



Candidate Questionnaire  
Local Candidates Committee  
NYS Legislative Elections 2018

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York State, and our interest in reforming state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than July 1<sup>st</sup>.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York State Legislature, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. **Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.**

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues.

We thank you very much for your response.

### **Biographical Information**

Candidate Name: Senator

Jesse Hamilton

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic

Age: 54

Education: SETON HALL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, Newark, New Jersey

Juris Doctorate (May 1994), Bar Admission, New York

NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED REAL PROPERTY ASSESSOR (2008)

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, New York, New York

Professional Studies Certification (Fall 2004)

Estate and Gift Taxation and Planning

LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY, Brooklyn, New York

M.B.A., Finance (May 1990)

ITHACA COLLEGE, Ithaca, New York

B.S., Finance (June 1985), Concentration in Business Management and Computer Science

Office Sought/District:

Senate, 20th District

Occupation/Employer:

Senate

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: I currently serve as the New York State Senator representing District 20, which includes parts of Crown Heights, Prospect Heights, Prospect Lefferts Garden, Flatbush, Brownsville, Park Slope, Gowanus, and Sunset Park. Before serving as a Senator, I was the Democratic District Leader in the 43rd Assembly District for almost a decade, and served as counsel for Senator Eric Adams while he was in the New York State Senate. I also spent 28 years in the New York City Department of Finance conducting small claims hearing for property tax reductions.

My years of community service include advocating on behalf of the needs of young people. I served for seven years on the School Board for District 17 - a district responsible for the education of 26,000 young people. I have actively served on PTA boards when my children were in school. In addition, I served on Neighborhood Advisory Board 9 for six years, including time as the chairperson. I have seen the successes we as a community can achieve together, like when P.S. 161 the Crown was named one of the five best schools in New York State.

As Senator of the 20th District since 2015, my accomplishments include founding the Campus, the nation's first technology and Wellness Hub.

As a member of the New York State Bar and Brooklyn Bar Association, I have provided Pro Bono legal services, representing neighborhood youth accused of crimes free of charge.

*(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)*

### **Campaign Contact Information**

Campaign Manager Name: Patricia  
Moore Address: 318 Rogers Ave  
Telephone: 347-770-0150

Additional Staff Contact:

Fax:

Email: [campaign@jessehamilton.com](mailto:campaign@jessehamilton.com)

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/SenatorHamilton/>

Website:

[jessehamilton.com](http://jessehamilton.com)

Twitter:

@SenatorHamilton

If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Republican, Democrat, other)? Currently a member of the Democratic conference

## I. AFFIRMATIONS

Have you completed required campaign finance filings?	YES / NO
Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee?	YES / NO
<i>(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union endorsements.)</i>	
Signature of Candidate:	Date:

## II. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state whether you support or oppose the following reform measures, and feel free to may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

### 2018 PRIORITY ISSUES:

#### ETHICS

1. Limit outside compensation earned by state legislators and statewide officials to 25% of their salaries, while enacting a salary increase and eliminating stipends.	Support / Oppose
2. Reform the Joint Commission on Public Ethics to eliminate the ability of one party to veto an investigation and to increase disclosure of its decision-making.	Support / Oppose

#### ELECTIONS AND VOTING

3. Do you support or oppose the following changes to the state's current registration and voting system? a. Early voting b. No-excuse absentee voting c. Election Day voter registration d. Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically <u>through legislation</u> , without requiring a Certificate of Good Conduct or Relief e. Automatic voter registration, unless the potential voter opts out f. Consolidated state and federal primaries g. Electronic poll books	a. Support/Oppose b. Support/Oppose c. Support/Oppose d. Support/Oppose e. Support/Oppose f. Support/Oppose g. Support/Oppose
4. Reform the special election process, utilizing a nonpartisan special election for state legislative seats and eliminate delays in filling vacancies.	Support/ Oppose

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE

5. Establish public financing of campaigns for state legislative and statewide offices using a method similar to New York City's Campaign Finance Law.	Support / Oppose
6. Close the LLC loophole to ensure that limited liability companies have the same contribution limits as corporations, rather than the higher limit for individuals.	Support / Oppose



7. Drastically reduce campaign contribution limits and reduce them even further from registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>
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**BUDGET PROCESS**

8. 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.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>
9. Provide for adequate 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.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>

**POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY**

10. Repeal Civil Rights Law, Sec. 50-a, which shields from public view the disciplinary records of police officers, correction officers, and firefighters.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>
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**ELECTION ADMINISTRATION**

11. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and putting in place professional, nonpartisan administration. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and putting in place professional, nonpartisan administration.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>
12. Empower the attorney general to investigate and prosecute election law malfeasance and cases of public corruption.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>

**HOME RULE**

13. Make mayoral control of city schools permanent, with a governance system that provides for accountability, transparency, parent engagement, and democratic participation.	<b>Support / Oppose</b>
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As a former School Board President and the founder of the nation's first technology and wellness hub I understand the importance of quality education. I do not completely oppose the above statement, but believe that control must include parents and community stakeholders who understand their neighborhoods.

Please use the space provided or a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the issues contained in the previous pages. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.







### III. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS (PAST AND CURRENT)

In addition to evaluating stances on the issues above, Citizens Union also assesses incumbents on how well they kept the promises made to voters during the previous election.

As an elected official who is seeking re-election,

- what were the top five promises you made to your constituents when you ran for your current seat and what progress has been made in keeping those promises?
- what are the top five promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?

Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient, and to affix additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements. We thank you very much for your response.

#### TOP FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM LAST ELECTION AND ACTION ON THEM

1. Housing-I support true low income housing, not multi-million dollar condos that were proposed at the Bedford Union Armory. I will make housing more affordable by expanding the number of seniors who qualify for homeowner exemptions and expand the number of people who qualify for rent freezes. My office is funding pro tenant groups such as Flatbush Tenant Coalition and Neighbors Helping Neighbors and I will continue to fight for pro tenant legislation. My constituent services team worked with tenants in the 265 Hawthorne Street building for the past three years to finally secure building ownership for residents, union members and working families alike are now co op owners.

2. Immigration-My colleagues and I succeeded in securing \$10 million to help provide free legal services to immigrants including thousands of mostly Caribbean immigrants in my District. My office announced \$185,000 in funding three groups working in the area of assisting immigrant communities from legal to social services.

3. Education-My colleagues and I helped secured over a billion dollars for public school. We established the nation's first free college tuition program for families earning under \$100,000 a year, and brought in \$50 million for community schools. My office also created The Campus, an initiative that gives local residents opportunities in technology, health, arts and wellness as well as providing other services to low income families in in neighborhoods such as Brownsville and Crown Heights. Over the last 2 years we committed over \$500,000 in funding to nonprofit organizations for The Campus which serves over 600 low income students in Crown Heights, East Flatbush and Brownsville.. Since the Campus was founded in 2015 test scores have improved in schools such as PS 298 and IS 392. One of our success stories is one of Campus students with developmental disabilities learning to speak because of the commitment of Campus partners such as Global Trauma Center which helps students with emotional problems with special attention to homeless students.

4. Healthcare- I have prioritized New York City's Health and Hospitals, the nation's largest Public Healthcare system. My District includes Kings County hospital which services all Brooklynites, Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center and SUNY Downstate Medical Center. I am co sponsor of Senator Rivera's bill will establish a New York Health plan. Many of the

constituents in my district only option is Kings County and some fear hospitals because of the lack of resources. One of the Campus's track's is health and wellness which provides free wellness classes for young people and health fairs for families. My office analyzed the Northwell Study and effect on constituents. Findings highlighted in this report could ultimately change the make-up of our community hospitals. The 700 million in allocations per the study is a step in the right direction, we must emphasize a multi billion dollar investment to bring the right resources to all community members. The restructuring of these health facilities will ultimately affect your everyday health-related decision making. My office funded a Diversity in Medicine program with Associated Medical Schools in New York. According to the SUNY Albany Center for Health Workforce Studies, African Americans and Hispanics make up only 12% of the physician workforce in New York as compared to approximately 31% of the population.

5. Addressing the number of gun-related crimes in the community: The United Against Violence (UAV) Task Force was established by office in 2016 in order to bring groups from across New York City together to learn from one another, share strategies and best practices, develop new and comprehensive models of responding to violence. We created a Violence Prevention Campus Track with conflict resolution classes, our student Peace Keepers program identifies student to break up fights or prevent violence before it occurs. I allocated funds to groups such as Save our Streets and Kings Against Violence Initiative partnering with CNN Hero Dr. Robert Gore. We are taking a holistic approach, looking at violence as a public health issue. We offer youth focused interventions that are school, community and hospital-based.

## TOP FIVE 2018 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. Expanding affordable housing, and adding income to NYCHA housing: I will make housing more affordable by expanding the number of seniors who qualify for homeowner exemptions and expand the number of people who qualify for rent freezes. My office is funding pro tenant groups such as Flatbush Tenant Coalition and Neighbors Helping Neighbors and I will continue to fight for pro tenant legislation. My constituent services team worked with tenants in the 265 Hawthorne Street building for the past three years to finally secure building ownership for residents, union members and working families alike are now co op owners.

We need to explore renting more commercial space to bring needed added income to NYCHA Housing. We should place a housing Tax on employers whose workers have to get housing subsidies to make ends meet. The State needs to sell bonds for new construction and have a percentage of money from casino gambling profits for public housing. I grew up in NYCHA Housing, in the Moore Houses of the South Bronx, and the 20th Senatorial District of Brooklyn is home to numerous public housing developments. The divestment at the city, state and federal level over the last decade is criminal. It is obscene that NYCHA has a 2-3 year backlog on repairs and that tenants have to live with mold, broken locks and other needed repairs. We must identify more revenue streams at the state level to help maintain the infrastructure on the largest supply of affordable housing stock in NYC.

2. Protecting DREAMers and immigrants: As I discussed earlier, with support from colleagues my office succeeded in securing \$10 million to help provide legal services to immigrants including thousands of mostly Caribbean immigrants in my District. My office announced \$185,000 in funding three groups working in the area of assisting immigrant communities from legal to social services.

We have to make these investments to protect our immigrant communities right now because the Trump administration is dehumanizing and denigrating our immigrant families, friends and neighbors. We must stand in solidarity with our immigrant communities.

I am an ardent supporter of the DREAM Act. I will continue to lobby my colleagues in Albany and make sure that the DREAM Act passes the Senate and becomes law. Children should not be denied access to a college education because of their immigration status. We must do better.

I also support efforts to preserve Medicare and Medicaid coverage for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protective Status (TPS) recipients, who are losing access to these vital services when these programs expire. Finally, my office is a Sanctuary Office with free legal services for immigrants 5 days a week.

3. Increasing access to education, and prioritizing funding for SUNY:

As a parent of two high school students and a former school board president, uplifting our youth has always been one of my top priorities. We have to take a holistic approach by learning the needs of not only the child but the entire family. I created with groups such as Bed Stuy Campaign Against Hunger to provide food packet for homeless students on the weekends. Students coming to class on Monday with empty stomachs and empty minds. The Campus provide wrap around services that serves the needs of families. We engage parents by empowering them with the tools to advocate for their child, I took action to the DOE with Medgar Evers College Prep one of the best schools in my District. They attempted to change policies at the school when the same policies exist at other schools. We took action with the parents from the ground up, I took direction from the PTA president because she knows the needs of her children more than anyone else.

As I mentioned earlier, my office created The Campus, an initiative that gives local residents opportunities in technology, health, arts and wellness as well as providing other services to low income families in in neighborhoods such as Brownsville and Crown Heights. Over the last 2 years we committed over \$500,000 in funding to nonprofit organizations for The Campus which serves over 600 low income students in Crown Heights, East Flatbush and Brownsville.. Since the Campus was founded in 2015 test scores have improved in schools such as PS 298 and IS 392. One of our success stories is one of Campus students with developmental disabilities learning to speak because of the commitment of Campus

partners such as Global Trauma Center which helps students with emotional problems with special attention to homeless students.

I am meeting with stakeholder about implementing a new policy to better target underserved area. Unfortunately, there is currently no mechanism to determine how much aid individual schools receive. NYC is considered one, singular school district. NYC's total foundation aid award is provided to DOE to distribute among the schools within NYC. NYC has discretion in allocating foundation aid among its 1,200 schools. Information on how NYC allocates funding is currently not available. However, as part of this year's budget, we enacted a Governor's proposal that requires every school district in the state to begin reporting on how much funding it provides to each of its schools. This information must be submitted to State Education Department, Division of Budget, and posted on the district's website. The purpose of this proposal is to provide transparency with respect to funding decisions made at the local level, to ensure that the neediest schools within a district receive the funding they need. This reporting will begin September 2018. Once we have this information, we can determine how much aid the schools in our district receive.

I believe that the state needs to stand behind its commitment to Free Tuition by committing more resources to cover the difference between TAP and Tuition, not forcing CUNY or SUNY to make up the difference. We should be providing opportunities to graduate within 4 years, this includes increases class selection and opportunity, more alternate class schedules including weekends, summers, Breaks.

In 2015 I along with Black and Puerto Rican Caucus supported a one-time investment of \$240 million to allow CUNY to provide salary increases to its faculty and professional staff for 2010 at the same level as the increases received by other public employees. The quality of education at CUNY has been put at risk because of the need for retroactive pay to resolve the contract and the absence of maintenance-of-effort legislation that includes collective bargaining increases. We have to stop putting band-aids on higher education on focus on true investment. I invested funding to a nonprofit to create more opportunities for minorities in the education field. We are not only losing minority professors to private institutions, we are losing minority students.

In 1999, the total CUNY enrollment was 194,994, by fall of 2017 it was up over 40% at 275,099 students. With the increase in enrollment, came increases in tuition. 76% of CUNY graduates are people of color, and 38% are immigrants. CUNY includes one historically Black college—Medgar Evers College located in my district across the street from my office. On a micro level if Medgar Evers had the resources to hire full time professors, funding for a dorm on campus and affordable tuition the school will be in the best position to serve the students.

Prioritizing funding starts with the Senate, Assembly and Governor's office on the same page. Free tuition is step, free tuition and resources for the schools is a leap in the right direction.

4. Fighting for criminal justice reform: I fought for real criminal justice reform that takes us away from the era of mass incarceration of young African Americans and Latinos by raising the age of criminal responsibility. I am working with advocates such as Akeem Browder to end the cash-bail system that keeps people locked up simply because they can't afford to post bail. I am a co sponsor of Senate Bill S7722 which relates to implementing automatic discovery. I am also a supporter of Lentol's Discovery Reform Bill A.4360-A and Latrice Walke's Bail Reform bill, A.10137. As a father of a young son who is now at the age where is a "threat", criminal justice reform will save so many of mostly black and brown man who simply can't afford to pay the bail and have no resources for legal representation.

5. Supporting labor unions and collective bargaining rights: I have been a member of District Council 37, New York's largest municipal public employee union, for over 30 years. I understand better than anyone the vital work that we

provide for the residents of New York City. We should NEVER contract out work to private corporations that can be done perfectly well by NYC employees. My Local 1757 (City Assessors) had to fight to stop the outsourcing of jobs to computer programmers to do the work of City assessors. And the fight continues. I supported legislation that allows full union dues to be deducted from New York State taxes, The 2017-2018 legislation says unions representing public employees can't be forced to provide full benefits of membership to workers who don't pay for them in the form of union dues. This new law increases access to and protects union membership in New York's public-sector workplaces in anticipation of an adverse ruling in the Supreme Court case Janus v. AFSCME. I have have worked with all groups of organized Labor from RWDSU on legislation to eliminate the subminimum wage to working with DC 37 to protect park workers from assaults.

The Tri-Borough Amendment is the only thing that protects public employees and we must protect it at all costs. I will vote no to any amendments to the Tri-Borough Law. The only amendment I will support would be to reduce the fine for members when they go on strike. Additionally, I do not support revising the Taylor Law unless we are strengthening the hand that unions have to negotiate a fair contract.

When I joined DC 37 they gave me an opportunity to make a living wage and start a family. I will fight like my life depended on it to stop any and all rollbacks of benefits which we worked hard for. We worked extremely hard for these benefits which should be contractually binding and not taken back. What has happened in Wisconsin and the teacher tenure decision in California should serve as a wake-up call. We must strengthen opportunities to organize workers, protect pension benefits by fighting vigilantly against any newly proposed pension tiers, and support our brothers and sisters in their contract negotiations.

## IV. ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENTS

Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor the public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent legislative leaders, we seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that she/he will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and always represent the public interest above all else.

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.

I have spent nearly 3 decades in public service, and I would not trade it for the world. I have served 15 years as an elected official in Crown Heights, eight years as President of the School Board and the last eight representing our community as District Leader of the 43rd Assembly District.

I was the President of the Lincoln Civic Block Association, where I organized community actions that enhance quality of life in the neighborhood. One of the Association's greatest achievements was bringing the community together after the tragic shooting of Benny Lyde, and bringing Benny's killers to justice. I am also President of the Rosa Parks Independent Democratic Organization.

Upon taking office, I took an oath that I would support and defend the Constitution, and what that means to me is that I have the opportunity to use my position to protect my constituents and serve my community. First, I want my constituents to be able to say whether they want me in office or not; I believe in increasing civic engagement by supporting voting reforms so that everyone has the opportunity to vote. Civic engagement is critical to ensuring democracy, which underlies all of the work that we do. It promotes social responsibility and economic opportunity, and fosters an understanding of the issues facing our communities and the solutions we must use to address them. I support voting reforms such as pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds, and free postage on mailed-in ballots. Additionally, anyone in the community is welcome into my office any day of the week. I have interns and volunteers of every age from all over the city. I do meet-and-greets several times a week. I want to make sure that my constituents know that I am holding myself accountable for their well-being.

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007  
Via email to [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org) or fax to 212.227.0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions