



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2022 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

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Please answer each of the following questions to the best of your ability:

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

For close to 50 years, the Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats has worked for reform politics in Brooklyn, and having its support would serve as proof positive that I, as District Leader, will fight for reforms to make the Democratic Party more inclusive and transparent.

2) Will you vote for Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn to be Chair of the Kings County Democratic Party? Please explain your answer.

Absolutely not because she has taken away small-d democratic opportunities like having two meetings per year, allowing for resolutions from the floor, and literally going to court to stop the County Committee from having its organizational meeting on Zoom. As a result, I cannot trust her with another term as Chair.

On a more personal level, I cannot trust someone who chose to not re-certify and “de-chartered” the Brooklyn Young Democrats - a group which I co-founded 12 years ago and of which I am still a member - and then has persistently **lied** to the public on the rechartering process. Having been on the New York State Young Democrats’ Credentials Committee four times (twice as Chair), I know the rechartering process and the documentation the County Chair is claiming was never provided to her “as required” is completely false. The truth is that the County Chair asked for the membership roster - ostensibly for fundraising purposes - and BYD refused because it believes in its members’ right to privacy, with which I agree. In reality, the only documentation that is required to be presented to a County Chair is a pro forma form recognizing the chapter that is to be signed. All other documentation, including membership rosters, is sent to the New York State Young Democrats and used **only** for internal member communications and NYSYD’s rechartering with the Young Democrats of America. If I cannot trust Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn to tell the truth about why she chose to no longer recognize BYD, I cannot trust her as Chair of the party.

3) What do you think are the most important responsibilities of a district leader?

- Serving as a representative to the Kings County Democratic Committee’s Executive Committee
- Serving as a member of the New York State Democratic Committee
- Helping select poll workers
- Recommending judicial candidates to be voted upon by the judicial convention delegates
- Advocating for the needs of the district to the elected officials for the assembly district
- Organizing Democratic Party members to recruit candidates for public office, get people to campaign for Democratic candidates, and motivate people to vote for Democratic candidates

4) What changes would you like to see in the operation of the county organization and its rules? What would you like to stay the same?



The changes I would most like to see are requiring that only the County Committee can amend the Party's rules; splitting the position of District Leader and State Committee Member into two separate positions; proxy reform; allow for hybrid meetings (virtual and in-person) and requiring meetings to be held in ADA-compliant spaces that are accessible both by car and mass transit so as many people as possible can attend; open meetings of all committees - including and especially the Executive Committee; having an impartial parliamentarian; setting quorum at a percentage of the membership and not a fixed number; restoring the ability of members to bring resolutions from the floor; holding at least two meetings per year; and appointing representatives from each AD to each standing committee and ensuring that the standing committees actually meet.

I would keep the standing committees since they can serve as a conduit for organizing and advocacy based on a defined issue area.

5) What, if any, groups or organizations will you not accept campaign contributions from?

- Police unions
- Judicial candidates
- Corporations

6) Do you support an active Assembly District Committee (ADC) in your Assembly District? Would you support an ADC that operates independently from AD leadership (Assembly member and/or District Leaders)?

I believe the real organizing work is and should be done through the ADC. The district leaders are also the state committee members, with a defined role to play in the state party by law. I believe their involvement in the ADC should be limited mostly to helping call and serve as temporary chairs of the reorganizational meeting.

I currently serve as the Sergeant-at-Arms for the 52nd ADC. Though we have not been able to meet as an ADC as much as I would like (only the Chair has the ability to call meetings), as District Leader, I would help fundraise to purchase the necessary technology (a high-capacity Zoom license) so that the ADC and its subcommittees could meet more often.

I am mindful of the history of the 52nd AD leadership as a team. In that, the 52nd is unique as the Assemblymember and district leaders have worked together to lead and support the ADC in being independent of the County machine. There is no other AD in Brooklyn with that history of reform and effectiveness. Reformers have always been in the minority, effectiveness does not come from having enough votes at County. There is no other AD that has ever filled as large a proportion of its county committee slots as the 52nd. Others do not welcome or encourage new CC members, the 52nd always has. Power to advance one's ideas is in the collective. The collective works when it works together and I would look to continue that legacy of reform.

7) What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?

- Limiting the number of proxies a person can have
- Elimination of the proxy forms saying that the proxies go automatically to the County Chair or District Leader (the County Committee member should have the sole choice of writing in who can have their proxy vote)
- The ability to submit proxies electronically



8) Do you support a party platform for the Brooklyn Democratic Party? If so, what two or three principal goals should be included in that platform?

Yes. I believe that such a platform should, first, include support for the Green New Deal/Environmental Justice because fossil fuels, and their impact on our climate, are a threat to everyone's health and homes, particularly burdening low-income communities of color. Secondly, it should state our support for the expansion of public transportation because NYC has the best transit system in the world but between rising fares, too many parts of the city being transit deserts, and aging equipment, it is a luxury not available for many Brooklynites. Finally, the platform should state our support for more affordable housing and more funding for NYCHA because too many people are being priced out of their homes and/or their homes are physically deteriorating (e.g. lead paint, rodent infestations, asbestos, mold, plumbing that doesn't work, poor and/or dangerous electrical wirings - all of which are harbingers of greater physical and mental health issues).

10) How do you engage in your community now? How do you foresee engaging in your community as District Leader?

I grew up in the 52nd Assembly District and know all of the neighborhoods in the district. I am on the board of Independent Neighborhood Democrats; I am a Eucharistic minister at my parish, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; I co-founded the Brooklyn Young Democrats; hold several positions in the New York State Young Democrats and Young Democrats of America; and am Sergeant-at-Arms of the 52nd Assembly District Committee (ADC). I have also campaigned for numerous local candidates over the years. Most recently, I have applied to join Community Board 2. I am an active member of my union, PSC-CUNY, and am currently helping organize members in the 52nd AD in support of the #NewDeal4CUNY.

With engaging with the community, I will make it my duty to go to all of the Democratic clubs that represent the 52nd AD and I will do my best to attend community board meetings and similar town halls. Moreover, I would do voter education and registration drives outside public housing by tabling on adjacent public sidewalks so I can engage with communities on the issues that matter to them. The ADC has long had members from our public housing communities (and many have been poll workers), but we should encourage and facilitate more people from all walks of life to participate in the political life of the 52nd.

11) What is your position on the current land use and zoning struggles in your district?

I am, generally speaking, in favor of up-zoning in my district. Living one block from the site, I saw firsthand the dog-whistle politics and rhetoric that was used to oppose the new Brooklyn Heights Library. I believe that if we want to be a more inclusive district, we need more affordable housing and we need to advocate for that to be more units and more deeply affordable units – much of what is called “affordable” hasn't been.

Another big issue is the deteriorating condition of the triple cantilever in the BQE, any reconstruction of which will be noisy with likely environmental and health impacts. Though it is the most expensive option, personally speaking, I prefer the replacement tunnel option because it will create the smallest environmental impact and will be the most sustainable for the long term.

12) District Leaders and the Kings County Democratic Committee Executive Committee have the power to recommend commissioners and other staff hires to the Board of Elections. In what ways



would you use your position as District Leader to increase transparency in the commissioner selection and hiring processes for the BOE, and professionalization of the BOE generally? What, if anything, would you do differently than your predecessor to ensure fairness and transparency in the hiring of poll workers?

First, I believe that there should be a change to the Kings County Democratic Party's rules so that the Election Commissioner is formally nominated and voted upon by the members of the County Committee - not rubber-stamping the pick by the Executive Committee - so that the County Committee members can have a real say in who the commissioner should be. Secondly, I would use whatever bully pulpit I have as District Leader for the passage of necessary legislation (such as S6226-b/A05691) and/or constitutional amendments to professionalize the board's operations and staff and make most of them subject to civil service laws. Finally, I would work with the BOE to change existing arbitrary policies such as the one I helped expose in 2019 and which they have now changed because of my actions- and to implement existing law (passed by former DL and Assemblywoman Joan Millman) allowing poll workers to work half-days, which would be more humane and encourage more people to serve as poll workers.

In terms of changing practices in the hiring of poll workers, I cannot think of much I would change. At least in the 52nd AD, the DLs have worked to increase the number and quality of poll workers; the biggest challenges have been the BOE's practices and the inaccuracy of their records. I would do an open call for serving as poll workers - with a particular focus on reaching out to students. Then, following Election Day, I would survey the Democratic poll workers that worked in the 52nd AD and ask for how their experience was, what issues they encountered, and what recommendations they would make for improvements so I could have more information on what to advocate for to the BOE.