

## 2017 Senate District 26 Questionnaire

*Completed questionnaires will be public documents available on our website, so put your best foot forward. If we ultimately hold an endorsement vote in your race, your questionnaire will be circulated to our membership before the vote.*

**Name:** David Yassky

**How long have you lived in the 26th Senate District?** 19 years

**Why do you want to serve as a member of the NYS Senate?** (1) To improve the economic opportunities and quality of life in the 26<sup>th</sup> Senate District, and in New York State, by proposing and enacting creative, progressive legislation, affecting budget outcomes and overseeing agencies; (2) to assist individual constituents and neighborhood organizations in solving problems and implementing neighborhood-level initiatives; and (3) to work with Democratic Senators to elect a Democratic Majority Leader.

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

- The inclusionary zoning provisions of the 2005 North Brooklyn rezoning, which was the most aggressive inclusionary zoning plan effected in NYC to that date, and paved the way for the current citywide mandatory inclusionary zoning;
- Borough taxis, which improved the transit network outside the Manhattan CBD;
- A taxi fare increase with accompanying rules that directed all of the increase to taxi drivers
- The NYC film and TV production tax credit, which created thousands of good-paying jobs for New Yorkers;
- Creating an enforcement unit at the Taxi and Limousine Commission that protects drivers against abusive fleet owners, resulting in multiple \$1-million-plus judgments against fleet owners who were cheating drivers;
- Department of Education rules banning candy and soda from public school vending machines;
- Converting 60% of the taxi fleet from gas guzzlers to gas-electric hybrid vehicles by 2013, resulting in a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from taxis;
- Legislation requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations for survivors of domestic violence;
- Rules requiring 50% of taxis to be wheelchair accessible by 2021;
- Helping to secure funding and approval for the creation of Brooklyn Bridge Park, and for two new waterfront parks in North Brooklyn;
- Turnaround of PS 8;
- Legislation enabling gunshot victims to sue irresponsible gun manufacturers and dealers (later overruled by Congress);
- Securing numerous neighborhood improvements (such as traffic lights, trees, ornamental lighting, subway renovations, and renovated parks and dog runs) in northwest Brooklyn;
- Helping numerous individual constituents to resolve problems with government agencies;
- As congressional staffer, helping to draft and secure enactment of the Brady Law, Violence Against Women Act, Assault Weapons Ban, "Safety Valve" legislation rolling back harsh mandatory minimum sentences, and "Diversity Visas" legislation; and
- Inspiring and mentoring numerous staff members who have made significant public service contributions since leaving my office.

**What are the greatest strengths and struggles of Senate District 26?** For an elected representative, strengths include a wonderfully diverse population and strong neighborhoods with strong civic leadership. For a resident, strengths include some excellent public schools, proximity to the downtown Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn business districts and generally good transportation options within the district and to other parts of NYC (though not in all of Greenpoint and Williamsburg, and certainly not during the L Train repair period), some terrific waterfront areas, access to excellent cultural resources, and again, neighborhoods with a strong sense of identity and strong civic leadership. Struggles include a desperate

shortage of housing for non-wealthy families, a dearth of good middle schools, and insufficient open space. For many District 26 residents, the Trump Administration's despicable attempt to rescind the DACA program poses an immediate threat and is inflicting terrible uncertainty.

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

Lack of good middle school options; disruption caused by L Train repair; completion of Bushwick Inlet Park; air and groundwater pollution caused by BQE, waste transfer stations and Exxon Mobile oil spill.

**Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?** I admire NKD's commitment to "transparency, accountability and inclusionary democracy," its focus on local government, and its determination to achieve concrete results. My public service has also been defined by these principles, and I would be proud to have NKD's support.

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

Permanent mayoral control of NYC schools; providing standard worker protections and benefits (eg, disability insurance, unemployment compensation) to independent workers; an adequate dedicated funding stream for the MTA.

**Do you pledge to caucus only with the Democrats?** Yes.

**What are your thoughts on the IDC?** The IDC has been an impediment to progressive legislation and has made the State Senate less representative of the people of the State of New York than it should be.

**Do you pledge not to support any members of the IDC financially or with endorsements?** I am inclined to make this pledge, but I would want to consult with the Democratic leadership of the State Senate before fully committing.

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

**In what ways would you like to expand voting access?** I support automatic or same-day voting registration, and greater opportunity to vote by mail or prior to election day. I also support much stricter limits on campaign contributions and matching funds for candidates similar to the NYC system.

**What criminal justice reforms would you like to see the Senate enact?** Fully decriminalize marijuana possession; reform bail rules to enable release of offenders without risk or harm; exempt individuals under 18 from criminal responsibility for nonviolent offenses; restrict the use of plea bargains.

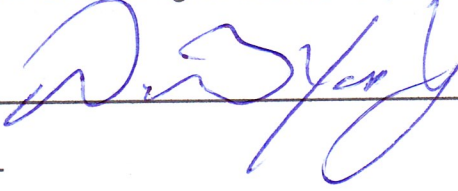
**NKD supports holding a New York State Constitutional Convention. Do you? Why or why not?** I do support a constitutional convention because I see it as the only way to enact political and governmental reforms such as campaign finance reform, same-day registration, elimination of the line-item veto and uniform salaries for legislators. I understand the concern about preserving progressive provisions of the State Constitution and progressive court rulings interpreting the Constitution, but I am confident the voters of New York State would not approve any diminution of these protections.

**What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?** None

**Of the elected officials in the NYS Senate, who do you admire most and why?** Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her effective leadership of the Democratic Caucus; Sens. Liz Krueger and Brad Hoylman for their principled and creative legislative agenda; Sen. Mike Gianaris for his persistent efforts to wrest control of the Senate from the IDC.

**What is one fun fact about you?** I know the lyrics to Les Mis, Falsettos, Jesus Christ Superstar and pretty much every Sondheim show (plus Hamilton, obvi) by heart.

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

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

Date: 9/9/17 \_\_\_\_\_

***You must sign this questionnaire!***