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2021 Environmental Questionnaire for New York City Candidates

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the New York League of Conservation Voters Questionnaire.

To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please consult [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when answering the questions.

The New York League of Conservation Voters is the only non-partisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action. This questionnaire is designed to elicit your views regarding what environmental, public health, clean energy and transit, and environmental justice groups consider to be the most important issues of the day. Responses may inform NYLCV's educational and legislative programs and actions NYLCV takes in the election cycle.

Responses should be considered public. Although NYLCV may choose not to publicize the responses to every question, verbatim responses may be reproduced and distributed publicly. If so, your responses may be shortened, if necessary, but will not be edited in substantive ways. If you choose to refer us to a position paper or website, please indicate exactly what text you would like us to cite. For candidates choosing not to respond to the questionnaire, NYLCV will note as much in its public materials.

NYLCV and its partners in the environmental policy arena believe that New York's voters are determined to make the environment a voting issue this year. Candidate positions on issues such as protecting public health, building a clean energy future, and mitigating climate change will help voters decide how to cast their ballots this election cycle. This questionnaire is one of the primary ways the public will get this information.

Here are a few guidelines:

- ☒ Questionnaires are due **Friday, February 26, 2021**.
- ☒ The completed questionnaire is mandatory for endorsement consideration and must be submitted via e-mail as a Microsoft Word file to: politics@nylcv.org
- ☒ Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg (jklainberg@nylcv.org)
- ☒ After receipt of the completed questionnaire, candidates will be invited to participate in a formal interview with a local Chapter Board.
- ☒ Candidate endorsements will be made by the NYLCV State Board on April 29, 2021.

CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFORMATION

Candidate name: Althea Stevens

Office sought & district number: City Council, District 16

Campaign e-mail: Althea@Althea4CityCouncil.org

Campaign phone: (917) 504-6320

Website: Althea4CityCouncil.org

Facebook page: [@Althea4theBX](https://www.facebook.com/Althea4theBX)

Twitter handle: [@Althea4theBX](https://twitter.com/Althea4theBX)

Campaign manager's name and email: Kate Connolly, katenconn@gmail.com, (530) 570-1499

Press Secretary's name and email: N/A

Scheduler's name and email: N/A

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

I have spent over 15 years working at community-based organizations, giving a voice to some of the city's most vulnerable populations. As a lifelong, heartfelt community advocate with the ability to motivate and inspire individuals, I lead with passion to serve others. I am running for the same reason. I want to make sure my community has the resources and services it needs to thrive, such as affordable permanent housing and increased funding for crisis intervention. The issues I have worked most extensively on are housing, criminal justice reform, and youth development.

I have worked with NYCHA Tenant Association leaders and affordable housing advocates, mostly in the Bronx but also citywide, for years. I have helped lead trainings informing NYCHA residents of the proposed RAD conversions. Recently, I have joined the board of Residents to Preserve Public Housing and we have been using the Green New Deal as a frame-work to lay out our demands to NYCHA Chair and other elected officials.

For the last three years I have been a part of the Gang Policing Coalition and we have been advocating to bring light to the NYPD secret database that is used to label young people in our

community as gang members. The database has clear racial bias. Two-thirds of the approximately 18,000 people listed in the system are Black, and about one-third are Latinx. Just 1.5 percent of people in the database are white. Hundreds in the database are minors, some as young as 13 years old. The public is not generally aware that this database exists, and no one knows a clear process for having your name removed from the list or determining if your name is even on the list unless you are arrested.

For the past few months I have been working with a group of NYCHA resident leaders from across the city who call themselves Residents to Preserve Public Housing and we have been using the Green New Deal as a frame-work to lay out our demands to NYCHA Chair and other elected officials. The Green New Deal is the only clear path we believe will give NYCHA residents a path to a healthier environment in addition to job training that will result in economic growth for residents. In addition, in response to the parallel pandemic of food insecurity in the Bronx, I have collaborated with elected officials and community partners to organize food support events. At these events, I have helped to hand out food to community members, as well as provided additional resources for accessing regular food distributions.

Additionally, this summer, the Mayor, without thinking about the long term effects on youth and families, cut all funding for summer programming. Although some of the funding was restored, this action made it clear that we must remind elected officials of the comprehensive and long-term benefits of enrichment programming for youth and ensure this funding is protected. It is imperative that we invest in our young people through providing them with high-quality, consistent programming. We should not wait until programs are cut to fight, but need to make sure that these investments are prioritized on every level.

I have also earned seats on a number of Advisory Committees, including the New York City Mayor's Office of Community Affairs, New York City Housing Authority Tenants Association, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) Inc. and numerous government agencies. In 2019, I was also honored by Council member Ayala Women History Month Honoree for her exemplary community work.

ISSUES

Each year, NYLCV works closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. These issues drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session, influence the bills we select for NYLCV's Environmental Scorecards, and informs the decision on the candidates we choose to endorse. To ensure your responses are in alignment with the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV's 2021 New York City Policy Agenda](#) when formulating your responses.

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity concerning, all the policy priorities of our partners per the following issues:



Top Priorities

Transportation isn't only the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state—it is also a major source of air pollution, causing respiratory and other public health issues. This is particularly the case near New York City's many major highways where too often, these communities are low-income and communities of color.

2. Encouraging the Shift to High Efficiency, Low Emission Forms of Transportation (p. 3)

To reduce emissions, I would advocate to make the Grand Concourse a car-free street similar to the 14th street initiative. Additionally, we need to create more protected bike lanes and plan inter-borough bike lanes for easier travel across the city.

More than ever, New Yorkers realized the value of our parks and open spaces in 2020 as our cultural institutions were closed and we had to practice social distancing. Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets but also contributes to the well-being of our residents and our economy.

3. Conserving New York City's Parks and Natural Areas (p. 3)

Throughout NYC, there is a huge disparity between the green space accessible to poor communities and wealthy communities. I have been able to see this first-hand in the Bronx where parks are left dirty and overgrown and community gardens are under-utilized because of a lack of funding. These green spaces are essential to our city and essential to our community members. They provide a brief respite from cars and big buildings, and offer opportunities for our youth to experience nature and to learn skills such as growing their own food. One of my environmental priorities in office would be to invest in and support such green spaces to improve the mental, physical, and social health of our city.

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavioral change is critical to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion, and sustainable waste management.

4. Common Sense Waste Management (p. 3)

I would support a multilingual public information campaign to explain the importance of recycling and reducing waste and how to do so properly. I would also look into restoring funding for the community composting program that provides drop-off locations for individuals to dispose of their food waste. I would also look into excess food and composting mandates for restaurants to both prevent and recycle food waste.

Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will

work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. We must also ensure the changes we make to tackle climate change benefit disadvantaged communities and provide for a just transition.

5. Energy and Infrastructure (p. 5)

To push New York towards renewable energy, I would start by working with tenants and building owners to determine barriers to greening buildings, especially residential buildings and the most feasible actions to take first. In determining my own timeline and project proposals for this, I would want to work closely with groups like Bronx Climate Justice North who have been doing this work locally for years. Additionally, while I support the plan proposed in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act; however, I would welcome the opportunity to speak to additional climate and energy experts to learn more and allow me to explore more solutions.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

NYC needs to invest more planning and resources into alternative modes of transportation, such as scooters and bikes. Additionally, we need to develop more inter-fare connections, like the Freedom Ticket program in Southeast Queens, to capitalize on and make more accessible existing transit options.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

First, I would support the Five Borough Resiliency Bill to ensure that the entire NYC coastline, not just the wealthy tip of Manhattan, has a plan to prevent and deal with potential flooding predicted from climate change studies. Additionally, I would advocate for additional cooling services and utility bill assistance during the summer based on the Heat Vulnerability Index. However as these are only temporary solutions, I would also support installing seasonal shade structures to help communities that are at highest risk during heat waves.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

As I detailed earlier, I would also look into restoring funding for the community composting program that provides drop-off locations for individuals to dispose of their food waste. I would also look into excess food and composting mandates for restaurants to both prevent and recycle food waste.

Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

9. Parks, Natural Areas, and Active Waterfronts (p. 9)



As I mentioned above, I would prioritize funding new accessible, green spaces and cleaning up existing green spaces in historically under-funded communities with little access to green space. I would also support regulating the efficacy and efficiency of the NYC Parks Department's Capital Division.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

This is an urgent issue that we must tackle with interagency collaboration and better oversight. It is unacceptable that NYC residents are still being affected by lead poisoning, with families in poverty bearing the brunt of this issue.

11. Reduce and Mitigate Heat Vulnerability (p. 9 – 10)

I would advocate for additional cooling services and utility bill assistance during the summer based on the Heat Vulnerability Index. However as these are only temporary solutions, I would also support installing seasonal shade structures to help communities that are at highest risk during heat waves.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

One way to improve air quality is simply to plant more trees, a favorite initiative in many cities and by many corporations. However, the placement of these trees is just as important as the actual planting. I would advocate that districts with little green space, like District 16, should be prioritized in these efforts.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

I would support strengthening New York's Safe School Drinking Water Act and would work with my state counterparts to urge the passing of such legislation as it is imperative that our students are protected from toxins and contaminants while at school.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

Prior to March of 2020, residents of District 16 already struggled not only to find healthy, affordable food, but to provide just enough food to their families. In a study from Hunger Free America, during the data period of 2015-2017, 37.6% of children in the Bronx were

experiencing food insecurity while the city-wide rate was 18%. Now, in a world where COVID-19 has devastated communities of color in the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn, and increased the financial burden on families already struggling to make ends meet, this rate has skyrocketed. To address this issue, NYC should increase funding to programs like Health Bucks and expand the pool of individuals eligible to receive them. The Council should also expand the locations where Health Bucks can be used as not everyone has access to a local farmer's market. To ensure families can buy enough food to support their family the Council should look into ways to supplement food purchasing assistance programs. Additionally, community and city leaders need to encourage the development of additional grocery stores in food deserts like District 16.