



2020 District Leader 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.

Contact with questions: Jessica Thurston, NKD's VP of Political Affairs, politics@newkingsdemocrats.com

Name	Julio Peña III
Assembly District and neighborhoods represented	Assembly District 51, representing Sunset Park, Red Hook and parts of Park Slope, Gowanus & Bay Ridge
How long have you lived in your district?	Born and raised in Sunset Park, 36+ years. Currently work in Red Hook and East NY.
What civic and political organizations are you involved with in your district?	South Central Brooklyn United for Progress, 1st Vice Chair of Brooklyn Community Board #7, Rep Your Block, Kings County Democratic Committee, ED 31, AD 51, founding member of the 51st Assembly District Committee.
What have you accomplished in public life that you are most proud of?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working with County Committee members to get our 51st ADC called after years of a disengaged and inactive leadership and electing our Executive Committee. -Creating a Youth Recognition Award at Community Board 7 and honoring the civic engagement and volunteer work of young people in our community. -Working with my neighbors and community to oust an IDC-aligned member and elect new leadership in Senate District 20.
Why do you want to serve as a District Leader?	<p>As a core value, I believe that, in almost any scenario, if you're not actively bringing different voices to the table, then you're not creating inclusive spaces. As District Leader, I would work with County Committee members to create more inclusive spaces, both at larger meetings and in our first of the borough formed 51st Assembly District Committee. This absolutely includes recruiting new, representative County Committee members and ending the practice of appointing members who do not know they are on County Committee simply to pad the power of the Chairperson with proxy votes.</p> <p>I think District Leaders can work broadly to hold all elected leaders accountable; those we passionately endorse, and those we vehemently disagree with. At the end of the day, they represent a constituency and the County Committee is a</p>

	representative body that should work to hold everyone accountable.
Why do you want New Kings Democrats' endorsement?	New Kings Democrats has been at the forefront of holding the Brooklyn Democratic Party and elected officials accountable. The Rep Your Block campaign has been instrumental in increasing participation in democracy across Brooklyn (myself included!), regardless of who you support as leadership. Earning their endorsement from members would allow me to reach more folks in my community and would continue to build momentum in creating new leadership for the 51st Assembly District.
What are your district's greatest strengths and struggles?	The district has a rich history of being a welcoming community for immigrants and families. My family came to Sunset Park in the 1960s from Puerto Rico with other families from PR and Dominican Republic. Later, the community has welcomed families from all over Latinoamerica and China. This cultural melting pot has created a rich diversity in the community. However, it struggles with one of the lowest voter turnouts in Brooklyn. Coupled with a historically undercounted Census, AD51 is threatened with being underrepresented. Our leaders need to be at the forefront of this conversation at every level.
What is your vision for the Brooklyn Democratic Party?	A party that creates spaces for dialogue and is open, transparent, and inclusive. A Democratic Party that creates rules to increase participation from historically disconnected and disengaged communities rather than rules to further protect the status quo. Party Leaders that vote to protect their constituents rather than their own self-serving goals.
If elected, how will you support the work of New Kings Democrats and its partners to make the Brooklyn Democratic Party more transparent, accountable, or inclusive?	If elected, I will use my voice at the Executive Committee to elevate the grassroots progressives voices that seek transparency, accountability, and inclusionary democracy from our County Committee. NKD has a robust history of being at the forefront of this journey and I am eager to join it!
Please review NKD's County Committee Reform Platform: https://bit.ly/2Zw4fpE Do you support these proposed reforms? Are there any that you do not support? If so, why?	When elected, I will work with NKD to advocate and advance the County Committee Reform platform, in particular, party rules changes to reform proxy voting, vacancies, and standing committees. Further, I am in favor of any rule changes that increases participation and creates more opportunities for engagement.
Do you believe the Party needs to change the way it nominates and elects judges? If so, please describe how you think this process could be improved.	Yes. The way we nominate judges is broken, inequitable and does not provide opportunities for representation. The Executive Committee should not be nominating judges who do not meet the qualifications to sit on the bench. Further, there should be opportunities for County Committee members to vet judges and greater transparency and dialogue in the process.

<p>If elected, how will you engage your constituents in local politics? Do you have a plan for reaching out to traditionally underrepresented communities in your district?</p>	<p>Yes! Sunset Park has such a rich and engaged community. One thing I learned through our 51st ADC is that folks are eager to get involved. We started engaging folks via voter registration drives and just scratched the surface on community engagement - all this without the support/activism of our District Leaders. Imagine what could be possible with an engaged party leadership? My goal is to also engage with community and civic groups in the community and work on coalition-building to better build capacity around voter participation.</p>
<p>If elected, how will you make sure that you have enough time to adequately serve as a district leader? How much time do you envision putting into this work every week?</p>	<p>I think preparing for meetings and making sure I can be accessible is key to the success of being an effective District Leader. Obviously, it is an unpaid position with no district office, however, there is plenty of work to be done for the lead up to County Committee meetings, preparing members, and following up with the community afterwards. That can be demanding and I want to make sure I am devoting enough time to the task.</p>
<p>What funds have you raised for this campaign? What are the major sources of your campaign funds?</p>	<p>While I have only just launched my campaign a month ago, I have raised \$1,600 from 26 individuals mostly in district donors.</p>
<p>What endorsements have you received from publications, electeds, community leaders, or political organizations?</p>	<p>As of now, I have received one endorsement from South Central Brooklyn United for Progress (previously NYSD 17 for Progress).</p>
<p>What areas of the district do you see as your biggest sources of votes and support?</p>	<p>I think my progressive platform and community background appeals to all Democrats in the district and see a strong showing of voters from Sunset Park.</p>
<p>Is there a District Leader in Brooklyn or elsewhere in NYC who you admire? If so, why?</p>	<p>In Brooklyn, I admire Doug Schneider for being a great mentor in Democratic politics. As a Queer Latinx man of color, I admire John Blasco for being brave, bold, and courageously himself.</p>
<p>What is one fun fact about you?</p>	<p>I am a huge nerd. Talk to me about Marvel/DC/Comics/Comic Con and we can chat for hours!</p>

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

Candidate Signature:  Date: 2/27/2020

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