



## 2010 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

### **STATEWIDE POLICY ISSUES**

1. If elected Governor, how would you manage New York's increasing fiscal woes, its burgeoning budget deficit and its growing long-term obligations? What would be your budgetary priorities? Are there specific programs or taxes that you would consider increasing, decreasing, eliminating or creating?

NY's fiscal woes are due to a drop in revenues, not an increase in expenditures. The deficit would be resolved merely by stopping the \$16 billion annual rebate of the stock transfer tax to Wall Street speculators. Restoring the tax brackets that existed during the Rockefeller era would raise an additional \$8 billion; at the same time, 95% of NYers would receive a tax cut. Finally, a banker's bonus tax on 50% of the bonuses that NY bankers gave themselves after trillions of dollar in federal bailouts would generate an additional \$10 billion. So rather than having a \$9 billion state budget deficit, we would have a \$25 billion surplus to pay for a Green New Deal of WPA-style jobs ; full funding of public schools; tuition-free SUNY and CUNY; and a transition to a carbon free energy system. NY must also confront the income disparity that is worse in NY than any other state. More funding is needed to deal with poverty, feed New Yorkers, support affordable housing, support mass transit, and protect the environment.

2. If elected Governor, what would be your approach to education funding? How would you meet the requirements of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decisions and the funding obligations handed down by the courts? What is your view regarding the continued delay of CFE implementation that Governor Paterson initiated in response to budget deficits?

See answer to 1 above on school funding. I would fully immediately comply with CFE decision. The state – and federal – government should also pick up more of the costs of local schools. I also support going back to free tuition for CUNY and would extend to all public colleges in NYS.

3. As Governor, how would you address concerns of localities about property taxes and ballooning pension costs?

Unlike Cuomo and Paladino, I believe pension payments to the average retired state workers are reasonable. The average full pension is under \$16,000 a year. The problem is the pensions for management level state employees and the padding and double-dipping of a minority who take advantage of rules that should be changed to prevent this abuse.

To deal with high property taxes: One, the state should comply with the state law on revenue sharing with local government. Started by Gov. Rockefeller, Section 54 of the State Finance law recognized that the state government had more progressive ways to raise revenue than local governments that only had the regressive property and sales taxes. I would increase state revenue sharing by 400% by requiring the state to meet the requirement to provide 8% of its revenues to local government.

Two. The State and federal government should pay most of the cost of running schools, instead of the local property tax.

Three, the state should pick up the county / NYC contribution to Medicaid, as is the standard for the rest of the country. Medicaid is the county's biggest cost – on average 45% of county budgets. I would also save money for the county – both in taxes and as an employer – by having New York adopt a single payer Medicare for All health care system. The state's recent study found that such a system would save New Yorkers about \$28 billion a year by 2019 compared to the insurance mandate passed by Congress.

Four, I would target property tax relief to New Yorkers that most need it. The Star program should be reformed into an expanded property tax circuit breaker, helping low and middle-income residents rather than primarily going to the wealthy under the present system.

4. If elected Governor, how do you plan to address the rising obligations and cost of Medicaid? How would you address the very costly elements of Medicaid like long-term and elder care? Would you reform New York's eligibility requirements for the program?

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I would amend the existing single-payer NY Health bill by Gottfried and Schneiderman to include long term care.

5. What is your plan for ensuring that New York State is economically positioned for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, particularly with regard to the growth of upstate?

We must first recognize that the trickle down economics of providing tax cuts to the rich and hand outs to large businesses over the last thirty years has utterly failed to help the upstate economy. Yet this continues to be the principal agenda of the two major parties.

Giving the rich more money in the form of tax cuts doesn't work because they don't invest long term to create new means of production and employment. Instead, they speculate on Wall Street to rearrange ownership of existing means of production.

Because of its abundance of clean water, Upstate New York is well positioned to profit from the adverse impacts of global warming and declining oil if it focuses on and leads the development a sustainable, green economy. The public sector has to step up make this happen, not with still more corporate welfare tax breaks and subsidies, but with public investment in a green industrial policy of investing in renewable energy, mass transit, green buildings, organic agriculture, and clean manufacturing. These are the new means of production needed for a sustainable green economic recovery and future.

In addition to public spending with private contractors to build this sustainable green economy, we need public investment by a state bank like North Dakota has. We need a public bank because the Wall Street banks are not investing long term in the creation of tangible assets upstate, but only willing to invest short term in paper assets in global financial markets. When the big banks do lend to us upstate they require collateral, which only serves to mortgage our regional assets to global financial institutions and siphon increasing portions of our income away as interest. We need a public bank to make equity investments in the real economy producing goods and services instead of Wall Street's debt leveraging in the financial economy that extracts interest and rent from us.

We can raise the funds needs to finance such investments in a Green New Deal by reversing thirty years of tax cuts for the rich in NY and enacting the progressive tax structure I outlined in answer to question 1.

6. What is your position on the use of eminent domain for economic development related purposes? Do you believe that changes are needed to the state's laws with regard to eminent domain and blight determinations and, if so, what would you propose?

Eminent domain should not be used to benefit private developers, such as Atlantic Yards.

The Greens would have used eminent domain to take ownership of various sports teams such as the NY Yankees rather than paying a similar amount of money to support the construction of new stadiums for them.

7. If elected, how would you respond to the affordable housing needs of the state, particularly in the cities?

Part of the \$25 billion surplus created by restoring fairness to the state's tax system would be used to fund affordable housing initiatives, including Housing Trust Funds.

Part of the state pension funds should be used to finance affordable housing in the state. I support the repeal of the vacancy decontrol bill and strengthening and expansion of rent control. Since 1997, some 300,000 affordable apartments (rent controlled, rent stabilized, Mitchell-Lama, and Section 8) in the downstate region have been converted to unaffordable, market rent status due to pro-landlord provisions in our rent laws - and the tenants moving into these apartments lack basic rent and eviction protections.

I would return the right to regulate rents to local governments rather than state legislators, since local officials understand better the realities of housing prices in their community. I would make the state's rent control laws permanent, and would extend it to every municipality with less than a 5% vacancy rate.

I support banning discrimination in housing based on the source of income.

I would raise the maximum shelter allowance for public assistance recipients and expand rent subsidy programs.

## **REFORM ISSUES**

8. What is your view regarding overhauling oversight and enforcement of state ethics laws? What is your position about the creation of a new, unified agency to oversee legislative and executive ethics, campaign finance, and lobbying in which no one elected official controls the majority of appointments? What is your opinion on the ethics reform bill passed by the legislature in January?

While I support the various ethics reform proposals advanced by good government groups, they will not fundamentally expand democracy in New York State. I would have vetoed the ethics reform legislation that the legislature passed early this year for failing to go anywhere near far enough, especially the failure to require independent oversight of the legislators' ethics. While I support a unified agency to oversee ethics, the most recent effort to create a more unified agency resulted in the removal of the most independent official in charge of the NYS Lobbying commission, a step backwards.

The US is relatively rare among the world's democracies in that it uses a winner take all, single member district system to elect its legislative bodies. By design, this creates two center-right political parties that become primarily focused on patronage. We need to adopt proportional representation for legislative bodies and instant runoff voting for single executive positions (e.g., Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General).

Our single-member-district, winner-take-all election system entrenches the two-party system because it motivates defensive voting for the lesser evil against what who your fear most. As a result, most state

legislative district are one-party districts with no representation for minor party or parties. And your vote doesn't really count since in the vast majority of cases you know which party will win the election.

Instead, most democracies elect their legislative bodies through a voting system that allocates seats based on the percentage of votes the various parties received. This creates a legislative body that is reflective of the political makeup of the voters. New York City Council was elected by a proportional system between 1938 and 1949.

In instant runoff voting, the winning candidate is required to have a majority of votes. Voters rank each candidate in order of preference. If no candidate wins a majority in the first round, the lowest ranked candidate is eliminated and their next ranked candidate gets their vote. This process continues until one candidate has a majority.

Second, rank and file members of the state legislature must agree to act as legislators and not cede all power to the majority leader / speaker. The power of the leader should be reduced by distributing staffing and resources to each legislator equally. Member items, which are used to reward or punish individual legislators, should be eliminated.

I support a clean money clean election system of public campaign financing. I would prohibit businesses or individuals doing business with the state to make campaign contributions. I would make all open government rules apply to the state legislature as well. I would largely eliminate legislators' ability to receive outside income and require full disclosure of any exceptions allowed (e.g., a farmer should be allowed to continue farming, a doctor to continue helping patients).

9. What reforms, if any, do you think are necessary to promote a timelier, transparent and more accountable budget process? What are your positions regarding the creation of an independent budget office responsible to provide revenue projections and economic and policy analysis, the use of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) in the budget process, and the implementation a later start date for the state fiscal year?

I have long advocated for the creation of an independent budget office.

I support moving the start of the state fiscal year back until June 1 to give the legislature more time to review and adopt the budget. If the budget is not adopted on time, last year's budget should be automatically adopted with adjustments to reflect inflation and increases in service needs. The legislature can then amend the budget.

I oppose allowing the Governor to use the budget to change underlying policies that have been enacted in law.

10. Is the current balance of power between the Governor and the Legislature adequate to ensure a healthy budget process? What do you think about the precedent set this year by Governor Paterson of budgeting by extender and including state government appropriations that if not approved would otherwise shut down the government?

The Governor has too much power over the budget process. However, the legislature too often evades

its prime responsibility of passing a sound budget. They prefer to delay and delay – all the while raising funds from special interests – to create a sense of crisis that allows for last minute horse trading to go on in secret in the back rooms. I think the Governor was right this year in how he used the extender process due to the refusal of the legislature to deal with the budget. It is certainly not a resolution that benefits the state however.

I support the creation of joint budget conference committees that have real responsibility to resolve differences between the two houses – not the window dressing committee conferences on recent years.

11. What is your position on the creation of an independent reapportionment commission charged with drawing legislative and congressional district lines under strict and fair guidelines? In your view, what makes for an independent reapportionment commission? As a candidate for office, do you pledge to veto any lines drawn by the Legislature under the current redistricting system that lacks an controlling role by an acceptable independent commission?

I strongly support an independent reapportionment commission and would veto any lines that meet such standards. As stated in my response to question 8 above, this would only marginally make the state more democratic. We would still remain ones of the least democratic governments among the world's democracies.

We need to create legislative bodies that are more representative of the general public, including increasing the representation of people of color and women. We need an independent reapportionment commission creating multi-member districts for proportional representation and a multi-party democracy.

12. What steps, if any, do you support to promote greater transparency and accountability of our state's public authorities and commissions? Which, if any, public authorities or commissions would you disband or restructure? How would you support and engage the newly empowered Authorities Budget Office to fulfill its mandate?

Public authorities are a dubious legal devise to evade the restrictions of the NYS Constitution. They are a massive waste of public resources and a major source of patronage, crony capitalism, and corruption. They should be eliminated or consolidated into only those that serve a broad public purpose, such as the New York Power Authority. Those that remain should be governed by publicly elected boards, not patronage appointments.

13. What is your view about measures to limit the role of money in elections and politics, such as substantially reducing contribution limits and/or instituting a public matching campaign financing

system at the state level? What is your position on requiring disclosure of independent expenditures?

While I strongly support public campaign financing and restrictions on contributions, such measures will be inadequate to create democracy in New York. Reforms that have been enacted in the past, especially at the federal level, after years of organizing have normally had only a minimal impact, both because the proponents fail to understand the realities of campaign fundraising and because huge loopholes are inserted in the final compromise. Far more critical is the adoption of a proportional representation system of government. (see answer to question 8 above).

I certainly oppose efforts such as so-called open primaries that seek to increase the ability of wealthy individuals to buy elections and reduce the ability of people to organized principled and accountable political parties.

The present contribution limits in NYS are obscenely high and need to dramatically reduced.

Most public campaign financing reform proposals heavily favor the major parties and discriminate against insurgent, independent and third party candidates. I will veto any legislation that discriminates against third party and independent candidates. Candidates need to be treated equally.

14. What is your position on making more strict requirements on the use of campaign contributions for non-campaign related activity? What are reasonable parameters on the use of these funds?

I support stricter requirements on the use of campaign contributions for non-campaign related activity. Such uses should be prohibited.

15. What is your position on selecting Supreme Court judges through an appointment process where candidates are recommended by citizens committees on the basis of merit and qualifications? If you do not support this approach, what judicial selection mechanisms do you believe should be put into place?

You cannot take the politics out of judicial elections by appointing supposedly objective committees to make recommendations. Various interested committees already make recommendations. The electoral reforms I am calling for – proportional representation, instant runoff voting, a voluntary system of public campaign financing – will give the voters much stronger incentives to participate and educate themselves on the issues and candidates for all offices because no vote will be wasted, every vote will count, and the playing field will be perceived as level and fair.

16. What is your position on stricter limits on gifts and other benefits, such as honoraria, which public officials can receive from lobbyists, contractors and others attempting to influence the political process? What is your position on limits to contributions made by lobbyists and others who do business with the state?

I support strict limits on gifts that officials can receive from lobbyists. They should generally be prohibited.

Those doing business with the state should not be allowed to make campaign contributions.

17. What is your position on revising the Municipal Home Rule law to limit the ability of a charter revision commission to "bump" other local referenda from appearing on the ballot?

Charter Revision Commission should not be able to bump referenda that have been put on the ballot through a petition process. The people should have the final say in a democratic society.

18. What is your position on restructuring the State Board of Elections and improving the administration of elections by abolishing the constitutionally mandated two-party system of governance and operation and replacing it with a more centralized system that includes a sole chief elections officer and a nonpartisan board?

I support repealing the constitutional provisions that allows the two major parties to run elections and replacing it with a professional, civil service type of administration.

19. What is your position on easing candidates' access to the ballot to make it easier to run for office at the state and local level? What measures would you support to do this? Would you support any or a combination of the following reforms: lowering the number of signatures candidates must collect, requiring a fee as a supplement to petitioning, lengthening the time period for petitioning, allowing independent nominating petitioners to begin collecting signatures earlier in the process, or allowing petitioners to collect signatures from any registered voter, regardless of party?

I strongly support making it much easier for candidates to qualify for the ballot.

Reforms are especially needed in special elections, since this is how about 1/3 of state lawmakers are elected initially and the normal six week petitioning requirement for independents is compressed into one week, making independent candidacies virtually impossible.

I would end the discrimination against third parties and independent candidates in NYS election system. All candidates should have the same petitioning period.



I support the role of political parties in our electoral system and oppose measures that would allow nonmembers and moneyed special interests to participate in the internal decision making of parties, such as open primaries.

20. What is your position on other election reform measures, such as the implementation of Election Day voter registration which would require a Constitutional amendment to abolish the state mandated voter registration deadline?

I support same day voter registration. I support extending the franchise to felons who are prisoners or parolees. Voting should be part of the process of reintegrating offenders into society.