



GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Harvey Epstein
City Council District #	2
In which primary	Democratic
Age	58
Education	BA, Ithaca College; JD CUNY School of Law
Current job, position, or occupation	NYS Assembly Member 74

Campaign contact information

Website	www.peopleforharvey.com
X	harvey4council
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INTRODUCTION

1. What are your top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected?

Promise 1: My seven-point housing platform is designed to address the core challenges of affordability, equity, and sustainability. By building 21st-century middle-class housing, converting underused commercial spaces into homes, and expanding mandatory inclusionary housing, we're making it clear: housing is a human right, and New York must lead the way in protecting it. We'll go even further by expanding the use of community land trusts, recapitalizing public housing, and protecting vital assets like Housing Development Fund Corporation (HDFC) cooperatives and protecting existing affordable housing. Together, these strategies will rebuild the foundation of a city where families can grow, communities can thrive, and the most vulnerable among us—including our seniors—are safeguarded.

Promise 2: I have a robust, detailed plan to help with our city's mental health crisis. It includes revolutionizing care for New Yorkers with dual diagnoses of mental health and substance abuse issues; doubling the number of supportive housing apartments being developed for people experiencing homelessness and battling mental health challenges; demanding accountability for release plans; expanding SHOW program mobile outreach; and training more mental health professionals and 911 operators to lead in crises.

Promise 3: Climate change is an existential crisis and we must lead the city to becoming carbon neutral. We must ensure that the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act is successfully implemented. This requires us to make charging stations publicly available; returning community composting initiatives; providing capital funding to ensure public housing be healthier and environmentally sustainable housing ; expand the use of wind and solar power, reduce waste and ensure that all city-owned properties reduce waste by numerous strategies available.

2. If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would introduce? Why is that your top priority? If you are an incumbent, please also state what legislation you have passed which you are most proud of.

The first piece of legislation I would introduce would be a requirement that more affordable housing be included in all new construction builds.

3. In your view, what are the major needs of your district's constituents?

I believe that the lack of affordable housing and the need for more housing is a key concern in my district.

4. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running, and do you have any

achievements or involvement in your neighborhood you are particularly proud of?

I have lived in the neighborhood for almost 30 years. Even prior to being elected to the Assembly, I am proud of the work I have done in helping to save community centers and daycare centers. In Albany, I have worked to protect and expand affordable housing, reproductive and LGBTQIA + rights, and voting access, and have also successfully advocated for campaign finance reform, election reform, environmental justice, and funding for public schools and higher education

5. What experience have you had with good government and reform issues? (e.g., voting and election reform, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

In my capacity as an Assembly Member and as an advocate before then, I have partnered on many pieces of legislation and campaigns to improve the lives in New Yorkers, including on bills regarding more transparency in New York State government, voting rights bills, restoring the right to vote for people on probation, and campaign finance reform legislation.

6. What do you think the role of the City Council is in city government this upcoming term?

The City Council needs to prioritize expanding affordable housing, tackling the mental health crisis, ensuring that public buildings are in compliance with environmental regulations, and ensuring that every child gets the head start, after school and access to quality education that they deserve.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

7. Do you support moving New York City's elections from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years, and will you co-sponsor a Council Resolution supporting that measure?

Yes

Voter turnout in New York City elections is exceptionally low, as they are held “off-cycle” in odd-numbered years. To boost local voter turnout and reduce participation gaps, the Legislature passed and Governor Hochul signed a law that moves county and town elections to even-numbered years, and lawmakers are supporting a constitutional amendment that would do the same for city elections, including New York City’s. Citizens Union is [leading a coalition of groups advocating](#) to move New York City’s elections to even-numbered years, and the City Council is considering a [Resolution in support](#) of that shift.

Comments (optional)

We recently passed a bill in the state legislature that did exactly that, though that bill did exclude New York City. I believe we must expand this to encompass NYC elections. We need to do what we can to increase voter turnout and engagement.

8. The New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) has been a source of frustration for voters and candidates for years. The City Council appoints NYC BOE members and has the power to appoint commissioners who are committed to reform, but the most recent commissioners have been appointed behind closed doors. Do you commit to request a public hearing for BOE nominees, and to only vote for individuals who are publicly committed to reducing party-based patronage and supporting open hiring practices?

Yes

Comments (optional)

I am very aware of party-based patronage here in the city and agree that we need more transparency and oversight.

9. Do you support maintaining the use of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City’s elections?

Yes

10. New York City is one of the few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the primary election. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of completely open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in one primary where the top two candidates, regardless of party, move on to the general election?

Yes

Comments (optional)

I support open primaries, where voters of any party are welcome to vote—it’s a key step in engaging more voters and ensuring that the needs and concerns of the people are heard and addressed.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve elections and voting in New York City.**

In the Assembly, I supported legislation to establish early voting and helped get it passed. I have also worked to pass other voting reform measures, including a few bills I personally passed — to allow young people to register and vote before their 18th birthday if they will have turned 18 by Election Day, transparency for county committee members, and other voter transparency bills. I know we need to do much more to create access to voting. I also currently have a bill to allow voting for incarcerated people, which has yet to pass.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

11. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people. Do you support limiting bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?

Yes

Comments (optional)

We should support a system that encourages and supports low dollar donations.

12. Are you a supporter of the City's public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to protecting the independence of the program and ensuring that the Campaign Finance Board has sufficient resources to run the program?

Yes

Comments (optional)

I was also a champion of the state public matching program that recently went into effect.

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

13. The recent pattern of indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall has exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. Please describe how you will maintain the highest ethical standards in office.

I hold myself to the highest of ethical standards and believe all elected officials should be held accountable for ethical violations.

14. Incoming public servants must sever ties and divest from companies or other interests that have business dealings with the City, but they are not required to recuse themselves when working on matters involving their former business partners, clients, employer, etc. Do you support forbidding public servants to work on matters relating to their former business partners, clients, employers, and other interests for a set period of time?

Yes

15. Some campaign consultants also work as lobbyists. Do you support restricting campaign consultants from lobbying the candidates they served for two years after the candidate won elected office?

Yes

16. Do you support moving lobbying oversight and enforcement from the City Clerk's Office to another agency charged with ethics issues, like the Conflicts of Interest Board?

Yes

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve ethics standards in New York City government.**

In the Assembly, we have passed transparency and oversight bills, and I was a strong supporter of the county committee transparency bill. I also have a bill currently pending to amend the state Consitution to provide for voting rights for incarcerated people.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

17. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the New York Police Department? (i.e., Place the final decision with the Police Commissioner; the Civilian Complaint Review Board; the Mayor; the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety; or another individual or entity).

The Civilian Complaint Review Board should have the final say.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve police accountability in New York.**

During my first term in the state legislature, I was a supporter of the bill to fully repeal 50-A, as well as other bills intended to improve police accountability. I currently have other bills pending to improve their accountability to the city and community they serve.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

18. The Mayor currently has the power to block charter revision ballot questions (proposed by the City Council, other charter commissions, and citizen petitions) by establishing their own Charter Revision Commission. Do you support removing this Mayoral power?

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, I support a state bill removing the ability of the Mayor to establish their own Charter Revision Commission.

19. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and be put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?

Yes

Comments (optional)

I support this and would also love to see a rule that says that a bill with at least 34 co-sponsors gets an automatic committee vote and put on the floor.

20. Please provide your views about the New York City Council's "advice and consent" powers. In what cases, if any, should a mayor need the Council's approval for an appointment of a high ranking Mayoral official, such as an agency commissioner?

Yes, the Mayor should be required to secure an affirmative vote of the City Council of all high-ranking officials, just like the Governor is required to do in conjunction with the state senate.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve the system of checks and balances in New York.**

We need to ensure the Council has sufficient power to have oversight of the Mayor. This includes their appointments of any deputy mayors, agency heads, and any other major appointments. This includes providing more power to the Council on oversight of schools, NYCHA, rent guidelines board, and other critical agencies and authorities.

ADDITIONAL INFO