



Candidate Questionnaire

Local Candidates Committee NYS Legislative Election - Primary 2026

Name Ben Yee

GENERAL INFORMATION

Office Sought (New York State) Assembly

District Number 66

In which primary Democratic

Age 42

Education BA in Economics with honors from the University of Michigan

Current job, position, or occupation

Chief of Staff to CEO at Pencil Spaces, an EdTech startup specializing in remote learning and AI

Other positions or roles

Democratic State Committee Member, AD 66

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Secretary of Manhattan Democratic Party;
Vice President of the Young Democrats of America;
President of Manhattan Young Democrats;
Regional Vice President NY State Young Democrats;
2019 Campaign for NYC Public Advocate

Campaign Contact Information

Website <https://votebenyee.nyc>

Twitter yben

Facebook votebenyee

Instagram yeebrew

Bluesky yben

Signature



GOALS AND PLANS

In addition to evaluating stances on the reform issues, Citizens Union considers the campaign goals articulated to voters, issues specific to the district, and the ability propose thoughtful solutions to represent constituents' interests.

What are your top three campaign promises or goals, and what actions will you take to achieve them if elected?

1. Turn the district into a hub for civic activism

I will start delivering on Day 1. I will turn the assembly seat into a hub for community activism, doing what I've been doing for 20 years – reaching out beyond community boards and political clubs to engage people who think that government intimidating or politics is not for them. We have to remind ourselves, we are in this together. This will be through constant programming in the form of discussion nights, debates and workshops on history and civics.

2. Education reform

A medium-term goal to update the NYS curriculum so that it serves our democracy and students for the 21st century. I will work to add new mandatory curricula across K-12 covering civics, media + technology literacy, financial literacy and consent education.

3. Fundamentally restructure the housing market for affordability

A long-term goal that will require a consistent fight, vision and champion. My approach to NY's housing crisis is multi-faceted and, therefore, has multiple paths to alleviating the current crisis. Fundamentally, the root problem is two-fold: a market that structurally over-supplies luxury units and a separation of the luxury unit and regular homes markets such that those in the latter will not participate in the former regardless of supply. A long-term solution requires laws to un-distort the market away from luxury housing, like a pied-a-terre tax, and incentivize regular homes by funding affordable housing and relieving development pressure on the urban core by expanding the metro-area with mass transit.

How long have you lived in the district in which you are running, and do you have any achievements or involvement in your district you are particularly proud of?

I have lived in AD 66 nearly my entire life. My family moved here from Brooklyn when I was 10 and I have spent 80% of my adult life in the East Village or West Village.

After 17 years of involvement and a career in civic tech, there are many things I feel are large accomplishments which have impacted my district. But, all of them, I'm most proud of my work inspiring others to become leaders in our democracy. These efforts – like running hundreds of (Real) Politics 101 workshop – have left a mark on NYC and AD 66:

Across NYC

- Nearly 10,000 New Yorkers educated in civic and political workshops.
- Hundreds of people became leaders in their own communities.
- Long-running, institutionalized programs I created – like Manhattan Young Democrats' Open Seat Project – get hundreds of new people involved in local politics annually.
- NYC's powerful Democratic Party organizations were forced to reform due to a new, educated Party

electorate — including rules mandating transparency, inclusion and real voting.

In AD 66:

- I've gotten dozens of people to join county committees, community boards, political clubs and to start activist groups.
- The two most recent Presidents of Downtown Independent Democrats and three Presidents of Village Independent Democrats got involved due to my workshops I ran in the district.
- One of my opposing candidates got involved in local politics because of my work, and I think that's fantastic.
- I was honored by Village Independent Democrats for "Engaging Millennials in Democratic Politics."

What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics and anti-corruption, checks and balances, government transparency and oversight, police accountability). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

I've spent most of my adult life working to advance good government and have partnered with Citizens Union many times. Highlights include:

- Serving on the NY Senate CIO's team from 2008-2011 when we turned it from "the most dysfunctional legislature in the country" to winning awards for transparency. I was part of:
Building a modern website,
Launching online livestreaming for all Senate sessions and hearings with closed captions,
Opening the laws of New York to the public online with full search functionality,
Putting the NY Senate and Senators on social media,
Creating one of the nation's first open data portals with machine readable records.
- Working at the non-profit think tank Reinvent Albany to coordinate the Good Government Working Group and produce white papers on how governments can use technology to improve efficiency and transparency
- Serving as Secretary of the Manhattan Democratic Party where I livestreamed Party meetings, published votes on social media and built the first County Party website in NY
- Serving as Democratic State Committee member for AD 66 and and passing reforms to livestream meetings, publish Committee votes and resolutions, hold electronic voting and create an email system for the public to contact their Party representatives
- Creating civic education programs to explain local government and political parties, helping hundreds of people win Party leadership positions and local elected office.
- Organizing for good government issues like closing the LLC loophole, expelling Pedro Espada and Hiram Monserrate, and passing Open Data laws in NYC

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

1. Do you support opening up New York City's closed primary system, allowing over 1 million unaffiliated voters that are currently locked out of the election to participate in the primary election?

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, even better if we have Ranked Choice Voting in State elections.

2. Will you oppose any attempt to permanently remove redistricting protections from the state constitution, including existing protections of minority voting rights, population equity, ban on political gerrymandering, and consideration of communities of interest?

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, but I will also fight to change the current redistricting to a true non-partisan model.

3. Do you support reforming the process of filling vacancies in the state legislature by implementing nonpartisan special elections (like the system used in New York City) instead of giving party officials the power to decide who will run as the party nominee?

Yes

4. Do you support restructuring the New York City Board of Elections to make it more professionalized and transparent, and less dependent on political parties (S699 Krueger/A1852 Rozic)?

Yes

5. Do you oppose requiring registered voters to show ID to vote in New York State?

Yes

6. Do you support providing time extenders for polling place voting hours in cases where an emergency leads to voting being disrupted or shut down? (S4602A Gounardes/A5846A Gibbs)

Yes

7. Do you support the Democracy During Detention Act (S440 Myrie/A2121 Walker), which establishes the election infrastructure to make voting accessible for all those eligible to vote who are detained in jails?

Yes

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

8. Are you a public campaign finance participant? If not, please explain why.

Yes

Comments (if needed)

Yes, and I have qualified for matching funds.

9. Are you a supporter of the state's public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to ensuring the program is fully funded?

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, and I'd like to strengthen it by finding a way to create meaningful spending caps.

10. Do you support requiring disclosure of a contributor's employer in campaign finance reports? (S1910 Rivera/A3092 Carroll)

Yes

11. Do you support requiring Independent Expenditure entities (Super PACs) to disclose their top three donors on ads, similar to the requirements under NYC law? (S8445 Fahy/A10097Solages)

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, but honestly more

12. Do you support applying lower contribution limits to lobbyists and people doing business with the state or seeking contracts from the state? New York City imposes lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and individuals doing business with the City.

Yes

ETHICS

13. Do you support requiring lobbyists to report their campaign contributions and fundraising activity, as well as campaign consulting services they provide?

Yes

14. Do you support including lobbying regarding a nomination or confirmation of a nominee that requires Senate confirmation in lobbying reports? (S374 Gianaris/A7456 McDonald)

Yes

15. Do you support codifying sexual harassment as conduct that violates the public officers and employees code of ethics? (Gounardes S4197/Kelles A6201)

Yes

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

16. Do you support giving the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board access to certain sealed and confidential records in matters involving potential police discipline? (S4966 Bailey/A292 Cruz)

Yes

17. Do you support transferring disciplinary hearings involving police officers from the NYPD to the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH)? (S3927 Myrie)

Yes

REVISING CITY CHARTERS

15. Do you support banning the establishment of “lame duck” charter revision commissions, established by mayors right before the end of their term? (S8934 Liu)

Yes

16. Do you support mandating that charter commissions conduct their process over a mandatory minimum timeline of 180 days before issuing recommended ballot questions to a city's charter?

Yes

ADDITIONAL INFO

Please feel free to attach any additional information such as resume, campaign brochures, or issues statements.

Ben Yee is an **educator, innovator, and democracy evangelist** who has served our neighborhood for nearly a decade as our Democratic State Committeeman. A lifelong resident of the district, Ben is the only **progressive** in this race with the experience to **beat the real estate lobby** and deliver results that the Democratic establishment has failed on, time and again. With Ben Yee, we can return **power to the people** and ensure Albany finally works for us.

Upgrade New York

A PLAN THAT DELIVERS

- ✓ **Real Affordable Housing** Rewrite the housing rules to implement progressive taxes on high-end real estate and fund truly affordable homes; a comprehensive plan that works.
- ✓ **Fast and Free Transit** Modernize our infrastructure to provide world-class, fare-free bus service and reliable subways that respect your time and the planet.
- ✓ **Climate Justice Now** Accelerate a Green New York through mandatory building retrofits and publicly owned renewable energy that creates local union jobs.
- ✓ **Real Transparency & Oversight** Use tech-forward auditing to track every taxpayer dollar, stopping the waste and back-room deals that protect the political machine.
- ✓ **Safer Streets & Communities** Invest in mental health services and community block grants to address the root causes of crime while improving street design and safety.
- ✓ **Defense Against Oligarchy** Protect New Yorkers from Big Tech, AI advancement, and unconstitutional federal overreach through strict statutory guardrails.

BenYEE

FOR NY STATE ASSEMBLY

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Let's
upgrade
Albany.

VOTE JUNE 23rd



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What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I would really love to count Citizens Union as a supporter.