

Grace Lee

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Name	Grace Lee
Office Sought (New York State)	Assembly
District Number	65
Email	grace@graceleeforassembly.com
Party Affiliation(s)	Democrat
Age	40
Education	B.A. in Economics-Philosophy, Columbia University; B.A. in Philosophy, Columbia University; Masters in Business Administration, University of Chicago Booth School
Occupation/Employer	Self-Employed
Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement	2007-2008, 2010-2011: Figure Skating in Harlem, Volunteer Figure Skating Coach; 2015-2016: Blue School, Gala Chair; August 2018-December 2018: Swing Left, New York Events Director; January 2019-February 2019: Blake For New York, Communications Chief of Staff; February 2019-present: Children First, Co-Founder; April 2019-October 2019: Asian American Federation, Board Member; July 2019-present: Seaport Coalition, Member August 2019-present: Seaport Advisory Board, Member; October 2019: Chinatown Jail Rally, Lead Organizer
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If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Republican, Democrat, other)?	Democrat
Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?	Yes
Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee?	Yes
Signature	

Green Leaf

1. Replace the Joint Commission on Public Ethics and the Legislative Ethics Commission with an effective and independent enforcement body (S594A/A1282A).

Support

2. Limit outside compensation earned by state legislators and statewide officials to 25% of their salaries and eliminate stipends.

Support

3. Do you support or oppose the following changes to the state's current registration and voting system?

a. No-excuse absentee voting (second passage of constitutional amendment)

Support

b. Election Day voter registration (second passage of constitutional amendment)

Support

c. Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically through legislation, without requiring a Certificate of Good Conduct or Relief

Support

d. Automatic voter registration, unless the potential voter opts out

Support

e. Mandating poll sites on college campuses

Support

4. Reform the special election process, utilizing a nonpartisan special election for state legislative seats and eliminate delays in filling vacancies.

Support

5. Reduce the vote threshold to become a registered party back to 50,000 votes and keep the gubernatorial election as the qualifying election, and reduce the petition requirement for independent candidates back to 15,000 signatures.

Support

6. Amend the state's public campaign financing system, approved in the 2021 budget, by

a. Drastically reduce campaign contribution limits

Support

b. Set even lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state

Support

c. Move the campaign finance

Support

matching program to be administered by an independent, nonpartisan body outside of the NY Board of Election

d. Simplify the matching system by making both in- and out-of-district donations eligible and by eliminating the three different tiers for matching

Support

7. Require full disclosure of grants and contracts issued by the state, including the budget lines from which the spending is made and reporting on the results of each grant or contract over a certain amount.

Support

8. Provide for effective online disclosure and itemization of spending from elected officials' lump sum appropriations, including reporting on potential conflicts of interest and how the funds are spent.

Support

9. Repeal Civil Rights Law, Sec. 50-a, which shields from public view the disciplinary records of police officers, correction officers, and firefighters.

Support

10. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and put in place professional, nonpartisan administration.

Support

11. Empower the attorney general to investigate and prosecute election law malfeasance and cases of public corruption.

Support

12. Make mayoral control of city schools permanent, with a governance system that provides for accountability, transparency, parent engagement, and democratic participation.

Support

13. Simplify and consolidate New York State's court system by passing the Chief Judge's proposed constitutional amendment to modernize the courts.

Support

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

2. I want to eliminate all outside income.

14. Adopt technological solutions and provisions that will allow the New York State legislature to convene and vote remotely if needed.

Support

15. Provide public access to observe and participate in government proceedings, in meetings that would be public under the New York Open Meetings Law, via live and recorded video available on government websites.

Support

16. Implement immediate programs to facilitate absentee voting for all New York voters as long as the widespread contagion risk of COVID-19 continues, under current state constitutional limitations. This includes electronic submission of absentee ballot applications without a wet signature and a public information campaign.

Support

17. What are your concerns regarding the use of emergency powers during this crisis, and how do you think NY government can maintain public accountability standards at this time?

My main concern is how the governor has been using his emergency powers as a broad mandate to pass through unpopular budgetary reforms. New York State is desperate for tax revenues, and the failure to enact a more progressive tax code during the crisis is a failure. Refusal to do so moving forward would be grounds for the NY State Assembly to trigger the clause rolling back the emergency powers.

18. What are the biggest challenges in your district in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak?

Low-income New Yorkers struggling to pay rent, put food on the table, and afford healthcare.
Small businesses dealing with the loss of income, fixed costs like rent and property taxes, and loans.

This is especially previously in Chinatown, where mom and pop businesses were dealing with the misinformed biases exacerbated by COVID-19 long before the rest of the city felt the effects of the pandemic.

Seniors struggling to get enough food to eat since they are on a fixed income and must stay inside because they are the most susceptible to the virus.

Dramatic increase in racist attacks and harassment against Asian-Americans due to ignorance around COVID-19.

Access to adequate testing to ensure that New York's economy safely reopens.

A plan to move us out of the impending economic crisis that will be caused by COVID-19.

A representative in Albany that understands these challenges and is willing to work to get the job done instead of playing political games.

19. What are the appropriate roles of city, state, and federal governments in a crisis such as this?

City, state, and federal governments need to ensure the health and safety of the people first.

They need to make sure the public has the proper information, access to testing and healthcare, and that people and businesses comply with the appropriate protocol on gatherings, social distancing, and sheltering-in-place.

They need to institute appropriate programs and platforms so that people and

businesses can recover.

They need to make sure that those who prospered before this crisis pay their fair share now to help us get out of it.

They must implement programs and protocols to lessen or eliminate the impact of future outbreaks.

20. How will you help your future constituents, residents and businesses, access potential funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, or any other future government relief funds?

Since the start of the pandemic, I have turned a large part of my campaign into a mutual aid and relief organization. I spend dozens of hours a week coordinating with relief organizations on how we can best help our neighbors most in need, and much of that time is spent personally delivering free meals and supplies to seniors, public housing residents, and other at-risk members of our community.

I also regularly provide information to inform constituents of how to access benefits from the CARES Act, such as how to apply for expanded unemployment payments, accessing the \$1,200 stimulus, and accessing small business relief funds.

In addition, my campaign staff and volunteers have made thousands of calls to residents in my district to check on their needs and to provide them with an informational guide on how to access city, state, and federal resources.

I will bring that same nonstop passion for serving my community when I am elected Assemblymember.

Campaign Promise 1

Economic Opportunity

Long before the governor declared a state of emergency, I was the first candidate in Lower Manhattan to propose a comprehensive solution for small businesses and workers impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. I have called for a universal basic income, immediate funds for workers, small business grants and loans, rent relief, and tax credits to keep the small businesses that make up New York from shutting down forever, and to keep families employed during the crisis. I know that to recover from this crisis, New York State needs to invest in our people and our local businesses to get our economy moving again. I have the experience to make it happen.

Campaign Promise 2

Housing

I am the only candidate in this election that has never taken money from real estate developers. Since the beginning, I have been a strong advocate for a housing plan that ends the 421-a tax giveaway to developers and prioritizes keeping Lower Manhattan affordable for families to grow and prosper. At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, I pushed to cancel the rents for families in NYCHA that have been impacted by COVID-19, and now there is growing support for my plan. As a mother and community activist, I will continue to fight for housing policies that put our families first.

Campaign Promise 3

Healthcare

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed just how out-of-touch our current healthcare system is, and now our legislators just approved more cuts to Medicaid. If we want to be ready for the next pandemic, we need a healthcare system that doesn't put New Yorkers in debt. I am an ardent supporter of Medicare for All. I have pledged to emphatically advocate for the New York Health Act to keep New Yorkers healthy and safe.

Campaign Promise 4

Education

As the daughter of two immigrants to this country, I know first-hand the importance of a quality education. In fact, it was a development across from my daughter's school that risked exposing children to toxic levels of mercury that inspired me to

run in the first place. I believe New York state needs to honor its commitment in providing a quality education for our children, and I will work every day to deliver on that promise.

Campaign Promise 5

Environmental Justice and Climate Change

Lower Manhattan needs to be adequately protected from rising sea-levels and future storms. I will push the city, state, and federal government to move forward with a plan with strong input from the local community to ensure that downtown and the Lower East Side is safe from structural damage and flooding. Carbon emissions must be eliminated in the energy sector and in the production of goods that the state purchases from elsewhere. Part of the City and State's plans to redevelop the coastline of Lower Manhattan must include plans to expand Piers 11 to 37 for new water taxi routes as well as deliveries for goods & services. I will fight to protect vulnerable communities from dangerous chemicals during the Brownfield Cleanup process. As your Assemblymember, I will propose legislation that would require the most stringent environmental protection procedures on any brownfield cleanup project in highly populated areas. I support oversight from an independent monitor for any brownfield cleanup project to hold both the development companies and government agencies accountable to the public. And, I will also fight to expand the amount of green space in Chinatown and the Lower East Side, which have the lowest rates of green space per-capita of any neighborhood in New York City.

Please tell us how you have and would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner, and maintain the public trust.

As the next Assemblymember, I will fight for ethics reform on multiple fronts: campaign finance reform, banning outside income, and leading the way on passing overdue sexual harassment prevention policies. Legislators in Albany must work for the people of New York, and the only way to ensure that is if legislators are only being paid by the people of New York. As the only candidate in this race who hasn't taken campaign donations from real estate developers, I fully support efforts to bring about publicly funded state elections.