

**New York State Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh's Response to New Kings Democrats'  
Questionnaire for Candidates for New York State Senate in the 26th Senate District  
September 9, 2017**

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

I've lived in the 26th Senate District for four-and-a-half years, in the 74th Assembly District for fourteen years, and in New York City for my entire life, except for four years of college in New Jersey.

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

For eleven years in the Assembly, I've gotten great satisfaction from being an effective, committed and energetic champion of progressive causes and responsive government. I have advocated for constituents and stood up when government in Albany has failed to function as it should. As a State Senator, I would be able to continue doing the work I love, representing New Yorkers and fighting for the things that matter most, but with an even greater opportunity to have a positive impact. I'll continue to work on strengthening rent laws and preserving affordable housing, increasing access to quality schools, safeguarding the environment, expanding public open space and making our communities more resilient, promoting economic and social justice, preventing gun violence, and creating a fairer and more accessible political process.

**What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?**

I'm proud to have been a leader on a number of key issues. I've led the fight to renew and strengthen our rent laws, and authored some of the Assembly's most important bills to strengthen them further by eliminating loopholes like the "vacancy bonus" that is responsible for half of the gross increase in the cost of rent stabilized housing citywide. I successfully pushed for a dramatic expansion of rent freeze and property tax abatement programs that keep housing affordable for seniors and people with disabilities. I helped to lead the successful effort to ban the environmentally destructive practice of drilling for gas known as "fracking." I have been an outspoken advocate for changing the culture in Albany, authored and passed legislation to fix New York's broken election and campaign finance systems, and voted against partisan, legislator-driven redistricting. I founded and lead both national and state coalitions of legislators committed to preventing gun violence and advocating for policies and programs that keep our communities safe. I helped shape our state's landmark NY SAFE Act, which implemented background checks on all gun purchases statewide and many other reforms to keep guns out of the wrong hands. I'm proud of the work my staff and I did to ensure that our community was safe and recovered quickly during and after the Sandy storm, and of the work we have done everyday to provide excellent service and advocacy for our constituents in the 74th Assembly District.

**What are the greatest strengths and struggles of the Senate District 26?**

I love the diversity—the distinct neighborhoods, cultures, and perspectives—and the vibrancy of community life across the Senate District. We are a city of strong communities that come together in good times and tough times, expect a lot of our government and our neighbors, and work to hold our elected representatives accountable, and the communities that make up Senate District 26 strongly exemplify that spirit. The greatest challenge—as in many parts of the city—is ensuring that neighborhoods remain affordable for the people who live in them and make them the great communities that they are. We also have enormous challenges ensuring that our transit systems are accessible and reliable, and tremendous opportunities and challenges protecting the open space we have, completing long-awaited park and waterfront projects, and standing up to inappropriate development in some of the densest neighborhoods in the county. And we have to work harder and faster to ensure that our communities and our critical infrastructure, especially along the waterfront, are resilient and that we're prepared for extreme weather events and other emergencies.

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

Brooklyn needs a strong voice for reliable transit solutions. That means pushing for workable alternatives during the L train shutdown and economic support for affected businesses—and fighting any reduction of local F line service. We also need a smarter approach to development that reduces the impact of construction on community quality of life across the district. After the Long Island College Hospital (LICH) fight left Brooklyn with less health care and a set of bad choices, I will do everything in my power to hold the developer Fortis accountable and make sure the local community has a voice in the future of the site. And I will work for a design-build approach for certain major public construction projects, as I already have in the Assembly, that will make projects like the BQE triple cantilever rehabilitation faster and cheaper. I will also make parks and open space a top priority, including completing Bushwick Inlet Park, fighting for maximum open space and a permanent pool at Brooklyn Bridge Park, and protecting Van Voorhees Park and the LICH parks from privatization. And I will join my colleagues in pushing for a ban on tourist helicopters.

**Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?**

I have great respect for grassroots organizations like New Kings Democrats that engage progressive, public-spirited, reform-minded New Yorkers in local, state, and national issues and in the Democratic Party.

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

Housing: Preserving and strengthening rent laws, new long-term tenant protections beyond existing rent regulated housing, greater State investment in eviction prevention and affordable housing, especially rehabilitation and maintenance of public housing.

Fair Elections: Enacting a broad set of reforms in the way New York runs election, many of which the the Assembly has already passed, including my early voting legislation and the bill I championed with Senator Daniel Squadron to close the LLC loophole, which allows unlimited, often virtually anonymous contributions to elected officials, candidates, and political parties.

Environmental Protections: Enacting strong standards to rapidly reduce New York's outsized contribution to climate change pollution; promoting a stronger, more sustainable economy through development of renewable energy resources; protecting people from exposure to toxins in their air and water and in consumer products.

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

I will only caucus with Democrats, and I will not join the IDC. We need to achieve a solid majority by winning more elections and we need to insist that all Senators elected as Democrats support and participate in and support a functioning, progressive Democratic majority.

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

Yes.

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

The Democratic party should nominate the candidate with the broadest support among Democrats who vote in the district. The ideal way to do this would be through a primary of all Democratic voters in the district, but the short timeframe to fill the vacancy, the important goal of having a Senator occupying the seat by the time the Senate reconvenes in January, and current law foreclose that option. Absent a primary, Democrats in each county should engage in a process, either in their respective counties or jointly, that best reflects the desires and interests of Democrats, consistent with the law, the state party rules, and the respective county rules.

**In what ways would you like to expand voting access?**

I have helped lead the effort in the Assembly for significant and long-overdue election reform. We should have automatic registration through a wide range of government agencies, pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds, election day registration, more voter-friendly ballots, early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, and better paid and trained poll workers who are not required to work shifts that last sixteen hours or more. I have authored or co-sponsored bills that would accomplish each of these objectives, and have been a leader in building consensus in the Assembly and passing a broad package of reforms by wide margins.

**What criminal justice reforms would you like to see the Senate enact?**

The over-incarceration of Americans nationwide is a troubling and expensive problem that requires immediate and comprehensive action. I would work to fix the broken pretrial system, ensure that our criminal justice system doesn't serve as treatment for substance use and mental health disorders, and work for racial justice.

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

I have long been a close ally of many of the reform groups that are in support of a constitutional convention, and I respect NKD's perspective on this issue, but I do not believe that a constitutional convention is the right approach to achieve the reforms and the progressive change New Yorkers need. A convention would effectively be an ad hoc, unicameral, temporary legislative body, and would be subject to the same obstacles and special interest pressures as our other governing institutions. As such, I believe a convention would require us to expend energy and resources preventing proposals for undesirable constitutional changes from being proposed by the delegates or approved by the voters, while positive change would be subject to the same pressures from those who oppose reform now. I believe the energy, time, and resources that supporters want to invest in the convention would be better spent electing the right people to public office, and particularly to ensuring that we have a functioning, progressive, Democratic majority in the State Senate.

**What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?**

I am proud to have been endorsed for State Senate by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Brad Hoylman, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Downtown Progressive Democrats, and the Working Families Party.

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

I have great respect for many of our Democratic Senators, most of whom I've worked closely with on legislation, budget issues, advocacy, oversight of state agencies, and New York City concerns. The Senators who have represented parts of the 74th Assembly District--Daniel Squadron, Brad Hoylman, and Liz Krueger--have all been terrific allies.

**What is one fun fact about you?**

I'm a pretty decent chess player.



