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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: JUSTIN KREBS

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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.

For 20 years, I've organized projects and campaigns on the local and national level to further a green future. Through my work at MoveOn, I've led the team that has aligned us with efforts to push the Green New Deal, supported and partnered with the Climate Strike, lifted up the youth voices that demanded a climate debate in the presidential primary, and worked with partners on anti-fracking efforts. I'd continue to call upon those relationships in the work on the city level.

I have a history of working on public/open space issues in our city, investing in and protecting the commons. I have worked in parks and playground advocacy for years through New Yorkers for Parks, invested years in Block Associations and neighborhood groups. I also had the chance to write a history of NYC's playground, which turned out to be less a history of physical spaces and more a history of advocacy, of concerned communities who organized to demand and create play spaces.

I have also previously worked with the League of Conservation Voters, helping to produce the 2013 Mayoral Forum on Earth Day at the Great Hall at Cooper Union where transit, street design and safety, and cycling culture were all part of the conversation.

I helped enroll our coop in the composting pilot program, and helped turn a building full of skeptics into true-believers who were upset when it went away. From the personal to the professional, hyper-local to national, this is work I believe in.

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)

VERY COMMITTED

This is a huge issue and an important set of issues. Among my closest campaign advisors and friends are folks who have been studying and advocating for these issues much of their careers. Pushing back the tide of cars that swamp our public spaces will be one of my top priorities, and in order to accomplish that, people must have access to reliable, safe alternatives. I am excited to invest in updated, more accessible public transit options including an ambitious bus redesign that reaches beyond recent efforts by pushing for quick, effective implementation and deeper public engagement in planning. We need to increase bus service to transit-isolated communities and for those who rely on the bus for trips that the subway doesn't support. City Council Members are key to advocating for these changes and can lift up proposals working with advocates and community members. Conversely, they can support proposals to expand bus service and changes to speed up buses, like separated BRT lanes or consolidating stops. I would seek to continue my predecessor's legacy of being a strong voice for transit.

I will push for decarbonizing the city fleet as soon as possible by converting to electric vehicles. And while we need to reprioritize our management of curbside space better to enable mobility, deliveries, and access, finding a way to get on-street EV-charging should be a City priority.

I will work to enthusiastically champion taking back our streets from vehicles, instead creating networks of interconnected, mixed-use, public spaces. With the necessity of Open Streets programs this year, many of the concept's most vocal opponents — retail and restaurant owners — have now been brought on board. We are uniquely placed to continue this momentum and think ambitiously of not just what we will maintain but where we can expand. I would convene people around the district who are passionate about making streets safer and more accessible following examples from projects across the US such as Boston's Esplanade and Back Bay Fens as well as Chicago's Lakefront Trail, which stretch through some of their cities' busiest and most populous areas. More ambitiously, I would also look to broader programs like Barcelona's Superblocks that repurpose streets to create a network of connected public spaces that are safe for children while allowing for local curbside access. We also need to ensure we are distributing these efforts and the resources that support them equitably across neighborhoods, especially low-income communities of color.

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)

VERY COMMITTED

From 2001 to 2005, I worked with New Yorkers for Parks -- as a lead campaigner on the Parks 2001 campaign to drive the question of park funding into the citywide elections, the campaign manager of Parks 1 in 2005 which produced a Mayoral Forum on Parks and pioneered digital advocacy tools in the service of parks and open space, writing a history of New York City's playgrounds, producing a film on the history of the Rockefeller family's involvement in our parks and open space, and working with parks, recreation, and green groups across the five boroughs.

This work is in my DNA, in my origins as an organizer in New York, and in my every day life -- as a parent who relies on our parks to make this the livable city for my kids and community.

I have a strong commitment to building on NYC's green spaces and believe every child should live within a safe, short walk from a park. These initiatives celebrate what makes our city vibrant and beautiful. I commit to increasing investment in and maintenance of open space that preserve our urban woodlands and quality of life -- parks, playgrounds, plazas -- including public benches, water fountains, restrooms -- and guaranteeing a greenline of service to actively maintain these public spaces. As I mentioned above, I believe that streets can be rethought, with Barcelona's Superblock program as inspiration, to provide a network of connected open spaces at people's front doors. Let's improve parks for people, but also bring the park to the people.

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)

VERY COMMITTED

When the curb-side composting pilot came to Park Slope, my building wasn't automatically enrolled and my neighbors were skeptical. They understood the value of composting...but were nervous about change. I met with each of them, navigated the coop board, and signed us up for the program. I worked to educate my neighbors -- mostly older, but a mix of ages. And for 6 years, our building became 100% compliant—leading to cleaner trash area, decreased rat problem, and better environmental health. And when the program ended, every neighbor asked, "What can we do to get it back?!"

We need programs like this for the impact they have on waste streams and larger climate impact. But also because they train us -- in specific, actionable, achievable ways -- how to be attentive stewards to our world and understand our own impact. They train old and young alike to be more intentional about waste. They ask us to engage in acts of civic participation.

I've signed on to a commitment to a next generation Green New Deal for New York City and will work for ambitious expansion of its waste reduction programs. Achieving and maintaining the city's Zero Waste goal will require us to educate and engage the public while also implementing citywide infrastructure and regulations if we want it to be effective. I will commit to bolstering our existing programs including bringing back curbside composting collection and making it citywide ASAP; supporting single-sort recycling to make collection more efficient; and expanding efforts to increase separate recycling collection for textiles, e-waste, and film plastic to pursue zero waste. I will not limit my approach to waste management alone as I support LCV's supposition that effective implementation will require cross-departmental approaches. We can look to Parks services to expand and increase the number of initiatives like Prospect Park's Mulchfest, which offers the opportunity for people to convert their old Christmas trees into mulch they can then take home with the surplus being used throughout the park.

I will work to invest in educational curriculums that could help maintain these changes and increase their impacts over time. I will look for ways to increase access throughout communities to ensure these programs are effective. Neighborhoods with little outdoor or communal apartment spaces need increased access to composting drop-off centers in order to make the option feasible and sanitary.

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)

VERY COMMITTED



I am dedicated to considering how every policy and program relates to climate change and will support LCV's platform regarding energy and infrastructure. Now is the time to invest heavily in strengthening our city's green infrastructure and providing jobs to do so. The payoff for the future investing is even stronger given low interest rates.

I'd focus on oversight and implementation of the Climate Mobilization Act, working to ensure city-owned and private buildings are able to meet commitments to decarbonization rapidly through rooftop solar, retrofits, and electrification. This is part of making sure our resources are reaching all communities, especially those most historically marginalized where economic access to adopting privately-owned green infrastructure like rooftop solar is limited. This could take the form of expanding community-led solar energy retrofit campaigns as well as exploring how the city could enact Community Choice Aggregation to create a public option for solar energy. These efforts will also pay off in cleaner air for environmental justice communities, by allowing for the shut down of the NYPA peaker plants, and by decarbonizing building heating.

I'd also work to highlight opportunities for the city to use its purchasing and pension power to encourage investment in decarbonization, such as ensuring our school food system (NYC is the second largest purchaser of food in the nation) has a lower carbon footprint and investing pension funds in zero carbon loan funds for buildings.

Additionally, all of these efforts will provide openings in green jobs. I would seek to expand programs that are creating high-skill green job pathways for disconnected youth, in the model of Green City Force or the HOPE Program's Sustainable South Bronx Program.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

VERY COMMITTED

As a long time transit rider and bike rider, I see the clear importance of creating and protecting initiatives to provide better, faster and safer alternatives to car trips. I would support investments in protected lanes for buses and cyclists, as well as enacting congestion pricing as soon as possible to help bridge the revenue shortfalls experienced by the MTA -- which COVID-19 has exacerbated -- and promoting bike-share/electric scooter programs. I also strongly support taking a look at the implementation of existing measures that move towards safer streets more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists that encourage a decreased dependence on cars.

First and foremost, I will push for a citywide interconnected network of protected bike lanes that works for everyone ages 8 to 80, is kept safe by structural design and is maintained in all weather. This should integrate bike share stations, protected and secure bike parking for residents that can handle family-friendly cargo e-bikes, and bike corrals in front of restaurants that rely on delivery cyclists.

Neither protected lanes nor streets that move away from a reliance on cars can work effectively without proper enforcement, especially at the beginning if we want to implement real changes that start working quickly. I will work to ensure this oversight is data-driven, utilizing all available technologies to monitor our streets including integrating all available technologies to combat biases so we can build a clearer picture of where/how problems originate. This will help us pinpoint where the current infrastructure is not working and examine the effectiveness of our efforts. And we can apply these same resources to better pinpoint which attempts are successful and which aren't. I will maintain that this data needs to be easily accessible to advocacy groups, educators, and the public. And -- as the City Council is debating even now --

investigations into crashes can be moved from the NYPD to the DOT, which will take these crashes seriously, treat victims with respect, and use the information to inform solutions.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

Part of the success for environmental resiliency is community resiliency. A community that has social capital, that has built trust and relationships and informal as well as formal civic networks can pull together in a crisis and plan together for the future.

This kind of community work and building social capital has been central to most of the organizing, advocacy and daily living I've done in New York -- across schools, neighborhoods, culture, open space, civic participation and more.

This is also why I'm committed to thoughtfully engaging with the decade-long project to re-envision Gowanus as an inclusive, resilient 21st century neighborhood -- a prime example of how a Council Member can make things happen if they are supportive of real dialogue. I am in favor of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice's approach to the Gowanus rezoning. THE GNCJ is a group of community groups, environmental groups, arts organizations, public housing residents, and other stakeholders really doing the hard work of navigating an equitable, ambitious rezoning -- that, if done correctly, will create affordable housing, open space, and other community benefits. This includes creating an Environmental Justice Special District that creates a diverse local oversight board to oversee implementation of all city commitments and developer requirements.

I will prioritize protecting our waterfronts and restoring natural buffers as a mitigant against storm surge and rising seas. I am in favor of a broader citywide framework for land use and infrastructure decisions than the piece-by-piece view and decisions we take now. As a council member, I will also use my powers as an advocate and convener to pursue regional collaboration starting by talking to leaders and liaisons throughout the city to understand their strategies and join forces.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

VERY COMMITTED [see #4 for more details]

I enthusiastically commit to impel ambitious strides towards zero waste in the city. We were making strides, but many have rolled back in recent years. The city needs to understand that waste reduction can have far reaching impacts on sustainability, health, space management, and communal resources.

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)



VERY COMMITTED [see # 3]

I would seek to serve on committees working with parks, recreation, open space

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

VERY COMMITTED

This is a vital issue across NYC and one that could and should be prevented with the right attention and follow through. A safe home free of poison is a right, and the city needs to be providing that. I would like to understand how I can be a good ally in this especially with colleagues whose districts are most impacted by lead in buildings.

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

VERY COMMITTED

I am supportive of LCV's proposals to mitigate heat vulnerability. I've seen it as a stroller pusher, a child chaser, as a companion to senior citizens, as someone who has produced and enjoyed outdoor performances. As the weather effects of climate change increase, our ability to enjoy these resources and keep our children and elderly safe decreases, and we cannot wait until we are in crisis to find solutions. I will work to implement city-wide tree plantings as soon as possible in ways that give precedence to communities with little access currently to green spaces and ambitiously push for permanent improvements by expanding our natural areas. And I'll keep doing the work of investing in community and social capital to cultivate civic resiliency as well

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

VERY COMMITTED

I enthusiastically support LCV's platform to improve air quality and lower our city's rate of emissions. It's common sense that this will not only have long-term environmental effects but also, as reductions in traffic last year showed, will have very real impacts on health and quality of life. Focusing on vehicular emissions particularly will benefit a number of our low income neighborhoods, which are more likely to be near highways and major thoroughways and have less access to green spaces. I will support the pledge to move city vehicles and our public transit system to electric power and finding other ways to lower the impact of our public resources, including reducing the city's fleet where possible. I will work to implement congestion pricing and am very interested in LCV's proposal to mitigate traffic by finding alternatives to our

current delivery systems, particularly the efficacy and implementation of neighborhood distribution centers. I will do everything I can to see the city implement these changes.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

VERY COMMITTED

I agree, we need to take a hard look at our water and waste systems so we can better locate the areas that need help and learn more about this problem before problems arise. I would enthusiastically support LCV's proposed study to help us determine water rate restructuring, prioritize engaging the public through government transparency and timelines that leave ample room for comment as I believe cooperative alignment will be the best way to get things done effectively and efficiently. It is part of ensuring the success of many of these programs. It is also part of creating a holistic approach, and I will encourage collaboration across city agencies, advocacy, and special interest groups.

Within Council District 39, there has been much conversation about the impact the Gowanus rezoning will have on CSOs, with advocates calling for the city to model how increased density will impact local hydrology and then use these findings to develop requirements that would mitigate the effects in this new development, but also to invest in district-wide infrastructure that avoids the need for CSOs to begin with. I would advocate for these measures as well as holding this standard for new rezoning proposals.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

VERY COMMITTED

I am very supportive of finding ways to offer New Yorkers more options for local, healthy foods that have less environmental impact regardless of their income, neighborhood, and background. As the pandemic has shown, it's all the more critical that food security is not uniquely tied to any single resource channel. Instead I support work to reprioritize existing city resources and programs towards the goal of environmental sustainability. I support LCV's proposal to increase local options for those utilizing food access programs providing options to our vulnerable citizens that align with the push for environmental sustainability.

Shifting to completely sustainable food systems will require long term changes across generations, and that starts with education. My first priority in office will be making sure education is the city's top priority and utilizing our schools' place at the center of so many families can make possible equitable access to all the city has to offer. This is another place where the city can use its purchasing power to force changes in our food system. I am committed to increasing equity across NYC's school, and education programs that promote health and increase quality of life are twice as important.