



2018 Attorney General 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	
Preferred campaign contact information: name, email address, phone number	Tish James Campaign Contact - Anna Brower anna@tishjames2018.com [REDACTED]
How long have you lived in New York? Where in the state have you lived?	I was born and raised in Brooklyn. I lived briefly in Albany and in Schenectady for a short time but for most of my life I lived in Brooklyn and currently live in Fort Greene.
What civic and political organizations are you involved with, either in your area or statewide?	My home political organization is the Vanguard Independent Democratic Association, but as the New York City Public Advocate, I am involved in a number of civic and political organizations around New York City.
What are New York State's greatest strengths and struggles?	New York's greatest strength has been and always will be its people. New Yorkers are tenacious and tough and seek to make their city, state, and country a better place. As a government, we have not always done everything possible to protect our most vulnerable populations, like children and seniors.
Why do you want to serve as Attorney General?	<p>With a federal administration that is hellbent on attacking communities and rolling back our rights, the powers of the Attorney General are more critical than ever. We need an Attorney General who has the skills, experience, and passion to stand up to these attacks on our constitutional rights. I firmly believe that I am the best person for the job.</p> <p>I also know how to make the most of an office charged with fighting on behalf of the people. As Public Advocate, I have revolutionized the use of litigation to affect meaningful change, from protecting residents of public housing to reforming the foster care system to ensuring that students with disabilities get the services to which they are entitled. I have passed twice as much legislation as the three former Public Advocates combined.</p> <p>Most of all, I have always fought for the people and against powerful interests. The Attorney General has broad powers, but also significant discretion, to investigate abusive practices. We need an independent fighter willing to stand up to the powerful on behalf of the powerless. I am that fighter.</p>
What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?	I was the first candidate to win a City Council seat exclusively on a third party line. I am the first woman of color to hold an elected city wide position. It is not the historical footnotes that I am proud of, but the fact that these positions represent that I have been uplifted by my community time and time again. I was able to win these seats because of average, everyday people and I have worked to ensure that their voices are heard.
What do you consider to be the highlights of your work experience?	As Public Advocate, I passed more legislation than all previous Public Advocates combined, including landmark pay equity legislation banning employers from asking about salary history. I also turbocharged the Worst Landlords Watchlist and took legal action against unscrupulous landlords in our City. I sued New York City and New York State to reform the foster care system, and I sued New York City on behalf of children with disabilities who were being forced to ride in dangerously hot school buses. As a City Council Member, I uncovered the CityTime corruption scandal and saved taxpayers approximately 600 million dollars. This also changed the way that the City handled contracts.

<p>Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?</p>	<p>New Kings Democrats has been a voice for people across Brooklyn who have often felt ignored and works hard to bring all voices to the table. I believe our missions are aligned, and I would be honored to have the support of an organization that works hard for all Brooklynites and holds elected officials, including myself, accountable.</p>
<p>If elected, what will your top three priorities be while in office?</p>	<p>Protecting the Economically Vulnerable as both Consumers and Workers: I will use all the powers at my disposal to crack down on scams against immigrants and seniors, ensure that labor law violations are enforced with unprecedented vigor, and that workplace harassment and discrimination has consequences for bad actors.</p> <p>Defend Civil Rights for All: From its opening hours, the Trump Administration has made clear that it has more interest in waging a culture war than in protecting civil rights. They have reversed position on voter ID laws, abandoned efforts to reform police practices, dismantled civil rights divisions across agencies, destroyed protections for transgender students, workers and homeless people, removed, slowed or abandoned safeguards against discrimination from too many programs to name. When they are not failing to protect civil rights they are actively violating them, doggedly pursuing a pretextual Muslim ban based solely on racial and religious animus and committing untold atrocities against immigrants. As Attorney General, I will take legal action against the Administration's unlawful policies and step into the breach left by federal abdication, prioritizing enforcement actions that the Trump Administration has abandoned.</p> <p>Protect New Yorkers from the Trump Administration's Unlawful Actions: The Trump Administration has flouted the law at every turn, seeking to roll back generations of progress. Their ethos is a combination of animus and venality and they have worked to turn the awesome might of the federal government into a tool for sewing hate and reaping corporate plunder. We cannot and must not accept this administration's contempt for the rights and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable among us. As Attorney General, I will seek every lever of power available to me to challenge the Trump Administration's unlawful actions and to protect New Yorkers from their attacks on our basic rights.</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>As someone who has served as a watchdog over City agencies and an ombudsman on behalf of City residents for the last five years I believe deeply in transparency and accountability and I have worked every day to make sure the government is doing the people's work.</p> <p>As Attorney General and the state's chief legal counsel, I will vigorously defend the state's interests. But ultimately I am running to be the People's Lawyer and that will be the guiding principle I follow. If a state official steps over the line, I will not hesitate to prosecute. If I disagree with a state action, I will make that abundantly clear. I also believe the dual roles can be complementary. As counsel to the state, I will have unmatched insight into the weaknesses and failings in the government's interactions with its citizens. As an independent elected official, I can identify and fight for systemic reforms that will benefit both the state's agencies and its people.</p> <p>I have also always strived to make government as inclusive as possible. As Public Advocate I have held numerous town halls and public forums that are critical for public engagement and government accountability and as Attorney General, I will continue to engage New Yorkers. I will work closely grassroots and service organizations to ensure that I know the situation on the ground, create a robust educational and "know your rights" program, and expand the healthcare advocate and consumer complaint mediator models to areas like housing and employment.</p>
<p>What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party and</p>	<p>My hope for both the Brooklyn and statewide Democratic Party is that there is increased participation at all levels that reflects who we are as a City and a State. I</p>

for the statewide Democratic Party?	would like to see more young people involved and members from every corner of our state.
How will you contribute to efforts to attain unified Democratic control of the New York State Senate?	I called on the breakaway IDC members to rejoin the Democratic Caucus and I wholeheartedly support Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins as the Majority Leader in the State Senate. I will speak out in the future if such a breakaway caucus ever attempts to reform.
How do you think the New York State Democratic Party can improve the way it operates?	I believe that communication is key and that the State Party can do a better job of sharing information from State Committee meetings. I also believe that the State Party should do more outreach in underrepresented areas to increase engagement.
What is one important way you think New York State government should be reformed, and what is your plan for trying to implement such reform?	We must reform our campaign finance system to support any New Yorker who wants to run for office, not just those who can afford it. New York State's current campaign finance laws make rampant corruption and regulatory capture all but inevitable. New York's individual contribution limits are the highest in the country by a significant margin and the law is so riddled with loopholes as to make those astronomical "limits" essentially meaningless. I strongly support bringing statewide the public financing system that helped me get my start and that has worked so well in New York City. I also believe we must close the LLC loophole, eliminate oft-abused housekeeping accounts, and place stricter limits on entities lobbying or doing business with the state.
What would you do as Attorney General to reform criminal justice in New York, to create a system that treats people of color and disadvantaged communities more equally? Are there actions you could take that would not require action from the legislature or the Governor?	<p>As Attorney General, I will push to expand and codify the Attorney General's role as special prosecutor to serve not just in cases ending in death of civilians, but cases in which civilians are injured, or have been victims of sexual assault or hate crimes by police. I will also push for the repeal of 50-a, and push for state funding for body cameras. If elected, I will require that the Office of the Attorney General act under open discovery laws, while pushing to create more open discovery laws statewide.</p> <p>One of my primary focuses as Public Advocate has been criminal justice reform and police accountability. I was the first elected official to push for citywide use of body cameras, I joined the lawsuit to end stop-and frisk, I sued to make the Eric Garner grand jury minutes public, and I spearheaded the successful call to make the Attorney General Special Prosecutor when police officers kill civilians.</p> <p>I have been vocal in my call to legalize recreational marijuana use, strongly support ending cash bail, and support increasing funding for violence interrupters.</p>
Would you retain Barbara Underwood as Deputy Attorney General?	Yes. Barbara Underwood is incredibly qualified and capable, and I would absolutely keep her on as Solicitor General.
What is your legal experience? How many verdicts have you taken, what area(s) of law do you practice/have you practiced, taught?	I have been an attorney for over 35 years. I originally served as a public defender at the Legal Aid Society, representing our most vulnerable. I served as the Assistant Attorney General in Brooklyn, where I took on predatory lending, religious accommodation, and consumer fraud cases. I served as Counsel to many committees in the New York State Assembly. As Public Advocate, I transformed the office, suing the City and State of New York to reform the foster care system, to protect public housing residents without heat in the winter, to protect children with disabilities riding on dangerously hot buses, and to preserve rent exemptions for the rights of elderly and disabled New Yorkers. I also continued to take on legal cases in a <i>pro bono</i> capacity, most recently representing a child from Honduras in applying for, and obtaining, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status.
Are there any pending matters handled by the AG's office that you expect you will recuse yourself from if elected?	None.
Our understanding is that the Attorney General invokes a few different laws for subpoena and enforcement power. What other legal mechanisms could the	The Attorney General's Office has a wide array of statutory and common law powers and responsibilities beyond the core investigative and enforcement mechanisms Attorneys General have traditionally used to protect consumers and root out, and bring legal action against fraud, persistent illegality, and deceptive practices in business. For instance, the Office has specifically delineated roles in areas as disparate as

<p>AG's Office employ to take actions on behalf of New Yorkers?</p>	<p>regulating charities and defending state laws from constitutional challenges. A creative and aggressive AG can find ways to use many of these other mechanisms to protect New Yorkers, such as investigating the NRA's use of dark money using the former and preventing gun violence by defending the SAFE Act under the latter.</p> <p>Additionally, the Attorney General has some demarcated criminal jurisdiction which, while not plenary like a District Attorney's, can be used on behalf of vulnerable New Yorkers such as prosecuting criminal violations of the labor law or auto-fraud. Most importantly of all perhaps, in this time of federal aggression, the Attorney General has the power to sue on behalf of the state and its citizens to invalidate unconstitutional federal statutes, enjoin illegal actions, and even force federal agencies to do the jobs legally required of them.</p> <p>As Attorney General, I will do what I have always done throughout every stage of my career: listen to the real problems of real people, stand up for the vulnerable against powerful interests, and use creative thinking to harness every power at my disposal to protect those who need it.</p>
<p>Assuming that you are familiar with the legal bureaus that make up the Attorney General's office, have you identified any bureaus/subject matter areas that are lacking? If so, what?</p>	<p>As Attorney General, I will create a Housing Bureau merging elements of consumer, civil rights, and criminal law enforcement in a bureau that is not just New York City focused, but deeply integrated into the operations of the regional offices. The Housing Bureau will operate a hotline to hear complaints from tenants and homeowners about discrimination, harassment, illegal overcharges, conditions, deed theft, abandoned and untended properties, mortgage fraud and foreclosure. I will fight against eviction by construction, tenant harassment, and crack down on landlords that skirt the law.</p>
<p>What funds have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources of your campaign funds?</p>	<p>I have raised approximately 1.2 million dollars with the majority of my donations coming from Unions and small donors.</p>
<p>What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?</p>	<p>In my current race, I have endorsements from more than 30 grassroots political clubs, every union that has made an endorsement including RWDSU, 32BJ, and 1199 SEIU, and numerous elected officials. A full list of my endorsement is available at www.tishjames2018.com</p>
<p>What areas of the state do you see as your biggest sources of votes and support?</p>	<p>I am working hard for support across the state, and am taking nothing for granted. While I believe my strongest base of support is in New York City, specifically from my home borough of Brooklyn, I have visited 17 counties and plan to continue traveling around the state to meet voters.</p>
<p>Which elected in New York State do you admire most and why?</p>	<p>I am an outspoken admirer of Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. As a fellow woman of color who also got her start because of advocating for her community, I know that she always has the best interests of her constituents at heart. She has also shown the utmost grace during the existence of the IDC, which barred her from her rightful place as the Majority Leader.</p>
<p>What are some of the ways you think New York City or State residents can best participate in civic life?</p>	<p>The number one way to participate is to vote. Voting is a precious right that should never be taken for granted. I also recommend joining a local political organization and standing up for the issues and causes that matter most to them.</p>
<p>What is one fun fact about you?</p>	<p>I do a great rendition of Proud Mary.</p>

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

Candidate Signature: _

Tish James_

Date: 7/31/18

You must sign this questionnaire! When complete, please e-mail your signed and scanned questionnaire to politics@newkingsdemocrats.com and info@newkingsdemocrats.com