



Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats: 2024 District Leader Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Julio Peña III

Office Sought: District Leader, AD 51

Email Address: info@juliopenabk.com

Phone Number: 646-820-8093

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

1) Why do you seek an endorsement from CBID?

I have been a member of CBID for the past four years and in that time have been excited to participate and support the various advocacy events the organization has participated in. It speaks volumes that as a group, you not just value electing progressive Democrats and striving to reform the Brooklyn Democratic Party but also value advocating for critical issues that affect everyday Brooklynites and to make our borough a better place. I am coming before you again, seeking your endorsement to continue working in partnership and collaboration to ensure everyone in Brooklyn has a voice and can meaningfully participate.

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

Given how I have experienced her leadership these past 3 ½ years, I cannot in good conscious vote to continue the behavior I have witnessed. I had wished that things were better and that we could have worked together, but Chair Bichotte Hermelyn does not believe in building consensus, rather she rules with an iron fist. It is my sincere belief that in September, a County Leader candidate emerges that can not just build a broader consensus amongst its leaders, but also espouses the values of inclusiveness, coalition-building, and transformative democracy.

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

The role is very much what you make of it; voting for the Executive Committee Chair, in my opinion, is the most important vote we have. It sets the tone for our entire term as District Leaders and the Party Leader should represent the values of the Democratic Party. We also have important duties in recruiting poll workers and assigning staff to poll sites (however, because of my position and not being afraid to stand up to the Party Leader, my ability to appoint poll workers has been curtailed and assigned to the former female district leader).

There are other unofficial roles of a District Leader that I think are just as important. You can be a neighborhood organizer. Galvanizing around specific issues or educating voters around ballot initiatives, candidates for office, legislation, or land use issues. There is also an opportunity to work with your elected officials in your district to better your neighborhood. I also see the role as a link to these elected officials, someone who can bridge everyone together.

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?



To start, I would like to reform the number of proxies a single person can hold at any given meeting - currently, one person can determine the outcome of a county committee meeting (or an executive committee meeting for that matter) simply because we do not limit the number of proxies any given person can hold. I'd also like to limit how the party rules are amended by the Executive Committee - it should not require a simple majority by our membership. I would also like to see greater participation in our Committees and we should absolutely be encouraging county committee members to sign up and participate!

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

I have not accepted donations from current judicial candidates.

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 absolutely support an active ADC! As an elected District Leader, I was incredibly proud to have organized our 51st ADC in 2021 and continue to support its efforts, both as District Leader and as a County Committee member representing ED 44. I do think ADCs should be independent of elected officials but I am always happy to support their work anyway I can.

7) What County Committee proxy reforms do you support?

As stated above, I support any County Committee proxy reform so that one person can no longer control the outcome of a single meeting. This can be achieved in several ways - we can limit proxies to 10 per person. Or we can limit proxies so that only members within your AD may hold them. I am open to either or other options.

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?

We are electing Democrats across the borough but we don't have a platform or guiding principles for what we need to uplift our city, particularly post pandemic. I absolutely support having a party platform - if you plan on running as a Democrat in Brooklyn, at minimum, you should be supporting affordable housing, access to quality healthcare, and full funding for our public schools.



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

In the past four years, I have held several voter registration and district events to engage voter participation. I have also educated residents in ranked choice voting during the 2021 primary season.

I've also held district leader office hours for poll workers seeking support completing applications and assignments. I've hosted virtual events such as the judicial forum, an immigrant led & workers rights panel, and more recently a listening session for Brooklyn County Committee members. Lastly, I send out (almost monthly) District Newsletters with important information and news of the Democratic Party and how folks can get involved as well important announcements from local groups and organizations.

I also wear different hats in the community; I am Chair of Brooklyn Community Board 7 and on the board of directors for two nonprofits; Fifth Avenue Committee and Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

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

Sunset Park was home to one of the largest private rezonings in the city four years ago and one of the things we learned in the process is that historically, community residents are almost always at a disadvantage in the rezoning process - with limited resources and limited time to review proposals, it is difficult for communities to make lasting decisions if they do not have the tools and resources to effectively make those decisions. I support smart development that will lift our community up. I support affordable housing and I am open to mixed use development that prioritizes the needs and asks of our community.

11) 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?

One thing that I have learned in my role is to make processes more transparent and accessible to everyday voters. People do not know that District Leaders make these recommendations or that they are tied to political parties. The Board of Elections absolutely needs to be a nonpartisan professional organization where its employees and leaders are hired for their merits, not who the elected leaders are. Anyone who is interested in being a poll worker in my district is encouraged to apply and I do not discriminate or discourage those from applying.