

1. What is your name?

Reshma Saujani

2. What office are you running for?

Public Advocate

3. What is your plan for preserving and adding additional units of affordable housing in New York City?

I am running for Public Advocate to create opportunities for all, and that means expanding the availability of affordable housing, especially for New York’s working families and seniors. As Public Advocate, I will create a new legal corps within the Office of the Public Advocate to partner young lawyers working to meet new pro bono requirements with tenants to combat unscrupulous landlords who are trying to circumvent affordability and safety protections. I will demand that developers build more affordable housing, and push Albany to restore control of New York City affordable housing policy to the City. As someone who is committed to standing up for every New Yorker I will also focus on the foreclosure and homelessness crises in our city that are not getting enough attention from policy makers, and focus on best practices that the City should scale up. Finally, I will ensure that my appointee to the City Planning Commission will stand up for working families, seniors and community concerns in city rezoning processes to ensure greater affordable housing and community benefits.

4. Do you support or oppose 421 tax abatements for development in buildings in already highly desirable neighborhoods?

Support

5. As a Public Official, what actions would you take to promote the continuation and improvement of rent stabilization In New York City?

I am extremely concerned about the 421a tax abatements for high-end developments, and whether we are effectively using our tax expenditures to build truly affordable housing that meets the needs of New York working families and seniors. I believe we need to demand more from developers than the current 20% affordable housing set-aside, and that we need to revise affordability requirements to address the financial reality of working New Yorkers. We cannot continue to subsidize the housing preferences of the wealthy at the expense of the majority of New Yorkers who are spending an unreasonable amount on housing. Vacancy decontrol has caused a consistent erosion of New York’s affordable housing stock. We have also seen that landlords will use any measure of means – legal and illegal – to remove apartments from the rent stabilization system so they can further enrich

themselves at the expense of New York’s working families. I will be a strong and vocal advocate for generally returning the right of housing self-determination to New York City residents, and for specifically repealing vacancy decontrol to ensure that New Yorkers have the opportunity to stay in the homes where they grew up, built their lives, and raised their families. In addition, as Public Advocate, I will create a new legal corps within the Office of the Public Advocate to partner young lawyers working to meet new pro bono requirements with tenants to combat unscrupulous landlords who are trying to circumvent affordability and safety protections. Public Advocate Bill de Blasio has done an admirable job identifying the city’s worst slumlords; I will use the Public Advocate’s office not just to shine a light on the problem, but to go a step further and hold these landlords accountable.

6. How would you provide housing and mental health services to the homeless?

I will be a Public Advocate who stands up for the most vulnerable New Yorkers, including the mentally ill and homeless. I support scaling up effective programs that provide public health, mental health and job training services to low-income and homeless individuals. As Public Advocate, I will work with advocates and experts to identify and scale up proven interventions so that we build a more comprehensive and effective set of policies for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

7. What is your position on the leasing of NYCHA property to private developers?

I believe that decisions about future development should be made based on the needs and goals of the community, not the needs of private developers. I oppose the plan to sell NYCHA property to private developers, as it will disrupt vital community resources for NYCHA and other area residents. Further, if space is currently occupied by public schools I do not believe it can be simply deemed “open space” for the sake of leasing or selling it off to developers – if there is a school on the site, it is not open space. Development must be accompanied by a critical examination of how it will impact local neighborhoods, schools, mass transit, parks, senior centers and other public services. I believe we should be more aggressive about requiring developers to finance improvements in schools, social infrastructure and mass transit when they are developing in already densely populated areas and even then the development must only be done with appropriate community awareness and participation.

8. What is your position on the leasing of open space that is currently occupied by public schools to private developers?

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community resources for NYCHA and other area residents. Further, if space is currently occupied by public schools I do not believe it can be simply deemed “open space” for the sake of leasing or selling it off to developers – if there is a school on the site, it is not open space. Development must be accompanied by a critical examination of how it will impact local neighborhoods, schools, mass transit, parks, senior centers and other public services. I believe we should be more aggressive about requiring developers to finance improvements in schools, social infrastructure and mass transit when they are developing in already densely populated areas and even then the development must only be done with appropriate community awareness and participation.

9. Do you support the continuation of mayoral control of schools?

Yes

10. Do you support or oppose the Mayor appointing a majority of the members on the Public Education Panel?

Oppose

11. Do you support or oppose the reappointment of Dennis Walcott as Chancellor?

Oppose

12. Do you support ending tenure protection for teachers?

No

13. Do you support or oppose a moratorium on school closings?

Support

14. Do you support or oppose the co-location of charter schools in public school buildings?

I support a moratorium until there is a meaningful review process that engages parents

15. Do you support or oppose a moratorium on new charter schools?

Oppose

16. Do you support or oppose giving local Community Education Councils greater power in determining use of school space?

Support

17. How can you use your office to encourage the use of renewable energy?

I will use the Office of the Public Advocate to advocate for the greater usage of renewable energy in a number of ways that are beneficial to the environment and

create economic opportunities for New Yorkers. I will push for more development of local renewable energy resources in New York City, including solar panels on public buildings and public infrastructure projects. I will work to partner low-income New Yorkers with green jobs training so that the installation of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies in New York can be done in a manner that empowers our residents. I will work with the City Council to introduce new legislation and accountability mechanisms to ensure that the City is meeting renewable energy usage goals and the City residents have greater opportunities to choose their energy supply from renewable resources.

18. Are you in favor of closing the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant? If so, how will you use your office to support IP's closing?

As Indian Point continues to age, I have serious concerns about the continued safety of the facility and its resilience to potential disasters, both natural and man-made in scope. I believe we need to begin transitioning to renewable energy today and to reduce our overall energy use by aggressively retrofitting our buildings and adopting energy efficient technologies. I believe Indian Point should not be a part of the long-term energy supply mix of our region, and look forward to working with our elected officials in Albany and Washington to find more meaningful energy resources.

19. Under what conditions, if any, would you support hydraulic fracturing in New York State?

I support a continued moratorium on fracking and am open to a permanent ban. Protecting the quality of our drinking water is not just an economic issue, it's a public health and safety issue. Moreover, as Public Advocate I will fight to create good-paying jobs, and though the prospect of more jobs in fracking seems appealing, the energy industry has a proven track record of leaving behind environmental havoc whenever and wherever it suited their bottom line. We would be better off creating jobs in non-polluting industries that do not threaten our safety or public health.

20. Do you favor or oppose commercial rent control?

Oppose

21. Do you support zoning regulations that discourage owners of commercial properties from renting to large banks and chain stores?

Yes

No

22. Do you support or oppose the leasing of public parks to raise revenue, such as private tennis courts in Central Park or private development of the Hudson River Park?

Oppose

23. Do you think the power of eminent domain has been abused within the city? Is so, what examples would you cite?

I am concerned about the usage of eminent domain for the city's major development projects over the past several years. I believe we should have robust community and public conversations to determine public benefits before eminent domain is allowed to be invoked by city planners.

24. Do you support a bill mandating a living wage for anyone who works under a contract with New York City?

Yes

25. How do you define a living wage in dollars?

I believe a living wage is a wage that allows an individual working a full 40-hour work week to earn enough to afford to live here and provide opportunities their families. Realistically, I think we need to raise the minimum wage in New York City to at least \$10/hour, which is indexed to inflation so that purchasing power does not decrease over time.

26. Should the living wage be applied only to NYC contracts or should there be a City minimum wage tied to the cost of living in New York city?

City Minimum Wage tied to Cost of Living

27. Would you support the establishment of a City Department of Labor for complaints of violation of fair labor standards?

No

28. Do you believe there should be mandatory paid sick leave in New York City for all workers regardless of establishment size?

Yes

29. Under what circumstances, short of probable cause, should a police officer be able to stop and frisk someone?

All police practices must adhere to U.S. Constitution and New York State Constitution, which protect an individual's right to be free of unreasonable government search and seizures. I believe that the NYPD's current practice of Stop and Frisk does not meet constitutional standards, and that other factors besides

reasonable suspicion are being used to stop, question and frisk too many of our youth and New Yorkers of color. As Public Advocate I will stand up for our most vulnerable New Yorkers who are being unfairly and illegally targeted.

30. Would you continue, change or end the stop and frisk policy of the police department?

I support ending Stop and Frisk as it is currently practiced. The NYPD's current Stop and Frisk practice is misguided, racist and wrong. I believe it is an ongoing civil rights violation that is not only unjust, but also harms police community relations and undermines public safety. When I am Public Advocate, I will not only support comprehensive legislation to end the abuse of this practice, but will use the powers of my office to shine a light and agitate around all civil rights violations in this city.

31. Is there something you can do to keep people from getting arrested when, while being searched, they are found to have small amounts of marijuana that would not have been a crime if the marijuana was not in public view?

Until the state changes this misapplied law, we need to seek other administrative remedies to this wrongly enforced law. I will strongly advocate to the Mayor and NYPD that they instruct officers to permanently cease making arrests for "public view" violations when small amounts of marijuana are only discovered by means of a search. I also support stronger oversight mechanisms, including an independent Inspector General, at the NYPD to prevent the abuse of the rights of New Yorkers. As Public Advocate, I will shine a light on abusive police practices. I will also work to bridge the gap between the NYPD and communities across New York City to better empower neighborhoods to lower crime rates.

32. Who would you appoint or support as police commissioner?

I believe the next Mayor should appoint a new police commissioner after conducting an appropriate nationwide search for an individual who has the skills appropriate to a law enforcement agency as large as the NYPD, but who also understands the unique challenges of running such an agency in a city as diverse as ours. Our next police commissioner should demonstrate a true commitment to community-based policing, and bring an attitude of fostering better, more cooperative police-community relations as a cornerstone of reducing crime.

33. What would you do to improve city mental health services?

Mentally ill New Yorkers are some of the most vulnerable individuals in our City and I will be a Public Advocate who fights for them. I believe City social service agencies and contracts should no longer be among the first items to be cut in the Mayor's annual budget, and instead, in times of economic contraction, we should be

prioritizing the availability of social services to support the greater number of New Yorkers in need. I will advocate for robust funding of our mental health system. I will also push for greater understanding of and implementation of best practices to ensure we are effectively spending money to support the mental health needs of New Yorkers.

34. Would you continue (support) Bloomberg's policy of increasing the number of bike lanes?

Yes

35. How would you protect transit fares?

I believe the City should have greater control over our mass transit system, and that City officials and residents should have a greater say in the decision-making processes of the MTA. We should be better working with our federal elected officials for greater federal funding for public transportation projects – instead of the bias towards highways and suburban development – and seeking greater regional collaborations that can help share the burden of our transit system which serves the interests of suburban commuters and regional businesses every day.

36. Do you support congestion pricing?

Yes

No

37. What, if anything, do you think should be done to New York City's campaign finance law?

I believe that keeping special interest money out of politics is the key to ensuring fairness in the Democratic process and I am proud to be running for office in a city that is committed to empowering individuals over corporations. As Deputy Public Advocate, I worked with Bill de Blasio to build the Coalition for Accountability in Corporate Spending (CAPS) to put pressure on corporations to disclose their political giving and ensure more transparency in the system. As Public Advocate, I will push for New York to continue its leadership in this area, including by better addressing third-party spending and exploring more comprehensive forms of public financing of campaigns.

38. Do you favor an increase in City income taxes for residents making more than \$250,000 per year?

Yes

39. Do you favor or oppose an increase in the city sales tax?

Oppose

40. Would you support a transaction tax on Wall Street trades?

Support

Oppose

41. Do you think non-profits, including religious institutions, should be taxed when such institutions sell their property or air rights?

I believe nonprofit organizations should be able to legitimately raise funds in accordance with - and in furtherance of - their approved charitable missions. Our federal and state tax officials should pay close attentions to ventures between tax-exempt organizations and for-profit entities to ensure that relevant charitable principles that undergird our tax-exempt system for nonprofit organizations are properly followed.

42. What kind of a commuter tax, if any, would you support?

I support reinstating the commuter tax that expired in 1999, and look forward to pushing Albany to implement a solution that ensures that those who use city services pay their fair share for the maintenance of those services.