



**2018 State Senate Candidate 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	Zellnor Myrie
State Senate District number and neighborhoods represented	20 <sup>th</sup> - Brownsville, Crown Heights, East Flatbush, Gowanus, Park Slope, Prospect Heights, Prospect Lefferts Garden, South Slope, Sunset Park
Preferred campaign contact information: name, email address, phone number	Andre' Richardson [REDACTED]
How long have you lived in the above district?	I was born and raised in the 20 <sup>th</sup> State Senate district by a single mom in rent-stabilized apartment. I went to public schools in Crown Heights, high school at Brooklyn Tech, and undergrad/grad at Fordham University.
What civic and political organizations are you involved with in the district?	I have served as chair of my Neighborhood Advisory Board where, through community organizing, we helped secure nearly \$400,000 in federal funding for job training, after school programming, and tenant protection. I also attend meetings with Flatbush Tenants Coalition and also worked extensively with the Legal Aid Society where we operated a 24-hour emergency hotline for immigrants seeking assistance.
What are the greatest strengths and struggles of your Senate district?	I believe housing is the civil rights issue of our generation and one of the greatest problems facing my district. Homelessness is up; and homeownership is down. Evictions are up; rent-stabilized units down. Buildings are going up; and affordable housing is going down. Tax breaks for developers are up; paychecks for the working class are down. We can't afford to keep doing business as usual, not in this district. Our community is at a crossroads and we need a real Democrat in Albany to fight for us. My strengths are the ability to fight for issues I'm passionate about while holding a high level of integrity and never compromising it.
Why do you want to serve as a member of the State Senate?	I'm running because my story is not possible without public investment in progressive policies. Without rent regulation and investment in public schools, I would not be who I am today. Our community deserves a real advocate and Senator Hamilton has failed us in that regard. My experience in public service and as a product of this community makes me the best candidate to represent the 20 <sup>th</sup> state senate district.
What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?	I helped write and pass the Tenant Bill of Rights on the City Council in conjunction with community residents and housing rights organizations like Met Council. As the product of a rent-stabilized home, introducing this bill during my tenure as legislative director was one of the proudest moments of my public life.

	<p>As a lawyer, I also had the opportunity to advocate for victims of stop-and-frisk before a federal court. Together with the Legal Aid Society, I fought for greater transparency in NYPD's stop practices, disciplinary records, and sensitivity training. Our advocacy has the potential to mandate further changes to the NYPD's current policing tactics; tactics that remain the frontline of criminal justice reform in the city.</p>
<p>What do you consider to be the highlights of your work experience?</p>	<p>As an associate at a private Manhattan law firm, I was committed to public service. I provided over 600 hours of pro bono service to immigrants seeking asylum, victims of police brutality and illegal stop-and-frisks, special education students not receiving services from the Department of Education, and victims of domestic violence. I also am committed to my community as a member of the neighborhood advisory board, junior board for the Legal Aid Society, and president of my tenant's association.</p>
<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?</p>	<p>As a progressive, my values are very aligned with the values the New Kings Democrats. I am running as a real Democrat and want the support of real Democrats like the New King's. While my opponent continues to caucus with Republicans and other "fake Democrats", I'm looking forward to representing the 20<sup>th</sup> as a real Democrat committed to progressive values.</p>
<p>If elected, what will your top three legislative and budgetary priorities be while in office?</p>	<p>My top three priorities would be housing, immigrant rights, and education. First and foremost, our affordable housing stock (including rent controlled units which, unlike rent-stabilized apartments, have experienced precipitous increases in rent) has been eroded gradually over the past four decades. Meanwhile, new developments in the district, assisted by generous tax breaks from the state, are being built at record pace. This should not be, and there is a way for both affordable housing and new development to co-exist. Increasing our demands on developers who receive taxpayer dollars to build, as well dedicating more public land to 100% affordable housing, are some of the ways we can achieve that.</p> <p>In terms of immigrant rights, it is a disgrace that in the state that harbors the Statue of Liberty, the Assembly passes the NY DREAM and Liberty Acts repeatedly, only for them to meet their demise in the state senate. We can pass both of these bills that would provide protection and resources to the immigrants who built this country and keep our communities strong. As a child of immigrants, I look forward to advocating for their passage as a state senator.</p> <p>Lastly on education, the children in our district are owed millions of dollars in Foundation Aid funding (my elementary school is owed almost \$1 million alone). It is an affront to our democracy that the state refuses to obey the law as outlined by the Court of Appeals. We have a moral obligation to fight forcefully for this funding, but it is also a matter of law. If elected, I will fight to have this funding included in the budget as it should be.</p>
<p>If elected, how will you support the work of New Kings Democrats and its partners to make New York City government more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?</p>	<p>A great way to make government more accountable is by fixing our broken voter and campaign finance laws. We need Automatic Voter Registration, Early Voting, Same-Day Registration, and No-Excuse Absentee Voting in this state. I also believe the limits on individual contributions should be lowered and the LLC loophole closed. If elected I will work to ensure public filings should also include the profession of individual contributors to make it easier to track influence in Albany. Lastly, New York State should adopt public financing akin to NYC's system to help weaken the influence of large donors in</p>

	our political process.
What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?	My vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party is a party that prioritizes progressive values over the status quo. Our communities and our state are facing too many problems to allow business as usual to continue. Too many Democrats with safe seats have pushed the status quo over real progress and that has to change. I believe in the long term task of party building instead of short term political expediency.
How will you contribute to efforts to attain unified Democratic control of the New York State Senate?	I believe the best way to attain, and maintain, Democratic control of the state senator is to oppose the IDC. If it weren't for the IDC, Democrats would be in control of both houses of the New York state legislature and we could have passed progressive legislation like the New York Health Act and the New York DREAM Act yesterday. I'm running not only because my opponent has failed to deliver a Democratic majority in the senate, but because he has failed to represent the 20 <sup>th</sup> district as a true Democrat.
How do you think the Democratic Party can improve the way it operates in the State Senate?	I believe the biggest improvement the Democratic Party can make is by expelling members of the IDC from the Democratic Party. IDC members like opponent are allowed to run on Democratic tickets despite caucusing with Republicans and supporting their policies. I don't believe the Democratic Party can be an effective force for change unless we are willing to remove those of us who are working against the party and against progress.
What is one important way you think the State Senate should be reformed, and what is your plan for trying to implement such reform?	Albany's anti-corruption laws need serious strengthening in order to empower local prosecutors to hold our public officials. The abuse of public trust should be a criminal charge, matching the federal analog. Bribery, currently defined very narrowly, should be broadened, particularly in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in <i>McDonnell</i> that has led to the overturning of several corruption cases here in NY and across the country. Legislator salaries should also be increased and outside income banned.
What funds have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources of your campaign funds?	I began fundraising in late October and filed in January with 650 donations totaling \$93,577.48. 75% of the campaign's contributions were \$100 or less, and 100% of contributions came from individuals.
What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?	Working Families Party, Brooklyn Political Action Network, CBID, True Blue NY, Tenants PAC, Indivisible Do or Die, No IDC NYC, and the Jim Owles Club.
What areas of the district do you see as your biggest sources of votes and support?	I believe our biggest source of support will come from every Assembly District in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Senate District. I have been doing a lot of retail campaigning throughout the entire district, and have received positive feedback. As someone who is from the district, a child of immigrants, product of rent-stabilized housing, and product of public schools, I understand the position of our many working class families. My father has been a proud union member for 17 years and my mother a business owner for the past 20. Additionally, last year, I provided over 600 hours of pro bono service to immigrants seeking asylum, victims of police brutality and illegal stop-and-frisks, special education students not receiving services from the Department of Education, and victims of domestic violence – many of whom are disaffected from the political process. As a member of this community, I believe I am best equipped to represent their interest in Albany.

Which member of the State Senate do you admire most and why?	Andrea Stewart Cousins. In the midst of being undermined and discriminated against by some of her colleagues, she has shown true leadership and character by fighting for what is right and not being distracted.
What are some of the ways you think New York City residents can best participate in civic life?	<p>There are two major ways New Yorkers can participate more in civic life. The first is getting involved in their neighborhood/community boards Getting involved in your neighbor advisory board is a fantastic way to be connected with your local community and have a say in its commercial and cultural development. Being chair of my Neighborhood Advisory Board has been an eye-opening experience and I hope other New Yorkers can get involved with their local communities the way I did.</p> <p>The second way is voting. Turnout rates for this city have been dropping every year and our last mayoral election saw only 22% of registered voters turn out, a new record low. Over the next few years, our local and state government will be addressing real problems with serious legislation and it's important that people have a say in who will be negotiating these policies. If elected, I look forward to advocating for the institution of a Civics curriculum in our schools. Our kids should know who their representatives are and how local government works. Research suggests that those who vote early when they are young remain consistent voters throughout their lives; instituting a civics curriculum will help set our children on a path to lifetime civic engagement.</p>
What is one fun fact about you?	I was as a DJ in Law School.

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

Candidate Signature: Zellnor Myrie

Date: April 1, 2018

***You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please e-mail your signed and scanned questionnaire to [politics@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:politics@newkingsdemocrats.com) and [info@newkingsdemocrats.com](mailto:info@newkingsdemocrats.com)***