

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress district leader / state committee member candidate questionnaire. Your answers to these questions will be made available to the public on our website, <http://nysd17forprogress.org>, and will be promoted on our Facebook page and twitter feed.

Answers are due by end of day February 20 if you want to be considered for endorsement!

Campaign Information

What is your name? [Julio Peña III](#)

What office are you running for? [State Committee/District Leader, Assembly District 51](#)

Have you held this position before? If so, how long? [No](#)

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them? Info@JulioPenaBK.com

What is your campaign phone number? [n/a](#)

What is your campaign e-mail? info@JulioPenaBK.com

What is your campaign website? www.JulioPenaBK.com

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names?

[Twitter: Julio_PenaBK](#)

[Facebook: JulioPenaBklyn](#)

[Instagram: JulioPenaBK](#)

Campaign Issues

What do you see as the role of district leader? What would you bring to that role?

[I think there is the required role of District Leader and there is a broader undefined role. 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 gain proxy votes.

What do you see as the role of the Brooklyn Democratic Party, both currently and in the future?

The Party has a mandate and role to play in the creating a platform for Democracy, for filing vacancies, for nominating judges. But the battle lies I think with the larger philosophical role of what could we do with a more engaged Party. There is a slew of engaged folks wanting to do more but are actively discouraged. Discouraged because it is becoming harder to become involved due to poor leadership, little transparency, and a party accountable to no one. We should be working to increase leadership, at all levels, both at County Committee, at Committee Meetings, and working to elect progressive leaders in neighboring counties (as well as in our own county!).

What do you see as your role in increasing voter turnout and political participation and how will you go about it?

The work we've done in organizing our 51st Assembly District Committee has paved the way for engaging our County Committee membership. I would continue to partner with members to organize events around voter participation, particularly as 2021 rolls around and Rank Choice Voting comes to the ballot, as well as voter education around RCV.

With a new leader of the Brooklyn Democratic party, what is your vision for how it should be run?

I would hope to see that the tactics of the past stay in the past. It was really disheartening, for so many years to see folks continually excluded. My hope is that Assemblymember Bichotte is committed to reinstating more frequent meetings, creating and including county committee members in committee meetings, and finding more ways to be as inclusive as possible so that KCDC can reflect the diversity of Brooklyn. I also hope that this will set a new tone for how accountability for the Party.

Are there any things the Brooklyn Democratic Party can do to be more transparent and accessible to the average Democrat?

I'd like to see Executive Committee meetings more publicly advertised/open to County

Committee members. They should be live-streamed so that folks know what is actually going on. I'd also like to see some collaboration between the Borough's; Queens and Brooklyn share strong immigrant communities and should be working together, particularly on issues around immigration.

What do you think about the current role of County Committee and how, if at all, should it be changed?

I think the current role is lacking in engaging everyday democrats in some of the larger issues facing our communities - particularly families and immigrants. Many of our elected officials stay silent. If the Democratic Party is creating the party platform, why are we not speaking out on these issues? There is an opportunity to speak up, hold the larger party accountable, and hold elected leaders accountable but that's not really being done right now. In the last few years, many people have gotten involved to do just this but have consistently been met with resistance.

What is your opinion on the rule changes the Brooklyn Democratic Party made at the end of January (reducing the number of yearly county committee meetings, limiting the scope and the subject of resolutions, etc.)?

It's a real slap in the face to the hard work of so many people. It creates a wall between County Committee members and the Executive Committee/District Leaders. There may have been an intent that was good-willed, but the impact will overwhelmingly hurt everyday people. My hope is that we can reintroduce these rules and many more that increase participation, not limit it. I'm also disheartened that so many District Leaders have been incredibly silent on the issue; another reason why the meetings and minutes should be made public.

What, if anything, should the Brooklyn Democratic Party do about party members who run for election as Democrats but do not caucus with Democrats once elected?

If you run as a Democrat, but do not caucus with the Democratic Party, you should not have the support of the party. I just cannot see a scenario that would excuse this.

What do you think about the current process by which judges are chosen to receive the Democratic nomination and how, if at all, should it be changed?

Judges being selected for specific districts or municipal districts should come to communities and meet the community members. Every election voters go to the ballot and have no idea who these judges are. I also have concerns with electing judges in general but I admit, I am not a subject matter expert.

What do you think about the current process for determining the Democratic nominee in special elections for state-level races and how, if at all, should it be changed?

This is why I think Assembly District Committees are so important! Nominees in special elections should not be selected by 42 members in a room with only one or two members from that district. ADCs should meet, discuss, and vote on nominees for special elections. County Committee members reflect more on the values of communities.

Should district leaders have term limits? Why or why not?

I would be open to term-limits for District Leaders. I'm not sure what would make sense in the length of service since it is an unpaid, non-legislative position.

How independent should district leaders be from other elected officials? Should district leaders be allowed to hold another elected position? Why or why not?

In the party rules, they outline that District Leaders cannot hold state-wide or city-wide office. During the charter revision commission discussions, there were talks to ban City Council members from being party leaders. I think there is already a discussion around party leaders holding dual office. I'm not sure it's creating space for others to be involved, particularly underserved communities. I think folks who are working to create the party platform should be independent and hold their elected leaders accountable and that would be difficult if they are the same elected leaders who are then proposing legislation. I also have serious ethical/moral concerns with elected leaders/district leaders who resign and get to handpick their successor.

What other issues should a district leader take a position on?

I think any issue that can be elevated to County Committee a District Leader can take a position on, particularly issues that have the ability to shape a party position and impact communities.