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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: Lincoln Restler

Office sought & district number: City Council, District 33

Campaign e-mail: lincoln@lincolnforcouncil.com

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Press Secretary's name and email: see above

Scheduler's name and email: see above

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.

While in City government, I had the privilege of working on a number of climate and environmental justice initiatives, including the Local Law 97 of the Climate Mobilization Act, the waste equity bill to reduce the amount of garbage sent to low income communities, and the plan to divest our pensions from fossil fuel companies. During my time in government, I have also successfully advanced more protected bicycle lanes and busways.

I am proud to have helped successfully advocate for Open Streets, including Outdoor Dining, as part of the City's response to the constraints of COVID. I want to help return our streets to our residents, by expanding these programs even further.

Every weekend, I volunteer with the North Brooklyn Compost Project and enthusiastically collect the compost of my neighbors. For at least a dozen years, I have been a compost zealot.

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)

Moving away from personal high-emissions vehicles and moving toward cleaner transportation is one of my priorities.

I will promote electrifying the City fleet, as well as DOE school buses and MTA buses. I will also work to encourage the move to electric personal vehicles by making chargers more readily available.

Ultimately, we need to encourage a move away from car travel and promote use of public transit. But we can’t convince New Yorkers to use our transit systems if they do not get them where they want to go, when they want to be there. I will aggressively advocate for capital improvements and expansions to the MTA subways and buses, new busways, automated enforced of bus lane violations, as well as an enhanced network of protected bike lanes and increased number of Citi Bike docks.

In the 33rd District, the BQE is a major source of congestion and emissions, and I will work to reenvision that roadway by reducing the number of lanes and expanding green space.

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)



I will focus on bringing parkland and green spaces to the communities that need it most, particularly at the 7 NYCHA developments in the 33rd District. Maintaining and enhancing our parkland is critical, particularly as COVID-19 continues to ravage our communities, and we need safe, open space to gather.

This district has been promised a variety of park spaces during recent rezonings that have not yet materialized, including Bushwick Inlet Park, Box Street Park, Willoughby Square Park and more. I will do whatever it takes to hold the administration accountable and see our promised park land realized.

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 believe in a vision of Zero Waste that not only mandates composting and recycling and incentivizes reduction of residential and commercial waste, but also streamlines waste collection with underground containerization and ultimately eliminates sending waste to landfills.

I am excited for the implementation of the Commercial Waste Zones legislation, as well as DSNY's Clean Curb pilot program to reduce piles of waste on our streets.

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)

My goal is to make the 33rd Council District the first carbon neutral district by 2030 and for it to serve as a model for Brooklyn, New York City, and beyond. We have crafted a white paper with 53 concrete policy initiatives to drive down carbon emissions in the 33rd district and across the city. To achieve this audacious plan, I would turn the goal of carbon neutrality into an organizing campaign across the district. Block associations and neighborhoods will be given the resources and tools they need to dramatically reduce their carbon footprint. I would use the bully pulpit of the Council office to build widespread awareness of the actions each of us can take to reduce

carbon emissions and then employ behavioral economics informed approaches to make it as easy as possible for people to make the right decisions.

We need to decommission existing fossil fuel infrastructure and ban expansions and new infrastructure. I was proud to stand with neighbors and get arrested in opposition to National Grid's North Brooklyn pipeline proposal. Additionally, we need to create good, union jobs to create green energy and infrastructure.

I'm supportive of NYLCV's energy and infrastructure proposals. Here are some proposals I'm contemplating, which I hope to refine with advice from advocates:

- 1) Electrify our housing stock. We should retrofit homes and buildings across our city, leveraging the new PACE financing tools and other NYSERDA incentives to make this a reality.
- 2) Significantly expand tax incentives to install Solar on every viable rooftop.
- 3) Legalize and incentivize the use of in-home batteries and energy storage..
- 4) Provide low cost financing to encourage mass utilization of electric heat pumps.
- 5) Reduce fossil fuel car ownership broadly by creating a protected bike lane network, implementing a series of bus rapid transit routes, mandating EV charging stations in garages and expanding EV charging stations throughout the district, and making low cost financing available to purchase e-bikes.
- 6) Mandate composting and recycling and implement a suite of initiatives to reduce residential and commercial waste and ultimately realize Zero Waste vision.
- 7) Encourage District 33 residents, who have the means to do so, to pay more for their energy bills by participating in voluntary renewable programs from their utility companies.

Working with colleagues in the Council, I would also seek to accelerate New York City government's transition to a zero-emissions future by investing in retrofitting government buildings, making all new facilities carbon neutral, getting all of our electricity from renewable sources, and shifting to an all-electric vehicle fleet for city operations (including expanding the use of e-bikes for operational agencies, ending the use of SUVs, and reducing emissions from our school buses). Read more on my plan to make the 33rd District carbon neutral [here](#).

6. Transportation (p. 5)

I'm hopeful that with the change of Federal Administration, the Congestion Pricing plan approved by the State legislature will finally undergo the necessary reviews and gain approvals from the federal government. Congestion pricing will be critical to mitigating congestion and taking the load off of some of our roadways. However, given that the 33rd District is uniquely positioned at the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg Bridges, we will still need to seriously evaluate and plan for the traffic implications in the 33rd district.

Reducing emissions also comes from incentivizing electric vehicles and other micro-mobility devices to promote the move away from cars. However, the most effective way to reduce emissions is by reducing car usage in general. By enhancing our public transit system - particularly our buses and subways - and adding additional options - new Citi Bike docks and

other shared micro-mobility, better protected and connected bike lane networks - we can show New Yorkers that they don't need cars to get around.

I will promote a reevaluation of our street space to divert major uses from cars to people, including working to reach the Streets Master Plan benchmarks, and facilitating expansion of Open Streets, Open Restaurants, Open Culture, and other programming on our streets.

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

As a waterfront district, the 33rd needs to act now to be prepared for the next major storm. We need a citywide plan to protect all of our waterfront communities, not only those located in Manhattan. To address rising sea levels, we must pursue ambitious enhancements to require floodproofing in design and construction; modifications to public and private spaces to allow for controlled flooding; and resilient infrastructure to create bulkheads, seawalls, and elevations wherever feasible. We also need to utilize natural buffers along the coastline, which we have implemented in some of our newer parks.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

As I mentioned, I am in favor of mandating composting and recycling, as well as incentives for reducing waste, and I would certainly support legislation and public education efforts to this effect. I would also support legislation to encourage City agencies to source materials from its own waste sources.

I am excited by the implementation of Commercial Waste Zones and would certainly be interested in designating more trucks for organics and recyclables and electric green trucks.

We must continue to study our residential and commercial waste practices in order to develop more policy to reduce and streamline overall waste.

I support additional product stewardship programs for items such as packaging used for residential deliveries and carpeting, and well as e-waste recycling opportunities.

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)

The history of polluting industry and dangerous toxins in North Brooklyn has made open space a priority here for decades. Access to public spaces is critical for enhancing quality of life, and this became especially apparent during the height of the pandemic.

The 33rd District is a waterfront district with unmatched parks. Brooklyn Bridge Park, Bushwick Inlet Park, and Marsha P. Johnson Park, as well as parks constructed through local development, have activated the waterfront in exciting new ways, and we have other great parks like Cadman Plaza, McGolrick, Transmitter, Thomas Greene, and McCarren. We still have a long way to go to build out Bushwick Inlet Park and other parks, and develop more parkland that brings green space to still underserved areas. I am committed to making investments into green space and streamlining NYC Parks operations to make it happen, as well as limiting any instance of alienation due to construction or other purposes. In the case that parkland must be taken temporarily out of use, I will demand alternative space be made available for park users.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

Lead poisoning has acutely impacted our neighbors in the 33rd District, particularly in older buildings in South Williamsburg, and across our seven NYCHA developments. Indeed, the community in South Williamsburg has the highest concentration of lead poisoning in New York City.

I'm supportive of NYLCV's platform for preventing lead poisoning. It is critical that the City undertakes interagency efforts to prevent and investigate lead poisoning. On the third pillar of NYLCV's proposal, I would emphasize that tenant notifications be multilingual.

I also enthusiastically support a Green New Deal for Public Housing, as the 33rd District includes 12,000 individuals living in largely deplorable conditions in seven NYCHA developments, and I am firmly committed to transforming these developments into environmentally efficient, healthy, and safe homes.

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

Heat vulnerability is particularly acute in communities of color, and was especially dire during the pandemic when gathering in congregate settings was discouraged. While the City worked to install air conditioners in thousands of NYCHA homes, it's critical that we leverage more sustainable strategies to mitigate heat.

I am committed to promoting green infrastructure, including buildings using Passive House standards, to manage indoor temperatures naturally and energy efficiently. I am definitely supportive of continuing the Cool Neighborhoods program and expanding many of its elements, as well as NYLCV's other proposals to mitigate heat vulnerability.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

We are all entitled to clean air, and I will work diligently to mitigate emissions and toxins in our air. This is particularly important for communities along the BQE and communities that have dealt with various forms of toxins and air pollution for decades. I am committed to electrifying both the City fleet and school buses, as well as advocating for electric buses for the MTA. Moving to renewable biofuels and other forms of clean energy is a top priority of mine, and I am especially excited by the potential for job creation through these efforts.

To improve air quality particularly in the 33rd District, I would pursue efforts to reduce vehicular traffic on the BQE, specifically reducing the number of lanes, and I would discourage personal car ownership by returning the streets to the people and investing in green modes of transportation. I am extremely supportive of innovative efforts including neighborhood loading zones, cargo bikes, and off hour delivery programs to mitigate congestion and emissions.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

While NYC has some of the best water in the country, we need to remain vigilant to ensure that it is free of lead, toxins, and chemicals. NYLCV's proposals to protect our water are sensible and DEP should absolutely transparently study and report on longer term plans for our water supply. I am especially excited by proposals to encourage more green infrastructure, which I would focus in the communities especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change that have faced historic disinvestment.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

While serving as a District Leader in 2010, one of my proudest accomplishments was working with the community to attract a quality, affordable supermarket to a neighborhood that was a food desert and ensuring 90% of the jobs, which were with UFCW Local 1500, would go to local public housing residents. This was an optimal model of connecting local residents to quality union jobs in a much needed new business in their community.

More generally, we need more high quality, affordable supermarkets throughout low income neighborhoods in New York City. In rezoned properties and new mixed use developments, the City must consistently prioritize inclusion of new high quality, affordable, supermarkets wherever they are needed. And when city subsidies are helping to facilitate a supermarket project, we should be demanding that quality, union jobs are created and local hiring prioritized. We cannot pit essential goods like food against quality jobs. We consistently need both.

But adding grocery stores won't solve the problem. During the pandemic, we have seen that existing food insecurity was severely exacerbated, pantry lines were longer than ever, and the city was delivering a million meals a day to New Yorkers at its peak. I helped arrange food distribution at NYCHA developments in the 33rd District.

We need strong communities and networks that won't wilt under the pressure of global disaster. We need to work with state and federal partners to make the entire food network resilient and sustainable, and not just during an emergency. There are policy decisions about who gets subsidies, how food travels through NYC, and where it ends up. The Hunts Point food distribution center is one of the major conduits through which fresh food passes in NYC. So why is it that so many surrounding communities in the Bronx lack fresh food?

My vision for the 33rd district is to fully address food insecurity by expanding local sites to grow fresh produce, increasing the capacity of our schools to provide more food to families in need, and strengthening our network of emergency food organizations to enhance their capacity. I am extremely supportive of both increasing education surrounding sustainability and healthy eating, and enhancing existing food programs including SNAP, Health Bucks, and other programs to give New Yorkers greater access to fresh food.