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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: Shaun Abreu

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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.

Of all the candidates vying for Council District 7, I believe that my academic background in environmental law, practical legislative experiences in reducing carbon emissions while working at the City Council, and prior legal externship at the Natural Resources Defense Council, uniquely prepares me to address the climate crisis head on.

As summer legislative director for New York City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, I conducted climate-based research and subsequently outlined legislation that would promote clean and renewable energy alternatives in order to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. This work, which ultimately identified building codes and zoning laws as high-leverage opportunities, was a precursor for the City Council's Climate Mobilization Act, which aims to mitigate the effects of greenhouse gas emissions from buildings.

At Tulane Law School, I served as a Managing Editor at the Environmental Law Journal, where I published on a states' ability to deny federal natural gas pipelines applications under the Clean Water Act for a project's failure to comply with a state's water quality standards. While at the Natural Resources Defense Council, I contributed to a successful

petition directing New York State to reduce pollutants from our city's drinking water and attended rallies at the Delaware River Basin in support of a ban on fracking at the Rivershed.

As a Council Member, I will build on my academic and professional experiences to effectuate a Green New Deal, to leverage clean and renewable alternatives and green jobs, expand solar power in NYCHA developments. Additionally, I will advocate for the expansion of the PACE Loan program, including smaller buildings, in an effort to increase compliance with the Climate Mobilization Act's new building carbon emission levels.

Finally, I will take steps to reduce the scourge of lead paint impacting our children and using low-emission boiler systems.

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)

I will prioritize policies that put New York City on a path to 100% energy-efficient modes of transportation.

Further, I will support a comprehensive evaluation of the use of street space to inform the feasibility of a residential parking permit system, which would increase parking in predominantly residential neighborhoods. As outlined on [my website](#), I am in support of a residential parking permit system as it would disincentivize outside commuters from leaving their cars in residential neighborhoods. This program also has the potential to improve air quality by reducing car presence and carbon emissions, while encouraging alternative modes of energy efficient transportation.

At the same time, we have to think through innovative ways to convert public space into green infrastructure, such as pedestrian plazas.

Finally, I will advocate for the timely delivery of the Streets Master Plan, which mandates expanded bus lanes, bike lanes, and pedestrian spaces. Finally, I will fight for the inclusion of scooters and alternate forms of transportation in protected multi-purpose bike lanes.

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 champion all efforts aimed at the sustained upkeep and maintenance of NYC's parks and Natural Areas, including City investments in new open green spaces. Parks serve as a meeting ground for critical societal functions, such as recreational activities and social gatherings, while providing enough space for groups to safely socially distance. I will prioritize the maintenance and upkeep of open green spaces through leveraging the City Council's zoning and budgetary powers.

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 will champion waste minimization through the restoration and expansion of the Sanitation Department's composting program. Within District 7, composting locations are concentrated in higher-income neighborhoods, so I will advocate bringing composting sites to Washington Heights and Upper Manhattan. Additionally, I've organized regular neighborhood clean-ups to remove litter from the street.

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)



I will fight to install affordable solar power panels to buildings with high rates of carbon emission, such as NYCHA developments, affordable housing units, and HDFC co-op buildings. This effort would be done in partnership with local organizations, like WE ACT thus creating local jobs.

This renewable energy effort would build upon the City Council's Climate Mobilization Act, which established strict requirements for the biggest buildings to curtail their carbon emissions, but exempted NYCHA and affordable housing complexes. Considering that 90% of NYCHA is 90% Black and Hispanic, this initiative will be crucial for combating environmental racism while prioritizing health outcomes and overall environment. It is important to note that City Council District 7 has the greatest number of HDFC co-op buildings in the City.

Additionally, I will advocate for expanded tax incentives for buildings that comply with the Climate Mobilization Act. Eligibility would extend to all building owners who are subject to Local Law 97 and can prove reasonable economic need. This incentive would allow these building owners to use their savings to invest in the improvements to reduce their emissions, including measures such as window and boiler upgrades, and fuel switching.

As a Council Member, I will also encourage the new Mayor to preserve the PACE Loan program, which finances energy-efficient building upgrades, and is sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and administered by the New York City Department of Finance and the New York City Energy Efficiency Corporation. We must ensure that the lending community has incentives to continue playing a role in the PACE loan program.

6. Transportation (p. 5)

As stated previously, I will prioritize policies that put New York City on a path to 100% energy-efficient modes of transportation while advocating for the timely delivery of the Streets Master Plan.

Additionally, I will actively promote budget equity so there is not a disproportionate amount of resources used to fund systems of power that oppress marginalized communities, and I will vote on fair and just budgets that fund community-based programming and initiatives. More specifically, I would expand commuter lines for in-city use, which would promote transit both transit accessibility and affordability. Additionally, restoring 24-hour subway service would promote accessibility for essential workers located in "transit deserts."

7. Resiliency (p. 6)

In the same way we think of comprehensive planning for housing, we need to think through a city-wide plan to develop a Rise to Resilience, beginning with those communities that are vulnerable to natural disasters. Public housing facilities along the water lines, like in West Harlem in Council District 7 (Grant Houses and Manhattanville Houses), are vulnerable to sea level rise from the Hudson River and storm surge. What happened with Hurricane Sandy can happen in West Harlem.

In addition, the City Council and Mayor needs to work with New York State to fund critical infrastructure to withstand coastal and inland flooding. Here, I would work with NYLCV and draw on my background in environmental law in New Orleans, where floods and storm surges are common, to deliver on important policy for New York City residents.

8. Solid Waste (p. 7)

I will support efforts that promote recycling, composting, and waste diversion through prioritizing smart legislation and investments guided by the Committee on Environmental Protection.

We need to prioritize the expansion of composting sites. Currently, we only have one composting site in Manhattan Valley, but none in West Harlem, Hamilton Heights, or lower part of Washington Heights in my district.

Finally, we need to implement a mandatory residential organic waste recycling program Citywide, guided by NYLCV's suggestions.

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)

I will allocate a portion of my discretionary funds towards the maintenance of parks, natural areas, and active waterfronts. The protection and upkeep of these public spaces are vital to sustaining and expanding the city's urban forest for generations.

Additionally, I will support Play Fair for Parks, a multi-year advocacy effort to improve parks and open space issues in NYC and identify comprehensive citywide solutions. While supporting these efforts, we must do so with an eye on the construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland, like in Washington Heights, Hamilton Heights, and West Harlem. To this end, I will also advocate to prevent parklands and jointly-operated playgrounds from being sold for other purposes, keeping them in the hands of the community.

Finally, although City parks cover 14% of New York City, the Parks budget is a mere 0.5% of the total budget. We need to prioritize parks by increasing the budget.

10. Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

I will advocate for greater enforcement of the existing lead poisoning prevention law (Local Law 1 of 2004) to protect our young children from the scourge of lead poisoning in public housing, HUD apartments, and private apartments. Elevated levels of lead has proven to stunt children's intellectual growth and affect the cardiovascular system, the regulation of hormones, and the immune system. Further, I will introduce lead prevention bills to build off of Local Law 1 of 2004.

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

I will support the expansion of both the Cool Neighborhoods program and the city's urban forest to reduce the urban heat island effect. Furthermore, I will prioritize the protection of vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and children, from heat vulnerability. We can do this by ensuring energy efficient air conditioners are provided to families in need.

12. Clean Air for All (p. 10)

While serving as the summer legislative director for New York City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, I conducted climate-based research and subsequently outlined legislation that would promote clean and renewable energy alternatives in order to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. This work was a precursor for the City Council's Climate Mobilization Act, which aims to mitigate the effects of greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and improve air quality.

Additionally, we need to advocate for and invest in activities that will improve air quality, such as planting more trees, expanding bike lanes, reducing car presence, and supporting energy efficient alternative modes of transportation by increasing affordability and accessibility.

Mitigating carbon emissions can also be achieved through prioritizing the use of cleaner technologies, such as electric scooters and buses, electric heat pumps, and renewable biofuels.

13. Clean Water for All (p.11)

Access to clean drinking water is a human right. That is why I will support efforts to formalize the NYC's Department of Environmental Protection's reporting process on the progress of the Long Term Control Plans for the city's waterways. The reporting process must also be transparent to foster opportunities for community feedback and engagement. The DEP should also commit to conducting ongoing research on water rate restructuring, including needed revenues, water conservation, and widespread use of green infrastructure. This research will set the foundation for a clear path forward to clean water for all.

As stated previously, I served as a Managing Editor at the Environmental Law Journal, where I published on a states' ability to deny federal natural gas pipelines applications under the Clean Water Act for a project's failure to comply with a state's water quality standards. When applicable, I will lobby the New York State to invoke these powers to deny federal projects that do not contribute to NYLCVS's objectives.

14. Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

To promote sustainable food systems, I am committed to fighting for more resources - like urban farms, pantries in our public schools, and increased support for community gardens - to tackle the health inequities in our neighborhoods.

In terms of food security, I will work to establish the City Council Committee on Food Sustainability, the first of its kind, to oversee all agencies that are responsible for implementing food policy and to ensure that resources are reaching food-insecure populations.

To promote food justice in schools, I will advocate to establish more in-school food pantries and fund the creation of deli-style cafeterias options that promote fruit and vegetable consumption among students. Additionally, I will dedicate dollars to expand the Community School Model, which will provide access to mental health services, recreational activities, food pantries, expanded learning opportunities, and more.

Further, I will set up citywide initiatives to support nonprofits in establishing urban farms within schools, public housing, and senior supportive housing to provide greater access to fresh, healthy foods through sustainable farming.

Finally, I have previously spearheaded efforts aimed at advancing food justice. In a New York Daily News op-ed, I called on the City to create an Emergency Food Voucher Program (EFV), to address hunger among immigrants, college students, and childless adults who are rendered ineligible for SNAP benefits by providing them with food vouchers directly. I also advocated for the City to establish a Voluntary Food Donation Program, in a City Limits op-ed, under which participating restaurants and grocers that are registered with the City would receive reduced licensing and renewal fees with the Department of Consumer & Worker Protection, if they donate food to emergency food providers, like soup kitchens, pantries, and food banks.

The next administration must significantly advance the work of the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) in order to prioritize local economies, healthy nutrition, and workers' rights.

To prioritize local economies, support the creation of additional local producers, who are committed to nutritious and culturally competent foods, for our local community. In turn, I will lobby our next mayor to use its enormous procurement powers to purchase foods from these local producers.

Further, I would advocate so that the Mayor uses its procurement powers to purchase healthy foods from local producers who use animal welfare practices, to the extent that they adhere to good labor standards. I believe that food procured with public dollars should be obtained from union shops that not only uphold health and safety standards, but also provide family-sustaining wages to workers as a way to honor their dignity.

Additionally, worker rights can be advanced through GFPP by reimagining how New York City administers its FRESH program, which gives tax breaks and zoning incentives to grocers to locate in food deserts, as part of large development projects. Unfortunately, many of the grocers that receive FRESH benefits are non-union stores that pay the minimum wage and offer no benefits.

As a Council Member, I will be wary of any effort to provide massive tax-payer subsidies to entities that are not committed to paying living wages and good benefits, as has been the case. As such, we should restructure the incentives being offered at the City and State level. Amazon, for example, represents the problem with some of the as-of-right tax incentive programs at the City level, such as the Industrial & Commercial Abatement Program (ICAP).

To the extent the City uses its procurement power to purchase food locally from grocers vis-a-vis its FRESH program, we must ensure restructure incentives such that benefits are granted based on good labor standards.