

Name: Alan Jay Gerson

How long have you lived in the 26th Senate District?

I have lived all my adult life in the district now denominated as the 26th Senate District. I represented on the City Council approximately 95% of the Manhattan part of the District. I worked very closely with my colleague, and friend, David Yassky, who at the time represented the Brooklyn part, on many issues impacting both the Brooklyn and Manhattan parts, most especially post-9/11 environmental issues. As a member of the Parks Committee, before the Brooklyn Bridge Park, I had advocated for the creation of a "Cross-River" park, creating riverside parks on both sides of the East River in tandem in a coordinated way, with shuttle boat and Brooklyn Bridge bike lane connection, and incorporating Governors Island with boat access from both boroughs.

Why do you want to serve as a member of the NYS Senate?

I am angry as hell that state government, and the State Senate in particular, has ill served all parts of our District and the state overall. Hospitals, under State jurisdiction, have closed without adequate replacement. An affordable housing crisis worsens every day without a comprehensive state response. The state mandates core curricula and testing in our schools without mandating smaller class sizes and support services struggling students need and deserve. A new State lump sum medicaid reimbursement system jeopardizes our most frail seniors. State legislation remains needed to preserve livability, open space, and small business in our neighborhoods. State action remains needed to promote the science and technology sectors as well as viable manufacturing. To deal with the above issues state legislators must be prepared to enact targeted tax increases in luxury and very high income sectors and to impose greater government efficiencies across the bureaucracy.

As a City Council Member I have achieved a record of progress in all of the above issues. I did so during a time when a Republican state administration politically dominated my district through the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, showing I can achieve a progressive agenda under adverse political conditions. Our web site outlines many of my state proposals, [www.nyforalangerson.com](http://www.nyforalangerson.com). I seek to serve as your State Senator to represent and work with you to fashion creative solutions to the pressing issues our District and State face.

What have you accomplished that you are most proud of?

Earlier today at the Labor Day parade I spoke with Terry Casaletta, a business agent for Theatrical Teamsters Local 817. I told her I was the Councilmember who enacted the law requiring Ultra Low Diesel Fuel for portable generators used at movie shoots. She thanked me for saving lives of her members and residents.

I am proud that I developed a reputation as a Councilmember who looked after the voiceless, who implemented programs or enacted legislation addressing dire needs of fellow community

members who were ignored. When the City all but ignored a raging Hepatitis B epidemic in many immigrant communities, I implemented the Hepatitis B Free program, without question preventing liver cancer, written up in Medical Journals and implemented elsewhere. Before anti-bullying became cause celeb, I passed the City's first anti-bullying legislation now implemented in all of our schools and a model for elsewhere. When the City contracted with only one provider of homeless shelters for teenagers living on our streets, which was not friendly to LGBTQ youth, I enacted a new budget item to provide shelter and services to the young people. My report exposed substandard conditions for young children in family homeless shelter.

As part of the Lower Manhattan rebuilding process, during the eight years following 9/11 when I served on the Council, I made sure no one was left behind. When business aid programs excluded the smallest of businesses, I made sure they were included. When resident compensation programs excluded residents of affordable housing, I made sure they were included. I was responsible for the first independent environmental testing, to make certain the district, and the impacted Brooklyn communities, were safe for all. I made certain that rebuilding plans included Fitterman Hall of the Borough of Manhattan Community College and the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church when they were excluded.

What are the Greatest Strengths and Struggles of Senate District 26?

Our greatest strength is our wonderful diversity, in all demographic categories, lifestyles, and neighborhood character. Our greatest challenge is to forge a genuine unity of community which respects and cherishes this diversity. This must include keeping our communities affordable to the residents, small businesses, and artists who have built and sustained our unique neighborhoods.

What are some of the issues specific to the Brooklyn portion of the District you would address?

To cite three examples:

The closure of LICH requires remedy. I have worked on health and hospital issues before, during and after my elected service. The State can engender a modest sized hospital with full emergency room and back up capability. The Governor's Brooklyn Hospital initiative, which requires augmentation, provides an opportunity to accomplish this with leadership and insistence from your next State Senator.

Plans for development in Brooklyn Bridge Park need to be reversed- we have a narrow window of opportunity to do. The planned development is bad for the park and its community and for the precedent it sets. As a Member of the Sierra Club Executive Committee, I have opposed such development. The State must both find additional revenue and also legislatively extend existing park protections to include include Brooklyn Bridge.

The State Senate led by your State Senator must exercise its oversight responsibility with respect to the MTA in order to minimize disruptions and closures from work on the L and 2,3

lines, and during closure periods implement best possible alternatives. As Chair of the City Council's Lower Manhattan Redevelopment Committee I demonstrated effective legislative oversight. When, for example, engineers from the MTA and LMDC were not even speaking with each other, my hearing made certain they collaborated, expediting progress. I am prepared to assert the same effective oversight with respect to the transportation issues.

Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?

In addition to all the other reasons, we share a passion and commitment to reform and transparency in government. I served as President of a very similar Democratic Club: the Village Reform Democratic Club. I also served as a Member of the New York State Committee on Open Government, the body with jurisdiction over interpreting and improving Open Meeting and Freedom of Information Laws. I will work with New Kings to achieve total transparency in lawmakers' personal finances and non-personal schedules, a solid public finance program which eliminates the corrosive influence of real estate and other corporate lobbying, and stronger conflicts-of-interest prevention, among other reforms.

If elected, what will your top three legislative and budgetary priorities be while in office?

Legislative: 1) Single Payer Health Insurance: NY should lead the nation. I will in the State Senate complement Dick Gottfried's work in the Assembly. As I first step I would legislate a blue ribbon commission of non-political experts to present a plan to the legislature, one without both insurance and governmental interference in personal health care decisions. In the meantime, I would legislate several universal preventive health measures, including my free grab bar installation legislation to prevent falls. I would also legislate measures to end insurance abuse of insurers overruling professional medical decisions.

2- Affordable Housing: We need the updated second generation of Mitchell-Lama. We can start with my Right of First Refusal legislation, which passed the City Council but requires Albany approval. This would enact a process in which residents of expiring affordable rental housing have the opportunity to buy their buildings to keep them affordable, with financing from a Housing Preservation Trust Fund.

3 - Open Space and Green Technology: I would close loopholes in current State park protection law, which now exclude community gardens and other open space. NY should also be a leader in science and technology, especially green technology. I would legislate incentives for clean energy micro-grids and the expansion of clean energy power.

Budgetary Priorities:

1 - School Enrichment: After leaving the City Council I created a non-profit corporation, Sophie Gerson Healthy Youth, to continue my mother's great work and leadership in education. Our corporation provides enrichment activities schools lack which low income families cannot afford in sports, dance, outdoor nature, hands-on science and summer camp. Teachers report that

middle school students in these activities show improvement in attendance, academics, behavior, self-esteem and health habits. To the Governor's credit he has expanded after school funding to at-risk schools. I would build on this as a budgetary priority by making summer camp universally available and extending to more schools the type of enrichment our Foundation provides.

2 - Nothing can better buttress the middle class than the expansion of collective bargaining to more employees now unrepresented by labor unions. I would make a condition on the budget to require collective bargaining to companies which contract with government or receive any state benefit. At the same time, the state should modernize the required collective bargaining process to take account of greater job mobility.

3 - Property Tax Reform: The State should impose on the City the requirement of a tax reform commission, last convened under the Dinkins Administration. Our current system is too complex, opaque and unfair to both businesses and residents. No resident should be squeezed, for example, because property tax increases exceed income increases.

Do you pledge to caucus only with the Democrats? What are your thoughts on the IDC?

Yes. I would strongly urge the IDC to rejoin the Democratic caucus, functioning as a caucus within rather than without of our party. A working Democratic majority remains a requisite for progress.

Do you pledge not to support any members of the IDC financially or with endorsements?

I would set an extremely high bar on such support. I would not want to make an absolute declaration to preclude support of a member who provides critical support to significant progressive legislation, eg single payer health care.

How do you think the Democratic parties of Manhattan and Brooklyn should choose their nominee in this election?

Ideally, the state should adopt the City Council approach to filling mid-term vacancies: an open special election. Given the current legal constraints, the Party should hold an open "convention" with delegations from Brooklyn and Queens seated and casting their votes in the same forum, with the nomination going to the candidate who receives 50% plus one of the total vote.

In what ways would you like to expand voting access?

The State should use new secure technology to make verifiable registration available and accessible year-round, including the day of election. The technology should also extend voting to persons in hospitals, persons incarcerated pending trial, and people in other special situations. This technology should also facilitate easy requests for absentee ballots - one should

no longer have to fill out a paper form to get a paper absentee ballot. Voter registration should be available in virtually all public offices and part of the high school graduation routine.

What Criminal Justice Reforms would you like to see the Senate enact?

No one should be incarcerated for individual drug possession or for prostituting themselves; no one should go to Rikers ( or the equivalent) for minor, non-violent misdemeanors. As a Community Board Chair, I was an early proponent of the Community Court model. Under this model, such matters were handled as health or social work issues, with mandatory monitoring. I will take my advocacy of this model to the State Senate.

On the City Council I introduced the resolution calling for greater law enforcement attention to human trafficking and the budget item providing greater support to safe houses for victims. As Senator, I would pursue significantly greater law enforcement effort to wipe out this terrible abuse.

NKD supports holding a New York State Constitutional Convention. Do you? Why or why not?

I do not. I fear that delegates will be elected in unrepresentative, low turn-out voting, and that a Convention will be susceptible to a range of political and special interests. NY actually has a progressive Constitution. It is one of the few a state Constitutions to incorporate an affirmative duty to support the needy as well as labor protections. I would not want to risk those provisions. I support NKD goals for a convention. I suggest that the better way to accomplish those goals is to regain a true Democratic majority of the State Senator now within our grasp and enact the necessary legislation.

What Endorsements have you received from publications, elected, community leaders, or political organizations?

We will announce significant endorsements as part of an announcement on Wednesday. I am pursuing this campaign in the same way I have all of my Council Campaigns: as a grass roots effort with support of community and political leaders and activists from parts of our diverse community. I have received endorsements from leadership of Democratic Clubs in Chinatown, the Lower East Side, and Greenwich Village, all of which will hold their formal endorsements in the upcoming days, from Presidents and officers of NYCHA tenant associations and block associations, from LGBTQ leading activists, from clergy of different faiths in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and from leading environmental activists in Brooklyn and Manhattan. We welcome New King Democrats to our rainbow coalition.

Of the elected officials in the NYS Senate, who do you admire most and why?

I do not to single out one from colleagues with whom I will work and get to know better. However, as to State Legislators I will single out one to whom I look as a role mode. The late Assembly Member Bill Passannante, exhibited great political courage in taking principled

positions in which he played a leadership role even though they were not popular in his political base. (Full disclosure: he was a friend to my mother and I interned in his office.) He came from and represented a very socially conservative neighborhood. Nevertheless, over strong opposition, even from his own house of worship, he introduced and aggressively fought for, in the 60's and 70's, divorce law reform, a woman's right to choose, and Gay rights. I look to Bill as a role model for political courage on any issue of principle.

What is one fun fact about you?

I think I am allergic to the Republican Party - or it to me. When I was a kid on a zoo visit I went of course to see the elephants. When an elephant stuck out its trunk to receive peanuts, before giving it a nut I decided out of curiosity to see what the inside of an elephant's trunk looked like. I was very considerate, not touching the trunk but just peering into it from a respectful distance. Well, the moment I placed my face squarely in front of the trunk - the elephant sneezed, all over me! And it was a long trunk! I decided then and there that any political party which adopted the elephant as it's symbol was not for me. (That being said, I supported efforts to end mistreatment of elephants by the circus.)

I have reviewed this questionnaire and agree that the responses set forth in this document are accurate:

Candidate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

09/09/17