

2018 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE'S NAME and HOME ADDRESS:

Cynthia Nixon

[REDACTED]

Position for which you are a candidate: Governor

Candidate's address for all DRC correspondence:

[REDACTED]

THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE DRC WEB SITE, Facebook Page, and as many other media outlets as possible.

Name, cell phone number and e-mail address for the person on your staff who will be your liaison with the DRC.

[REDACTED]

List your qualifications for this office including but not limited to other offices you have held, educational background, etc.

I grew up in New York City, where I was raised by a single mother in a one bedroom, fifth-floor walk-up apartment. I'm a proud graduate of New York public schools and an even prouder public school parent of three children, Sam (21), Charlie (15) and Max (7). I began working as an actor when I was 12 years old to earn money to pay for my college education, and also have been a proud union member ever since.

I'm a lifelong Democrat, and for the last 17 years, I have been fighting for better schools and more equitable education funding all across the state, including as a spokesperson and organizer for the Alliance for Quality Education. I have traveled the state, met with legislators and elected leaders at all levels of government, and spoken out in Albany on

numerous occasions to demand that public schools in every district get the resources they need, regardless of income level.

I also lobbied legislators for marriage equality, and when that wasn't sufficient to get the vote we needed, I helped build Fight Back New York, an effort to ensure an adequate majority of elected leaders in Albany who would vote for marriage equality by removing state Senators from office who were opposed to same-sex marriage. The campaign ultimately raised \$800,000 and helped elect three new Senators in support of marriage equality. I also traveled around the country to support marriage equality efforts in Maryland, Washington State, and New Jersey.

Please address these questions, but make your answers brief so the entire questionnaire does not exceed 4 pages.

- 1. ABILITY TO LEAD THE ENTIRE STATE – What contact and experiences have you had with parts of the state, other than where you currently reside, which demonstrate your recognition of the geographic, demographic and economic diversity of the state and your ability to provide leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers?**

From meeting with disability rights advocates in Rochester to public school families in Syracuse, I find that New Yorkers upstate and downstate have a lot in common. Across upstate New York, I hear about families struggling with underfunded schools, the disastrous effects of climate change, and the lack of good-paying jobs. One of the first places I visited on the campaign trail was Hoosick Falls. It is a small community that had been long ignored by the political leadership of New York State. While I was born and raised in the city, my mother's family who I visited every Summer growing up lived in rural Missouri and where they were farmers for decades, and having been very close to that family I am intricately aware of the kinds of issues faced by people who live in urban and rural areas alike.

- 1. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES – What issues do you believe are of most concern to voters in rural counties, and what will be your message in addressing those issues?**

School funding: Under Andrew Cuomo the funding gap between rich and poor school districts has grown by 24% to nearly \$10,000 per pupil. Rural schools are among the most underfunded, as are small city school districts located in rural counties. I will fully fund Foundation Aid, which Governor Cuomo has consistently opposed. I will appoint a commission in my first year in office to evaluate the existing Foundation Aid formula and recommend changes. This commission will

include representatives of rural and small city communities (school board members, teachers, parents or school superintendents). My year two budget will include their recommended reforms to Foundation Aid.

Infrastructure: I will invest heavily in infrastructure including roads, bridges, sewer and water systems. This will create jobs in rural communities and small cities and will ensure that these counties have the infrastructure they need for economic growth, as opposed to the Governor's approach to economic development which has passed over rural communities in favor of tax breaks for large corporations. We also make transportation and bus lines in particular accessible to all parts of the state, in order to address the many transportation deserts that currently exist and are crippling for people trying to live everyday life.

Higher Education: Higher education is vital to our rural counties--both because we need quality, affordable higher educational opportunities for New Yorkers throughout the state and because many of our SUNY schools and community colleges are located in rural communities and counties. While Gov. Cuomo's Excelsior scholarship program is largely a sham, serving only 3.2% of students, I will provide free tuition for all New Yorkers with incomes of up to \$80,000. This will be a tremendous benefit for rural communities.

Taxes: Under Andrew Cuomo increasing amounts of the tax burden has relied on property owners. This is because the priority of Governor Cuomo has been to cut taxes on the wealthy, banks and corporations. Raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations will primarily impact downstate urban and suburban communities. Rural communities on the other hand will gain investment in infrastructure, schools and higher education as a result.

Agriculture: Dairy farm income is of vital importance to New York, but Governor Cuomo has failed to provide any leadership on the issue. A key priority will be to ensure that family dairy farms have the capacity to succeed. Larger farms are really squeezing out local farmers and we need to stop that from happening. The price of milk is falling due to over-supply and the system is becoming rigged against local farmers.

There are large agricultural co-ops that are multi-state and sell milk to processors. If you don't have someone selling your milk, it's hard to survive. Banks are denying local farmers the opportunity for business and demanding a lot (more cows, better barns) and picking winners and losers. There's ongoing anti-trust litigation on this and we've got to support small farmers to succeed which will support the industry as a whole. The farm bureau needs to sound the alarm and help deal with the crisis. We are one of the top dairy producing places in the country. We can't allow our farmers to be in poverty. We can afford to provide appropriate supports to family dairy farms by utilizing a portion of existing economic development funds.

Broadband: Broadband service is critical to economic growth and the provision of basic services like health care and education. New York's slow pace in expanding vital broadband services has stranded many rural and low-income New Yorkers from accessing education

technologies, 21st century jobs, and more. It's past time to end the digital divide. In many rural areas of New York State you can't get access to broadband services whatsoever. Providing fiber optics networks is an enormous economic develop boost that enables job growth. Lack of access to the internet holds back small business owners who are unable to process orders and provide services via online markets and/or email. Expanding fiber optics should be done to maximize the expansion of union jobs across New York State. Laying and servicing fiber optics channels is difficult and dangerous work, and it should be done by trained, union professionals. If Charter is failing to expand quality broadband services, they should be held accountable. But the Governor's track record has been one that focuses more on handing favors to his big corporate donors than on making targeted economic investment. New York needs less grandstanding and real leadership in order to drive the expansion of high-speed broadband across New York State. During the New Deal, we provided electricity to thousands and thousands of rural households through state and federal investment. Today we need the same attention to utility access. 2.5 million households (and therefore nearby businesses) in New York State lack access to high speed internet services.

Climate: 2016 was the hottest year on record and the 12 warmest years have all occurred over the past 20 years. Sea level is projected to rise in Long Island, Climate change means New York's farmers are whipsawed by too much water followed by drought and high heat. Coastal flooding damages infrastructure, including the subway system and sends billions of gallons of untreated sewage into our state's treasured waterways including the Hudson River and the Great Lakes. The ski industry in the Catskills and Adirondacks is losing money because of warmer weather and fewer ski days.

I support rejecting all new fossil fuel infrastructure and enacting a Green New Deal to push New York toward a 100% renewable energy economy by 2050. A Green New Deal could generate 100,000 jobs in the renewable energy sector every single year. While the extraction of fracked gas has been banned in New York, our current leadership believes that fracked gas is a "bridge" to a renewable future. Yet the science is clear. Investing in new fracked gas infrastructure locks us into decades more emissions we cannot afford, and poses serious health risks for surrounding communities. We must immediately end investment in any new fossil fuel plants and pipelines and refocus efforts and funding toward renewable energy.

1. PARTY BUILDING – How have you expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building our party statewide and what are your ideas for future party building, specific to rural counties?

As Governor I will work closely with local elected officials and County Democratic committees to build the activist base of our party. It has been very distressing to me that Gov. Cuomo has neglected this duty. We have seen in fact that he has not campaigned against Republican State Senators and that he orchestrated the defection of the IDC to ally with the Republican Senators.

I will commit to work with local Democratic Committees to field competitive candidates in every Senate race, as well as in Assembly and Congressional races and I will campaign for the election of these candidates. These campaigns, along with local elections, are essential party building activities.

1. In the event of a primary for the office you are seeking, will you support the winner of the Democratic primary? (This calls for a YES or NO answer only.)

I am waiting on the outcome of the primary to make my decision. Gov. Cuomo has the same challenge as he is endorsed by more than one party.

5. FAIRNESS IN SHARING POLITICAL POWER - How have you and how will you defend and further the rights of small counties to be represented in the decision making process and in governmental and political positions?

I will make sure that appointments to my administration reflect the people of New York. Under Governor Cuomo these boards are overwhelmingly filled by big donors--mostly urban white men. Rural communities, like other communities, are significantly underrepresented. I will make sure that these boards have representative cross section of New Yorkers based on race, gender and region. The same goes for my administration. I will certainly seek the advice of the DRC and other rural constituencies in looking for recommendations for appointments and staffing.

6. INCLUSION – If elected, how would your administration include the people from DRC counties and address the issues of concern in those counties?

Under Governor Cuomo, the only people with influence are large corporate donors and this means that rural counties are shortchanged, and often ignored, in their input. I will travel to rural communities and small cities to meet with local community members and leaders and my administration will engage leaders from rural counties in fashioning solutions to New York State's issues. As I said in the prior question my appoints to boards and to positions in the administration will reflect the regional diversity of the state.

7. VOTER APPEAL – What qualities or experiences do you have that would attract support from voters in DRC counties, not just from Democrats but also from non-enrolled voters and cross-over Republicans?

One of the big problems that continues to go unaddressed, and in fact has gotten worse, is corruption in Albany. Ending Albany's corruption is a vital issue to appeal to non-enrolled and crossover voters. Governor Cuomo is unpopular in upstate and rural communities. The corruption is closely tied to the pay-to-play culture of Albany that Governor Cuomo has mastered. Much of this corruption has been tied to economic development programs which has

a very poor track record of producing jobs. All of it ignored the needs of rural New York. I am taking no corporate contributions and unlike Gov. Cuomo will not be beholden to corporate donors. I will end the pay to play culture of Albany. My approach to economic development will appeal to rural and small city voters. Instead of giving large subsidies to corporations which have failed to meet job goals, I will invest heavily infrastructure including roads, bridges, sewer and water systems. This will aid small cities and rural areas and will create jobs and build the infrastructure for economic development.

I will fully fund our public schools by funding the Foundation Aid formula which is very important to both rural and small city school districts. I will also update the formula which has not been updated since enacted in 2007. This will benefit rural communities, some of which are shortchanged by a floor on what is called the Income Wealth Index--in other words they are punished for being too poor. Governor Cuomo has consistently argued against funding the Foundation Aid formula and even tried to repeal it in 2017. The underfunding of these schools is why 8 small cities across the state are suing governor Cuomo and why there is a second lawsuit that includes small cities, rural districts and large cities. I support these lawsuits and will resolve them by funding schools in all regions of the state.

8. CAMPAIGN IN DRC COUNTIES – How would you campaign in DRC counties? Have you personally appeared with any local rural candidates? In what rural counties have you campaigned? How have you helped rural candidates campaign?

One of the first stops I made in my campaign was in Hoosick Falls in Rensselaer County. I met with residents who provided a first-hand account of what it has been like to deal with the toxic contamination of their drinking water. Factories in Hoosick Falls used a toxic chemical in manufacturing that contaminated drinking water wells throughout the town and village of Hoosick Falls, including the Village of Hoosick Falls public water supply which provides drinking water to thousands.

I also spoke out against the garbage incinerator in Finger Lakes. The Finger Lakes provide thousands of jobs and injects billions of dollars into New York's economy every year. I stood firmly opposed to the Crestwood Gas Storage Project and the Romulus garbage incinerator. The Governor of California would never allow a massive garbage incinerator or a major gas storage and transport hub to be built in the heart of Napa Valley.

THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE MUST BE postmarked or e-mailed at your earliest convenience but no later than _____, 2018 to Phil Jones at 19 Elm Street, Geneseo, NY 14454 or via e-mail at paj12147@gmail.com. INTERVIEWS MAY BE ARRANGED THEREAFTER.