

Citizens Union 2017 Public Policy Agenda

CITIZENS UNION brings New Yorkers together to strengthen our democracy and improve our City. The health of our democracy and the effectiveness of our government have a direct bearing on the quality of life for New Yorkers.

Nonpartisan and independent, our goal is to build a political system that is fair and open to all, that values each voice, and engages every voter. As New York's democratic reform organization, we inform, empower and organize citizens to strengthen the integrity of our political institutions. We fight against corruption; work to reform our voting and electoral systems; and press for city and state governments that are transparent, accountable and effective.

We welcome everyone, of any political or professional background, who wants to work with other New Yorkers to create a cleaner, healthier democracy for our City and State.



2017 Public Policy Agenda for the City of New York

ELECTION REFORM

- **Enact a top-two election system** to replace the current closed partisan primary system.
- **Establish instant runoff voting** for citywide offices, borough presidents and the City Council.
- **Monitor the newly-updated Pro-Voter Law and Mayoral Directive #1** so New Yorkers are provided more opportunities to register to vote at city agencies, including electronically.
- **Implement split shifts and create a voluntary municipal poll worker program** to expand the pool of qualified poll workers.
- **Create a permanent Student Voter Registration Day** and require that schools provide voter registration forms to parents.
- Allow voters to **opt for email-based voter guides**.

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

- **Monitor the 2014 Council Rules Reforms** in the areas of discretionary funding and bill drafting, and push to reduce the number of committees.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

- **Increase the public funds and spending caps** to counteract the increase in independent expenditures.
- **Ban the use of public funds for campaign consulting services from firms that also lobby.**
- **Further reduce public funds** for candidates facing minimal opposition and enact “war chest” restrictions.
- **Ensure the continued independence and autonomy** of the NYC Campaign Finance Board.

PUBLIC OVERSIGHT OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

- Enact further reforms **to strengthen public oversight and boost public confidence** in the accountability of police, such as engaging additional government entities to enhance transparency of the NYPD and developing the NYPD's internal oversight of police misconduct.
- **Strengthen the investigative, oversight and prosecutorial powers** of the Civilian Complaint Review Board and the NYPD Inspector General.
- **Make the Commission to Combat Police Corruption (CCPC) permanent** and grant it subpoena power.

GOVERNMENT OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

- Monitor **city agencies' compliance with the Open Data and Webcasting Laws**.
- **Create a central portal to track Freedom of Information Law** requests for city government records for all agencies.

BUDGET AND PENSION REFORM

- **Increase budget transparency** by more clearly defining units of appropriation and limiting their size.
- **Enact independent budgeting** for borough presidents, the Public Advocate, the Conflicts of Interest Board, and community boards.
- **Release the non-property revenue projections prior to Council hearings** on the executive budget.
- **Create a centralized Pension Investment Board** to create greater efficiencies in investments.

COMMUNITY BOARD REFORM

- **Provide urban planners to community boards** who are independent from the borough presidents' offices.
- **Open community boards** to their communities by creating a **standardized and transparent process** for filling positions.
- **Establish term limits of five consecutive two-year terms** for board members, and examine term limits for leadership posts.

LAND USE

- **Include appointees on the Board of Standards and Appeals** from the borough presidents and Public Advocate.
- Ensure that mayoral **appointees to the BSA have relevant professional accreditation**.
- Acknowledge **197-a plans by reconciling them with other development plans in strategic planning**.

MAYORAL CONTROL OF CITY SCHOOLS

- **Make mayoral control permanent**, while ensuring that the governance system encourages **accountability, provides transparency, engages more parents**, and respects democratic participation.