



2025 Primary Candidate Questionnaire – New York City Comptroller

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Info

Name	Mark Levine
Running in what primary	Democratic
Age	55
Education	Haverford College, John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University
Current job, position or occupation	Manhattan Borough President
Other positions	New York City Council Member
Previous jobs or positions	Teacher, Founder of a neighborhood credit union

Campaign Contact Information

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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?

1-Driving Affordability and Solving the Housing Crisis: I’m committed to tackling our affordability crisis and housing crisis here in New York City. This must include using all the powers of the Comptroller’s Office – from pension investment to investigation – to build affordable housing and lower costs across the city. I released a plan – “The NYC Affordability Fund” – that would leverage unused ETI funds to create a mezzanine debt to equity program, which I believe would help build or preserve 75,000 units of affordable housing.

2-Holding Government Accountable and Delivering for New Yorkers: Eliminating government waste and mismanagement, and pushing for reforms so government agencies deliver for New Yorkers and our

municipal workforce. This will be particularly important with Trump in the White House, as local government must work to protect against funding cuts to critical programs, and attacks on municipal and government workers. Examples of this include my plan to ensure human services contracts are paid on time, rather than let beloved non-profits doing work on behalf of the city languish for months or years while they wait to be paid.

3-Demanding Fiscal Responsibility and Smart Investments for Pensioners: I'm also committed to ensuring that our city's funds are invested wisely so that they grow for municipal retirees and in ways that align with our values as New Yorkers. Our pension system is valued at nearly \$280 billion dollars, making it an extremely powerful tool and one that should be wielded strategically. This will require a thoughtful approach to investments so that our pension system remains strong while simultaneously investing in affordable housing, workers and our communities.

2. 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.

I am committed to good government reforms, and I am running for Comptroller to ensure that City government is effectively delivering for New Yorkers. With Donald Trump in the White House and Eric Adams in City Hall, New Yorkers have lost trust that local government is on their side. We have a lot of work to do, and I'm ready to roll up my sleeves.

Most recently, I've worked hard to reform outdated laws that have limited public participation in government and decision-making. This has included working to ensure that Open Meetings Law allows public bodies to hold public business in hybrid settings. My office has seen an outpouring of interest in Community Board work simply because these meetings are now easier to participate in.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

3. Do you support moving New York City's elections from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years, and will you publicly support efforts in Albany to implement this reform?

Yes

4. 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 affiliation, move on to the general election?

No

Comments (optional)

We need to continue to work to better improve voter participation and access to our elections. This should include further steps to make it easier to register and change parties when a voter desires. However, I do not support open primaries at this time, though I would be eager to discuss this issue further with Citizens Union.

ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT

5. The recent indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall have exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. As the City's budget watchdog, what would you do to fight corruption and misuse of City funds?

Donald Trump, Elon Musk and MAGA republicans are attacking our communities and our values daily, and New Yorkers need to trust that local government will have their back. But recently, Mayor Adams and local

leaders have cozied up to Trump for political favor, rather than fight back.

As Comptroller, I'll be independent of City Hall and hold the Mayor and city agencies accountable to New Yorkers. I'll use the office's powers of audit and investigations to review policies and identify instances of agency malpractice. I'll use the office's power of contract oversight to keep a close eye on city contracts and ensure that taxpayer dollars are delivering results for our communities. And I'll use the office's role on the powerful Procurement Policy Board to ensure our procurement processes and rules leave no room for corruption or graft.

6. The City Comptroller is tasked with reviewing and registering City contracts and may present objections if the review process yields sufficient concern for corruption. Please describe your approach to reviewing contracts, and what areas in City Government procurement you believe most need attention to such issues?

With daily attacks from Donald Trump to our priorities of diversity and equity, as well as the constant threat that federal funds will be cut from city agencies, we must ensure that city contracts are effectively using tax dollars and are aligned with our New York values. I'll take a fine tooth comb to reviewing contracts, and will pay particular attention to contracts that fail to meet MWBE goals and equity standards, fail to identify sufficient metrics for success, or are awarded to companies with a history of worker exploitation.

Additionally, our procurement process overall is putting human service contractors and non-profits in harms way. Far too often, contractors who do vital work on behalf of the city – like emergency food delivery, homeless services, mental health work, legal defense and more – are paid months or even years late. It's imperative that we pay these providers on time, both because it's the right thing to do and because delayed payments are a financial liability for the City. I have published a plan, "No More Delays," to tackle this problem. You can read the full plan at <https://www.votemarklevine.com/issues/paying-human-service-organizations-on-time>

7. What would be your auditing priorities? What agencies and departments would you audit first?

I am committed to solving our housing crisis, and would audit HPD as soon as possible. Additionally, we must review the contracting practices and activity of the Department of Homeless Services, the Department of Education, NYCHA and more.

PUBLIC PENSION FUNDS

8. Comptrollers Stringer and Lander implemented various strategies for responsible investing, like fossil fuel divestment and shareholder advocacy. Do you agree with that approach, and if so, how do you propose to balance maximizing investment returns with broader social responsibility goals? If not, what are the top investment priorities that the public pensions funds should focus on?

With \$280 billion worth of assets, we know that our pension funds can be invested in ways that both strengthen retirees and improve our economy and communities. As we confront Donald Trump's attacks on our values and battle an affordability crisis that is putting families on the brink, we must do more. That includes protecting our diversity and equity values on Wall Street, and protecting our environment.

I have proposed a plan to utilize unused ETI funds to invest in badly needed affordable housing in our communities. This fund, called the NYC Affordability Fund, would use a mezzanine debt-to-equity style model to ensure that interest rates are competitive, helping to bring more affordability to market, while also ensuring strong and safe returns for investors.

It is important that our investments achieve the 7% assumed rate of return so that we minimize city contributions that impact our city budget. But I believe that we can invest our pension dollars to achieve that threshold, while also improving our economy, our communities, our environment, and holding Wall Street accountable.

9. How will you select asset managers, and what would you do to reduce conflicts of interest

that can arise from firms seeking pension business?

As Comptroller, I'll work to ensure we hire extremely talented staff at the Bureau of Asset Management, and set very strict guidelines and standards to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that we are hiring diverse, talented staff in BAM, as well as make progress with investing in black and minority owned fund managers. As Borough President, my NYCERS designee has made this a priority, and as Comptroller I'll continue to prioritize this.

BUDGET AND FISCAL HEALTH

10. Threats from the federal government to reduce funding to states and local governments could have a dramatic effect on New York City. How would you utilize the authority of the Comptroller's Office to ensure the fiscal health of our City, given these threats?

Donald Trump and his MAGA allies are attacking New Yorkers, threatening our budget, and inflicting an agenda of chaos and pain. We must do everything in our power to protect vulnerable New Yorkers.

As Comptroller, I'll use every power of the office to fight back against Trump and hold the City accountable to the people we serve. I strongly believe we should be adding to our general reserve and rainy day funds, so that we can be prepared when, not if, Trump cuts funding to vital services. I will also audit city agencies to ensure that we are effectively and efficiently using taxpayer dollars, and will work to ensure that non-profits that are doing work on behalf of our city are paid on time. Leaving social services non-profits unpaid for months or even years threatens those vital organizations, and is a financial liability for the city overall. I've published a plan "No More Delays: A Plan to Ensure the City Pays Contractors On Time" to address this issue.

11. The Trump administration has recently clawed back \$80 million in previously allocated funds by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), directly from City Government bank accounts. How would you protect the City's budget in the face of these efforts to reverse duly appropriated federal funds to the City?

We will never be able to account for every federal dollar if the Trump Administration cuts critical funding. But we can prepare to the best of our ability. I believe we should allocate an additional \$1 billion to our general reserve and to our rainy day fund. I also will not be shy to actively partner with Attorney General James and other pension systems to use the power of the courts as well as our pension dollars to hold Trump and Elon Musk accountable.

ADDITIONAL INFO

13. Please provide any other info you would like us to know about you and your candidacy.

I'm running for Comptroller because we are facing dual crises of affordability and confidence that government is on the side of New Yorkers. We need an independent leader who can hold City Hall account while also fighting back against Donald Trump in the White House. We need to ensure that local government is addressing the everyday issues New Yorkers and workers are facing, from housing affordability, to childcare, access to quality public schools, public safety, access to affordable healthcare, and more. I have the experience and background we need to hold City agencies accountable, ensure that contracts are fairly paying and protecting workers, invest our pension dollars to keep our pension funds strong while simultaneously investing in our communities, and more. I'm a parent of two Latino boys who attended public schools, and am a fluent speaker of English, Spanish, and Hebrew. I bring pragmatism, experience, and common sense to government, using data-driven, policy-focused advocacy to deliver real results and serve as an independent check on City Hall.

I have fought for our communities my entire career. I was the founder of Neighborhood Trust, a federal credit union that showed the power of wise investments in our communities. As a Council Member, I took on the landlord lobby for years to win the nation's first Right to Counsel, ensuring tenants have a right to an attorney in eviction cases—transforming housing court in the process. As Chair of the Health Committee, I fought far-right extremists who wanted to strip frontline workers and healthcare workers of PPE, overturn vaccine mandates, and put our children at risk.

As Borough President, I have fought to create the housing affordable we desperately need. I have pushed for more public bathrooms, better indoor air quality, and affordable housing in every neighborhood. I have led the fight to rebuild our mental health system, pushing back against cuts to inpatient mental health beds, disinvestment in life-saving programs, and fought against funding cuts to our schools, principals and staff. As Comptroller, I'll fight for our communities, and would be honored to earn the support of Citizens Union.

Please review your answers by clicking **PREVIEW ANSWERS** below. You can submit the questionnaire at the bottom of the preview page by clicking **SUBMIT**.

Once you click **SUBMIT**, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. If you don't see the email, please check your spam box.

If you have any further questions, you may contact us at candidates@citizensunion.org.