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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](mailto:politics@nylcv.org)
- Questions or extension requests may be directed to Joshua Klainberg ([jklainberg@nylcv.org](mailto: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**

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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.

I am currently organizing alongside my community to stop the construction of NRG's proposed fracked natural gas peaker plant in my district. Our neighborhood is already known as "Asthma Alley" and we have the technology available to us to create renewable green energy infrastructure. I am committed to closing and dismantling Rikers Island and creating a "Renewable Rikers" that will generate clean power and move our city away from dependency on fossil fuels. The battery storage capacity alone would generate enough power to replace every single dirty peaker plant in our city. I have been advocating to keep the Big Reuse center - a world class composting site that straddles the border of my council district and the neighboring district - open and expand our composting initiatives across the city. My proposals for a Green New Deal in NYC also calls for more open streets, protected bike lanes, investment in public transportation, implementation of superblock models, resiliency plans and more. I have the honor of being repped by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and ardently support a Green New Deal and a Green New Deal for public housing. During my run for District Attorney, I promised to stop criminalizing poverty, mental health and substance use, and prioritize holding accountable corporate bad actors that are destabilizing entire communities, including corporations engaging in illegal dumping causing environmental hazards etc. I have also used my platform to endorse and help elect state and federal reps in our city that champion environmental justice -- Jamaal Bowman, Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Zohran Mamdani and more.

#### 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.

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

I believe in implementing a Green New Deal for NYC. In order to do so, we must make major, systemic changes to our infrastructure at every level, including transportation. The most immediate way to do this is implementing a congestion tax upon entering Manhattan. Not only will this alleviate the number of cars idling on the road, but it will generate much needed revenue that can be used towards uplifting the most vulnerable members of our city.

However, This idea must be coupled with a major overhaul of our transit system, increased bike lanes and open streets with easier and encouraged access to alternative options like shared bikes and scooters. I am a big proponent of our Open Streets, enjoying them myself and also teaming up with community members to volunteer and keep them clean. We need multiple street segments that are open – right now 31st through 35th street on 31st ave are experimenting with open streets, as are parts of central Astoria, and I think we need to make these segments permanently open - and dramatically expand the programming so that superblocks and open streets exist every several blocks. I know the open street at Newtown ave did not work out as planned, but that location is definitely worth a second try to make it permanently open. We also had a really successful experience with Ditmars blvd being open on some nights and on weekends. That would be a great location for permanent open streets as well. The Shore blvd open street is wonderful and I think 20th ave is a prime location too. Other places to consider are Broadway and Steinway, although we would have to account for rerouting buses. I would work to expand the existing efforts in Woodside, East Elmhurst and Jackson Heights, and make sure every part of CD-22 has access to these kinds of open spaces and safe pedestrian-oriented streets. Permanent open streets allow us to further invest in creating more green spaces, which we sorely lack enough of.

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We have to double down on improving public transportation with more bus lanes and capital improvements to subway stations. As far as pushback from drivers, we must coordinate street redesign with public education and reframe the idea of public space and equitable use of that space. Instead of seeing the streets as a default place for private vehicles where they have the right of access above all other uses, we must question this unspoken but conventionally accepted framework. We can do this by showing people what's possible when we redesign our public thoroughfares to incentivize and reward mass transit, cycling, walking, and enjoying outdoor space. It's a moral imperative that must happen in the face of climate change, and it will lead to countless improvements in quality of life for New Yorkers.

I have been working closely with transit and cycling advocates to create participatory plans around connectivity throughout our district. My platform advocates for a major increase in state funding for the NYC Transit system. I am also advocating for a transition to municipal control of the transit and bus system so that we are able to swiftly improve signal issues, modernize our bus system build the infrastructure necessary to make New York City's public transport system fully accessible to all New Yorkers.

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.

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

It is imperative that we preserve our parks and green spaces, and we must work to create more of them across the city. In district 22, Astoria Park is referred to by many of our neighbors as "the crown jewel of Astoria." It has served as a refuge for myself and my dogs during the pandemic. Our current councilmember, Costa Constantinides, worked to secure a \$30 million investment into the park. Green spaces, open areas, public parks, flora and fauna in our city are precious resources that must be protected and nurtured. As part of my public safety plan our campaign released, I propose divesting from the bloated police budget and reinvesting in our parks and natural areas. Policing parks and environmental issues does not work – it perpetuates harm and rarely holds corporations accountable for patterns of environmental misconduct. New York already has a state-level conservation corps. My plan proposes a city model and calls to scale up a program based on civil environmental engagement programs that have worked across the country.

A Conservation Corps could promote environmental resilience throughout the city in conjunction with appropriate agencies and work in teams to help ensure our green spaces are safe, nourished and well-stewarded for future generations. Teams of corps members could be on-site at every park to help address issues and call for appropriate backup responders when emergencies arise. They could also address problems of local environmental hazards such as lead paint complaints, hazardous waste, and pollution through research, advocacy, and public education.

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.

#### Common Sense Waste Management (p. 3)

**My platform is committed to jumpstarting all halted planks of the zero-waste commitment and go further in our sustainable development and renovations to help achieve zero waste and carbon-neutral goals. Reinstating and expanding compliance with curbside organics collection is absolutely necessary. In addition, we cannot rely on recycling alone to meet our goals; reduction should be priority across the board. Single-use products must be eliminated wherever possible.** We have to reopen and expand food scrap and recycling drop-off sites throughout the District, and provide home composting containers and recycling bins to D22 residents who wish to use them. Right now, we are fighting to keep the Big Reuse, a world class composting site that straddles my district and the neighboring district, open permanently. As of September 3, 2020, only a few NYC food scraps drop-off sites had reopened after closing for the Covid pandemic. Curbside composting pickup, meanwhile, continues to be suspended. Prior to COVID-19, there were a number of drop-off sites in NYC's D22 or nearby. Right now we have wonderful neighbors here in the District who have been bottom lining composting efforts, but this is the job of government. The time has come to resume full-bore composting and recycling in D22

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#### 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.

Energy and Infrastructure (p. 5)

**I have been part of a coalition of folks in my neighborhood fighting against NRG's proposed fracked natural gas peaker plant in Astoria. We have marched in the streets, called our electeds, issued public comments, and continue to talk to and engage our neighbors on this issue to bring them into the fight with us. A central piece of my platform is closing Rikers Island and building a renewable energy island in its place. Our current City Council recently passed the Renewable Riker Act and it is going to be up to the next council to follow through. We can and should close Rikers Island and transform it into a renewable energy island.**

**New York needs to divest from fossil fuels and transition to 100% renewable energy over this decade. I am committed to divesting our city's budget from fossil fuel or natural gas; money the City spends should go toward renewable energy. We have to create and expand grant programs and partnerships that turn every opportunity the City has into a commitment toward sustainability and a green future.**

**Our infrastructure is outdated, our city is vulnerable to flooding, and our streets are packed with pollution-generating cars. We have to approach the problem of our city's climate future with a community-driven approach that creates a holistic suite of responses, from neighborhood design to traffic restrictions to carbon production caps to renewable energy requirements and investments. We have to center and work with front-line, working-class communities of color while developing and implementing green infrastructure. We must decarbonize the power grid, increase funding for community land trusts, decrease carbon footprints of existing buildings through retrofits, and stop all proposed new fossil fuel infrastructure.**

Transportation (p. 5)

**I believe in implementing a Green New Deal for NYC. In order to do so, we must make major, systemic changes to our infrastructure at every level, including transportation. In**

my district, only one train station is fully A.D.A compliant with an elevator that provides access to the station for our diabled community members. We must invest in making every subway station station reliable and accessible so that more folks will opt to use subways instead of single person cars. Subway signal systems are also in need of a dire upgrade. Many of the signal systems we have were installed in the 1930's. NYC must join many of the world's major cities in implementing a new and reliable automated signal system. We recently saw a bus redesign program that moved stations further away from folks that rely on this mode of transportation to escape transit deserts in the area. This shows us that our city needs to create an entire fleet of electric buses while phasing out gasoline powered buses and implement new bus stops across the city (swiftly in transit deserts). We must also work to drastically increase the number of protected bike lanes across NYC. I am a (recreational) cyclist myself and have participated in community rides to bring more attention to these issues and invite neighbors to ride and get involved. In district 22 and across western queens, there are nowhere near enough of these being built. These improvements are the first step towards creating a transit system that is rooted in the 21st century. My plan to defund the bloated police budget centers around using tax payer dollars that are invested in resources that don't make our collective lives better and diverting them towards the services and infrastructure our city needs to survive in the 21st century.

Resiliency (p. 6)

**Absent a dramatic city-wide plan to relocate waterfront communities out of flood zones like the one in CD-22, I will push for infrastructure and housing investment in these areas to protect existing developments and neighborhoods, and promote resilience. Any new development should be required not only to account for flooding and sea level rise on their site, but to contribute to the overall resilience of the community through additional stormwater capture and other green infrastructure – we cannot stop investments in waterfront neighborhoods like ours, Red Hook and the Rockaways, so we should prioritize the protection of existing affordable housing in these areas and push for new, affordable development on higher ground. I have supported the calls for a GND for public housing. Here in CD-22, Astoria Houses was hit hard by Hurricane Sandy. It is unacceptable that repairs and retrofitting are only taking place for the buildings that were damaged in the super storm, while leaving the rest vulnerable. We know it it only a question of when, not if the next climate event will occur and cannot continue to play Russian Roulette with people's homes and lives. Every single building needs to be proactively brought up to standards.**

Solid Waste (p. 7)

**Reinstating and expanding compliance with curbside organics collection is absolutely necessary. In addition, we cannot rely on recycling alone to meet our goals; reduction should be priority across the board. As stated by the NYLCV, using recycled materials for major construction projects or DSNY compost being used in the landscaping of our green spaces is an excellent example of this. We must also limit single-use products wherever possible. My plan to bring a Green New Deal to NYC works to ensure that we invest funds diverted from the NYPD in addition to funding secured by state and federal elected officials to increase the DSNY budget to have frequent and convenient curbside pickups in addition to other services. I compost myself (although I could be more diligent about it!) and have supported and amplified our local efforts to continue composting even after the City cut collection. I have also been among the community members organizing to save the Big Reuse composting facility.**

#### 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.

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

As mentioned earlier, it is critical that we created a dedicated, consistent budget that can be used to swiftly design and continue to improve our outdoor spaces across NYC. In district 22, Shore blvd sits along a beautiful, but inaccessible waterfront. I believe that by increasing investment in our green spaces during the budgetary process, my community can join other communities across the city in building and creating access to the waterfront for everyone. I believe that the quickest way to provide the necessary funds to do this is by defunding the police. A bloated police budget has been a large reason as to why our green spaces aren't properly maintained and improved consistently over time. This current budgetary process has shown cuts to agencies across the board, except for the NYPD which has received a budget increase.



Lead Poisoning Prevention (p. 9)

We have to fund research, advocacy, and public education. The Conservation Corps proposed in my New Vision of Public Safety could address problems of local environmental hazards such as lead paint complaints and take on these functions. Additionally we have to hold bad actors accountable, using every lever at our disposal including the Council's subpoena power and use of oversight hearings.

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

Our District contains many heat islands – areas that are typically 2-3°F warmer than the average temperature in NYC – in multiple locations. Resident's of the D22 are accordingly more vulnerable to heat-related deaths and health complications than is the typical New Yorker. Making the problem worse is the fact that 6-7% of homes in the D22 do not have air conditioners. The existence of heat islands has also been linked to previously redlined districts, illustrating that this is an equity issue. For starters, we need to plant shade trees, and provide state-of-the-art, environmentally sustainable fans or air conditioners, in all of the D22's 'heat islands.'

Clean Air for All (p. 10)

I think clean air for all starts with clean air for the most marginalized communities. We have to center transit justice as an equity, racial justice and social justice issue and adopt a "15-Minute City" plan for all New Yorkers. We need to frame low-carbon public transit as a right and make the subway, buses, and transportation system free in our system. We need more protected bike and bus lanes, limit the use of parking placards, and reduce the number of cars in the city by at least 25%, with a special focus on NYPD's fleet.

Clean Water for All (p.11)

Clean water is a core component of life and access to clean water should be guaranteed. We have to invest in infrastructure and access to ensure neighborhoods most impacted by generations of disinvestment and austerity have comprehensive free water services. I fully support Clean Water for All and would work to ensure sufficient resources and jobs are provided to meet its objectives.

Sustainable Food Systems (p. 11)

We have seen too many food lines and food deserts, too many emptied community refrigerators – I have spent hours throughout the pandemic trying to meet the basic sustenance needs our government refuses to meet. Every neighborhood should have a fully stocked free food system that ensures families always have adequate access to healthy, locally sourced foods, and we need to invest in door to door staff that gets food to people so that we do not see food lines and do not miss people who may need food but cannot get in a line. I have been a proponent of food sovereignty education in our schools and funding hydroponic farms for our students as a part of their learning experience. I have also volunteered with and supported the work of groups like the Rockaway Youth Task Force, an organization of youth in a food desert that runs a community farm.

Food, air and water are fundamental components of life – we need to ensure every person has full and free access to our humanity's basic building blocks.