



CHARTER REVISION PLATFORM

New York City Charter Revision
October 2019

IN NOVEMBER 2019, New York City voters will have the opportunity to weigh in on 19 proposed changes to the City's Charter. Most of the changes aren't significant, but are a step in the right direction.

NKD recommends voting Yes on all of them.

What is the Charter?

The New York City Charter is our constitution: it dictates the roles of agencies and elected officials and how major decisions are made. The Charter was established in 1897 by the State Legislature, and was overhauled in 1989 when the city voted to completely reshape how the city was governed. It is amended frequently, but some changes require a public referendum.

Didn't this just happen?

Yes. In November 2018, New York City voters approved three changes to the city charter. Those changes were the result of a charter revision commission created by Mayor de Blasio. This year, the proposed changes to the charter are the result of a commission created by City Council.

What are we voting on?

The 19 proposed changes are grouped into 5 ballot questions, so rather than voting for each proposal, voters will vote on each ballot question. The proposals are grouped by topic: elections and redistricting, the civilian complaint review board, ethics and governance, the city budget, and land use. Most of the proposed changes are insignificant, but the first question would make significant changes to how we vote.

Question 1: Yes Elections and Redistricting

What is the ballot question?

Ranked choice voting allows voters to rank candidates by preference rather than picking just one.

Establish ranked choice voting for elections for mayor, comptroller, public advocate, borough president, and city council.

Extend the time between when a special election is announced and when it is held from 45 days to 80, and change the timeline for redrawing City Council districts based on the 2020 census.

Why Vote Yes?

Ranked choice is a fairer way to decide elections with more than two candidates. Voters would not need to worry about wasting their vote on a less well-known candidate, or about another candidate acting as a spoiler against their favorite.

Allowing enough time to implement the new early voting requirements and redrawing the City Council districts are common-sense adjustments.

Question 2: **Yes** Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB)

What is the ballot question?

The CCRB is the entity with oversight of the NYPD.

Add two seats to the board, one appointed by the Public Advocate and one jointly appointed by the Mayor and the Speaker of the City Council, and set a minimum budget for the board.

Give the board more power by requiring the police commissioner to provide a written explanation of any deviation from the CCRB's discipline recommendations, by empowering the CCRB to conduct investigations into officers who lie during misconduct investigations, and by extending subpoena power.

Why Vote **Yes**?

This would more equitably distribute power on the CCRB among elected officials, and would provide the board with protections against defunding as political retaliation.

This would also increase decision-making transparency, discourage police officers from being untruthful, and allow for more efficient CCRB investigations.

Question 4: **Yes** City Budget

What is the ballot question?

Remove one of two barriers against establishing a Rainy Day Fund (state law would still need a change).

Guarantee a minimum budget for the Public Advocate and Borough President.

Require the Mayor to submit revenue estimate and budget modifications earlier in the budget process.

Why Vote **Yes**?

A Rainy Day Fund is a good financial management tool.

This would buffer against political calculations in budget decisions.

This would allow City Council to have better oversight over available funds and spending plans.

Question 3: **Yes** Ethics + Governance

What is the ballot question?

Extend from one year to two the prohibition on City officials appearing before the agency they served in.

Allow the Comptroller and the Public Advocate to each appoint one member to the Conflict of Interest Board, and reduce the maximum amount of money members of the Board are allowed to donate to local elections.

Require that there be a Minority and Women Owned Business office within the Mayor's office.

Mandate that the City Council provide 'advice and consent' for the Mayor's appointment to the City's Corporation Counsel.

Why Vote **Yes**?

This would reduce former City officials' misuse of personal relationships in City government.

This would bring a more diverse set of perspectives to the board, and reduce the likelihood of conflicts of interest.

This could elevate the importance of M/WBE contracting opportunities.

This provides a check on the Mayor's power

Question 5: **Yes** Land Use

What is the ballot question?

Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) is a procedure that allows members of the public to review zoning changes.

Increase transparency in ULURP by letting relevant governmental bodies assess the impact of the proposed changes, make recommendations, and give stakeholders a say.

Give Community Boards extra time to review land use proposals submitted to them in the summer.

Why Vote **Yes**?

This would make applications for changes more accessible to the public for review and allow Community Boards more time to solicit the opinion of their constituents.