



2026 Primary Candidate Questionnaire - New York State Legislature

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat in the New York State Legislature! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

For over 125 years, Citizens Union (CU) has been devoted to holding our local government accountable with the highest ethical standards and fighting for political reforms that improve New York democracy (<https://citizensunion.org/issues/>). To promote a competitive and diverse political culture, a fair and open political process, and accountable and responsible government, we evaluate candidates running for office and back those who strongly support reform. Our evaluations are done through questionnaires, independent research, and interviews conducted by our Local Candidates Committee. (<https://citizensunion.org/portfolio-item/citizens-union-2025-candidate-evaluation-info-for-candidates/>).

As a prerequisite for receiving the support of Citizens Union, please complete the following questionnaire and submit your response by Friday, March 27, 2026. As you complete the form, you can click “Save” and return to the form later. All short answers have a 250-word limit. Once you have completed the questionnaire and submitted your response to us, you will receive a copy of your submission. Your submission will be posted on our website (with the exception of contact info).

Upon receipt of your submission, we will reach out to you or your staff to schedule a virtual interview with members of our Local Candidate Committee. The interview will be recorded. Shortly thereafter, we will announce our support in key priority races to our members and on our website and other channels. Given time constraints and the limited capacity of a member-based organization, we may not be able to evaluate all contests or candidates in this election cycle.

Please feel free to reach out to Citizens Union with any questions or comments at candidates@citizensunion.org.

Thank you very much. We look forward to your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Name	Wei-Li Tjong
District	NY State Assembly 65
In which primary	Democratic
Age	50
Education	JD, NYU Law BA, Johns Hopkins University
Current job, position, or occupation	Partner at Tjong & Hsia LLP
Other positions or roles	President, Seward Park Cooperative Democratic State Committee Member, AD 65
Previous jobs or positions	Judicial Delegate, County Committee Member
Contact information	
Email	weili@voteweili.com
Campaign Manager Name	Katherine Smith
Campaign Manager Email	katherine@voteweili.com
Phone Number	(646) 706-2163
Website	voteweili.com
X	Set up in progress
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/people/Wei-Li-for-New-York/61576408460774/
Instagram	Set up in progress
Bluesky	N/A
Other social media platforms	

General

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

- 1) Repair & Expand Affordable Housing - I will fight to keep our neighborhoods livable by expanding affordable housing protections, preserving Mitchell-Lama and subsidized housing, supporting NORCS, and increasing funding for public housing repairs. I also support rental assistance and due process in evictions so every New Yorker has a safe, stable home.
- 2) Protect Our Diverse Communities - Our district's diversity is our strength. I support ethical law enforcement and community-based public safety strategies that build trust and address root causes of violence, including creating connections across our communities to strengthen mutual understanding and respect. I will also protect immigrant families by supporting measures like the New York for All Act and defending due process for the most vulnerable residents seeking safety and opportunity.
- 3) Healthcare for Working Families - Healthcare must be affordable and accessible. I will work to expand coverage, lower premiums and prescription drug costs, increase access to mental health services, and support legislation allowing organized communities and small businesses to buy group health insurance, reducing costs for individual healthcare expenses.

- **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 this district for over 50 years. I am the son of immigrants who came with nothing, who strove, and became NYC public school teachers and UFT members. I am a first-generation American raised in this community that shaped everything I have become. My parents arrived in New York in the early 1970s and later won the lottery for an apartment in Seward Park Cooperative (when it was then still Title I housing).

I grew up with the evolving diversity of downtown—Jewish, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Puerto Rican, Dominican—attending Torah Head Start at MTJ and PS 124 at Confucius Plaza, playing stickball off East Broadway, riding bikes through Loisaída, and generally being relegated to the outfield in the Chinatown YMCA Softball League. I was baptized and confirmed at the Church of St. Mary on Grand Street.

I earned scholarships to Dalton, Johns Hopkins, and NYU Law. For 25 years, I've practiced law in New York—at Skadden Arps, Chadbourne & Parke, in-house for AllianceBernstein, and as an NYC Administrative Law Judge. Fifteen years ago, I founded what has grown into a successful small law firm of 16 attorneys.

When I was able, I recommitted to this community, purchasing my own apartment at Seward Park where I continue to live and volunteer, for the last 25 years leading our diverse community of over 5,000 residents, currently as President. I have also served as an NYC OATH Administrative Law Judge for several years when I was starting my law firm, and was elected State Committee Member for AD 65 in 2024.

- **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.**

As State Committeeman for our district this term, I have attended meetings and conventions, during which I have been a part of positive change on the state level. Speaking from the floor and advocating for the district, I was part of a push to force party leadership to (only just late this past year) create a direct method by which to contact other state committee members by email, enabling more representatives, near and far, to be able to coordinate and gather support for important progressive initiatives.

I pressured the party to act ethically: to respect the will of the primary voters and fully endorse the duly elected Democratic nominee for New York City Mayor, Zohran Mamdani—despite my own sometimes firm disagreements with some of the mayor's positions. I helped advocate for an important statewide educational curriculum to address bodily and sexual autonomy, to give all committee members reasonable and proper notice of meetings, and for the creation of a kind of basic introductory curriculum for new State Committee members.

In addition to doing the work of the party in officially nominating its candidates for statewide office, I was also proud to stand with the entire committee voting individually for “a comprehensive restructuring of federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ... that safeguards human rights and due process.”

Elections and Voting

- 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?

While I can see why entrenched party interests would advocate for the current and longstanding approach to primaries, potentially creating a sea-change in how primary voting is conducted in the City is too exciting an opportunity to pass-up. My early investigation into the issue makes me feel I am likely to support some version of opening primaries to non-party-affiliated registered voters.

- 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?

Absolutely. Recent decisions at the federal level have made it all the more important that the state legislature and judiciary support the protection of fundamental voting rights that many of our citizen forbears fought- and died-for. The legacy of the Civil Rights movement cannot be undone – and we must do whatever we can to protect the voices of the people.

- 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. This is the best way to express the will of the people.

My experience as a county committee member when Daniel Squadron stepped down from his State Senate seat, meant that I witnessed for myself the manner in which even the Democratic party itself could not accede to the will of the committee – who overwhelmingly elected Paul Newell as Squadron’s replacement with 75% of the vote – much less the more directly expressed will of the people.

While I am glad we have had Brian Kavanaugh for as long as we have, I was decidedly against the manner in which he secured his incumbency.

- 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, I do, and support this bill.

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

100%.

- 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

- 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?

Campaign Finance

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

Yes, I am a public campaign finance participant.

- Are you a supporter of the state's public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to ensuring the program is fully funded? *Fully funding the program ensures its budget meets the program's needs and demand.*

Yes, I absolutely support the program and commit to ensuring it's fully funded.

- Do you support requiring disclosure of a contributor's employer in campaign finance reports? ([S1910 Rivera/A3092 Carroll](#))

Yes

- 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/A10097 Solages](#))

Yes

- 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

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

Yes

- Do you support requiring the disclosure of lobbying in connection with a nomination or confirmation of a nominee that requires Senate confirmation in lobbying reports? ([S374 Gianaris/A7456 McDonald](#))

Yes

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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