



Citizens Union 2025 Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Mayor

GENERAL INFORMATION

Candidate Info

Name	Whitney Tilson
In which primary	Democratic
Age	58
Education	Harvard: Bachelor's degree and MBA
Current job, position, or occupation	Investor and editor, Stansberry Research (financial newsletter)

Previous jobs or positions

- Previously:
- Managing director, Kase Capital Management (hedge fund)
 - Board member, KIPP NYC
 - Co-founder, the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City
 - Member, Central Synagogue Criminal Justice Committee

Campaign Contact Information

Website	https://www.whitneyformayor.com/
X	https://x.com/WhitneyTilson
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/whitneytilson
Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/whitneytilsonofficial/?hl=en
Bluesky	https://bsky.app/profile/did:plc:2fpkcgct4c5ikv2n4xuiovlo
Other social media platforms	https://www.tiktok.com/@whitneyformayor

INTRODUCTION

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

Promise 1: I will end street homelessness by enforcing an overnight camping ban and providing all people living on the street a bed in a shelter, psychiatric treatment facility or permanent housing.

Promise 2: I will cut crime in half by hiring 5,000 cops and continuing NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch’s work prosecuting quality-of-life crimes, which have led to a decline in more serious offenses.

Promise 3: I will grow our city’s economy by 50% over the next decade by eliminating red tape and creating a friendly environment for investment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

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 have not been formally affiliated with any good government or reform-focused organizations. But as a Democratic donor and civic activist, I have been open about my disdain for the corrupting influence of money in politics and support a constitutional amendment overturning the Supreme Court’s disastrous Citizens United decision.

I have, however, been active in policy reform initiatives that are adjacent to some of the categories mentioned above. I have spent the better part of my adult life advocating for greater accountability and choice in our public school system. I was a co-founder of Teach for America and Democrats for Education Reform, and I served on the New York City board of KIPP Charter Schools for two decades. I see educational equity across racial and socioeconomic lines as one of the great social justice struggles of our times.

In addition, I served on the criminal justice reform committee at Central Synagogue for many years. We were active in advocating for more humane sentencing, better re-entry policies for the formerly incarcerated and improved conditions in jails and prisons.

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

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)

It is a travesty that we actively depress voter turnout by holding our city elections in off-years when the majority of

voters have tuned out of politics.

4. The New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) has been a source of frustration for voters and candidates for years. How will you use your power as Mayor to improve the operations of the NYC BOE and ensure that its operations are transparent and accountable to the public?

We must amend New York State's Constitution to make all of the state's boards of election nonpartisan, in lieu of the Constitution's current requirement that the boards be administered by political appointees from both major parties. It is obvious that this bipartisan patronage system has led to extreme incompetence and corruption, especially in New York City.

As mayor, I would have limited direct control over the NYC BOE, but I would use my influence over the City Council to encourage more professional appointments. I would also use my bully pulpit to draw attention to BOE malfeasance and advocate strongly in Albany for a constitutional amendment changing how we administer elections.

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

Yes

Comments (optional)

Ranked Choice Voting broadens the potential pool of candidates available to New York City voters by making it easier for voters to follow their hearts. In theory, it also encourages the election of the candidates most capable of building a broad coalition of voters. We must do a better job, however, educating the public about how Ranked Choice Voting works and what its advantages are. I also support making the general election, not just the primaries, a nonpartisan Ranked Choice Voting system.

6. 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 affiliation, move on to the general election?

Yes

Comments (optional)

Yes, though the change must occur at the state level, which is why I support the work of Unite NY. New York City -- and New York State -- should shift to a form of completely open primaries where the top two candidates move on to the general election regardless of party affiliation. Currently, in New York City, our system empowers Democratic Party bosses, in particular, and leads to election outcomes dictated by the small fraction of the electorate that votes in Democratic primaries. A more open system would encourage higher turnout and candidates with less extreme policies, thus enabling more democratic outcomes.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

7. 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)

Yes, I support stricter limits on this form of bundling with a goal of prohibiting the practice if possible.

8. 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 am a strong supporter of the City’s public campaign matching funds program and can commit to protecting the independence of the Campaign Finance Board, as well as ensuring its robust funding.

ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

9. The recent 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 will appoint a fearless and fearsome law-enforcement and ethics expert to serve as commissioner of the Department of Investigations.

I will also institute strict personnel protocols designed to prevent nepotism and political patronage hires. Those protocols would include anonymizing résumé submissions, requiring hiring managers to recuse themselves from assessing candidates with whom they have existing relationships, and prohibiting referrals from other city officials until the final stage of the hiring process.

I would have zero tolerance for any nepotism, patronage, self-dealing or other unethical behavior, firing any official who shows the first sign of departure from those core principles.

10. Incoming public servants must sever ties and divest from companies or other interests that have business dealing 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

Comments (optional)

I would require a two-year cooling off period before allowing public servants to work on matters relating to their former business partners, clients, employers, and other interests.

11. Some campaign consultants also work as lobbyists. Do you support restricting campaign consultants from lobbying their former clients for a period of two years after their client has won elected office?

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.**

As mayor, I will volunteer to put my financial assets in a blind trust to avoid even the perception of conflicts of interest in my work for the city.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

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

I would keep final disciplinary authority in the hands of the Commissioner of the NYPD, but strongly encourage him/her to follow the recommendations of the CCRB and take strong, decisive action when NYPD employees break the law or abuse their power.

13. How do you view the role of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety?

The deputy mayor for public safety’s job should be to ensure that the NYPD, FDNY, Department of Correction, Department of Probation, NYC Emergency Management, and the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice are both interacting effectively and striving, in their respective lanes, to implement the mayor’s citywide public safety strategy and goals.

14. Do you support making the appointment of the New York City Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?

No

Comments (optional)

New York City’s strong mayoral system has shielded the city from the left-wing extremism and provincialism of the City Council. Municipal legislatures are, by nature, dominated by local political concerns, rather than the interests of the city as a whole. Cities like San Francisco that have devolved more power to their municipal legislatures have been marked by legislative paralysis and capture by ideological and special-interest groups.

*** 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 City.**

I support doubling the budget of the Civilian Complaint Review Board.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

15. 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?

No

Comments (optional)

I support preserving this mayoral prerogative so voters can choose from an array of different charter revision proposals.

16. 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?

Even when I don't like the mayor (like our current one), I believe a strong mayoral system is necessary to manage such a large and fractious city. So I don't support expanding the City Council's current, narrowly circumscribed "advice and consent" powers, which enable the body to confirm members of the City Planning Commission, the Civilian Complaint Review Board, the Corporation Counsel and a handful of other entities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.