



GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate info

Name	Raymond Santana
City Council District #	8
In which primary	Democratic
Age	50
Education	Graduate of Marist College
Current job, position, or occupation	advocate, business owner

Campaign contact information

Website	<a href="https://www.raymondsantanafornyc.com/">https://www.raymondsantanafornyc.com/</a>
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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: Address the Housing Crisis by building more units, improving existing structures, and strengthening tenant protections

Promise 2: Restore order and public safety by strengthening police-community relations, and getting guns off our streets

Promise 3: Make NYC more affordable: by making key investments in healthcare, education, and public transportation

**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.**

If elected, my first legislative priority will be tackling the housing crisis by expanding deeply affordable housing, strengthening tenant protections, and curbing speculative real estate practices. New developments must reflect actual neighborhood incomes, not inflated regional averages. We need stronger enforcement against illegal evictions and landlord harassment to keep families in their homes. Additionally, we must hold landlords accountable for vacant units and predatory practices that drive displacement. Housing is a human right, and I will fight to ensure Harlem and the South Bronx remain affordable for the communities that call them home.

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

District 8 needs safety, fewer guns, cleaner streets, affordable housing, and good jobs. I have dedicated my life's work to improving police-community relations, and I know first-hand the importance of building trust through accountability, to improve safety and remove illegal guns from our streets. Our neighborhoods deserve cleaner streets and better sanitation services. That means more trash bins, consistent waste pickup, and investments in public spaces to improve quality of life. Affordable, reliable transportation is also essential for economic mobility. I will work to expand transit options, lower fares, and improve service so residents can access jobs and opportunities across the city. Finally, we need more local, good-paying jobs. That means investing in workforce development, supporting small businesses, and ensuring new developments provide employment for the people who live here. I will fight for a safer, cleaner, and more connected District 8, where every resident has the resources and opportunities to thrive.

**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?**

District 8 is more than just where I grew up—it's the community that stood by me in the toughest moments of my life, when the entire country was against me. It welcomed me back after I was proven innocent and gave me the chance to rebuild and grow.

My proudest achievement is dedicating my life to advocating for justice and fixing our structurally unequal and flawed justice system. And now I am ready to fully dedicate myself to tackling the real issues my neighbors face every day—housing, safety, jobs, and opportunity. As a Member of City Council, I will bring my national credibility to addressing local issues, making sure no one in our community is left behind again.

**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.**

I have dedicated my life's work to advocating for police accountability and justice system reform, using my

platform to shed light on these critical issues. The Netflix documentary based on my life story, “When They See Us”, and my work at the Innocence Project are just a few ways I've fought to expose and address the injustices within our system and reach as many people as possible. While I have never been in politics, my years of advocacy have pushed for real reform—fighting against wrongful convictions, calling for greater government transparency, and demanding a system that works for the people, not against them. On the City Council, I will bring that same passion and determination to ensure true accountability and justice for our community.

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

As a council member, I see myself playing an important role on the ground, acting as a shield for our community against federal instability. The City Council’s role is more critical than ever in ensuring that local needs are met and that our residents are protected.

**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.

**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

**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

**\* 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.**

n/a

**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

**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

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve New York City’s campaign finance system.**

n/a

**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.**

Having been impacted firsthand by a flawed system, integrity and transparency in my office will be paramount. I will lead by example, fostering a culture of openness and accountability, and holding my fellow council members to the same high standards. Moreover, by engaging the community and local stakeholders, I will ensure a diversity of opinions and maintain transparency to prevent any potential conflicts of interest from arising. My commitment to ethical governance will be unwavering, as I work to restore trust and ensure that the interests of the people always come first.

**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.**

n/a

**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 Deputy Mayor for Public Safety should be in charge of oversight and discipline of the NYPD. That said, the Deputy Mayor should work to build a thoughtful partnership with NYPD leadership. New York's public safety challenges will require collaboration and partnership to help solve, so our approach to public safety should reflect those values.

**\* 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.**

I have been actively involved in advocating for stronger police accountability and justice system reform, particularly through my work with the Innocence Project. I helped steward crucial legislation alongside Senator Zellnor Myrie, such as the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act, which seeks to provide a genuine legal pathway to exoneration for those wrongfully convicted. This bill would allow individuals to challenge their convictions, even without DNA evidence, ensure post-conviction discovery, and provide a right to counsel for wrongful conviction claims.

Additionally, I worked on legislation to ban deception in police interrogations, a tactic still legal today that led to the wrongful convictions of me and the other Exonerated Five. The legislation would also ensure that youth under 18 are able to consult with counsel before waiving their Miranda rights, and make it easier for individuals who've pled guilty to challenge their convictions if they believe they were wrongfully prosecuted.

These efforts are part of a larger package of bills aimed at ensuring fairness in the justice system, preventing misconduct, and holding law enforcement accountable for their actions. As a council member, I will continue to push for these reforms at the local level, ensuring that the voices of those impacted by injustice are heard and acted upon.

## 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

**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

**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?**

I believe the City Council's advice and consent powers should extend to all senior-level Mayoral appointments. While the bill passed in July of last year was a step in the right direction (expanding Council oversight to 20 additional city agency commissioners) it fell short by not requiring Council approval for many other senior-level positions.

**\* 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.**

## ADDITIONAL INFO