

Democratic Rural Conference of New York State

2018 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE'S NAME and HOME ADDRESS:

Zephyr Teachout

Position for which you are a candidate: **Attorney General**

Candidate's address for all DRC correspondence:



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.



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

I am a constitutional law professor, an anti-corruption fighter, and an anti-trust expert. I began my law career representing people on death row, and co-founded an organization dedicated to training young lawyers in underfunded defense trial work. I am the former national director of the Sunlight Foundation and am now a professor at Fordham Law School. I was cited by Justice Stevens in his dissent of Citizens United. I joined a team of lawyers to sue Donald Trump just three days after he took office for violation of the Emoluments Clause, and have continued to lead that fight to bring similar lawsuits in Washington DC and Maryland, where I advised the Attorneys General. As the author of the book Corruption in America, I am uniquely qualified to take on the lawlessness of the Trump administration, and to root out corruption in our own state. The deep knowledge I have of the US Constitution allows me to be creative in my approach to combat injustice, and allows me to use tools available to the Attorney General that we have not seen utilized. My experience, and the fact that I am the only candidate not to take LLC money, or corporate PAC money means that we I will be able to exercise the powers of the office of the AG in a way we have not seen before.

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

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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?

New York State is the most diverse in the country. Statewide officials in New York must represent every community, from the immigrant communities of the Bronx and Queens, to the financial powerhouse of Manhattan, to the rural and more conservative areas upstate. I will fight every day to make sure that all New Yorkers, including those who have traditionally been shut out of the process, are able to have their voices heard. Throughout this campaign, I have made an effort to visit every part of the state to better understand the needs of individual communities.

2. 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?

Rural areas of New York State face unique challenges, and also disproportionately suffer from many problems that affect all New Yorkers. For example, a well-funded and well-run public education system is the essential infrastructure of democracy, but is something that has eluded many, especially for the most vulnerable children across our state. New York State’s public schools are drastically underfunded, and I will make it a priority to enforce school funding mandates.

Additionally, we are facing a national public health crisis driven by the deceptive practices and aggressive marketing of addictive and dangerous opioids. The Attorney General’s office must take the lead to abate this deadly crisis. The big pharmaceutical companies that profited off this misery must be held to account, and to fund the recovery. This is perhaps the most abusive, egregious scandal in the history of the pharmaceutical industry, where deceptive marketing converted a niche opioid painkilling drug into one of the most widely used prescription drugs in the country, and I will use every legal tool available to hold these companies responsible.

Lastly, New York’s infrastructure is outdated and crumbling, from the subways in New York City, to our roads, bridges, and tunnels, to our electrical grid. Many rural areas suffer from outdated infrastructure and are harmed by dirty fossil fuel pollution and a lack of access to resources such as high-speed internet. These challenges are occurring at the same time that telecom giants are merging, often resulting in monopolies in rural areas, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is indiscriminately approving dirty fossil fuel projects that will harm rural New Yorkers. As Attorney General, I will stand up for our rural communities and ensure that their health, wellbeing, and economic interests are not sacrificed for corporate profits.

3. 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?

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My vision for the New York State Democratic Party is a party that looks out for the well-being of all working class New Yorkers, whether they work in a bodega in the Bronx or a farm in Essex County. It is essential that the Party stand up for ordinary people and reject the influence of corporations, large donors, and entrenched political power structures. The motto of New York State is “excelsior,” meaning “ever upward.” I firmly believe, however, that we can only move “upward” if all New Yorkers, including our most vulnerable communities, see the benefits of our progress, not just those who live in privileged zip codes.

4. 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.)

Yes.

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?

The fact that LLC’s and corporate PACs can contribute to campaigns severely hampers the ability for citizens, especially those in small counties and rural areas, to have their interests adequately represented in state government. We must get corporate money out of politics to ensure that citizens all over New York are able to have their voice and vote heard. The Attorney General is the people’s lawyer, and I will work on behalf of all New Yorkers, wherever they live.

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

The New York Attorney General’s office has 15 regional offices located all over the state. I will ensure that I receive input from all regional offices on policies and lawsuits that can potentially affect their interests, and will staff each office with attorneys who are in touch with the communities in which they are located.

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?

Voters from both parties, as well as political independents, justifiably feel like their voices are getting drowned out by well-funded interests. I intend to change that. I have and always will be working for the people. I don’t accept corporate or LLC money and will always put the wellbeing and interests of New York’s citizens first and foremost. Two of my biggest campaign goals are addressing and combating corruption, and defending workers’ rights.

People from all political views care about these issues and want a government that looks out for their interests. I also believe that people all over the political

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spectrum will be attracted to my relentlessness, independence, deep knowledge of law, and empathy for all New Yorkers. I have the independence to be an Attorney General that holds everyone equally accountable under the law, something that is desperately needed in this position.

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?

We have a field organizer in Tompkins county, and have regular canvasses throughout the state to connect to a diverse range of voters. I have a strong connection to the communities encompassed in NY-19 and throughout the southern tier, Central New York, and upstate New York. These are areas that are critical to our pathway to victory.

9. OTHER CRITERIA – Please set forth anything else you want us to consider. **New York's infrastructure is crumbling around us, while contracts for infrastructure projects routinely go to big donors. New York's corruption problem runs deep and it disproportionately hurts the state's most vulnerable communities, including rural areas that depend on these projects. Politically connected hedge funds block policies that would benefit our kids and public education system. While some of the corruption is unfortunately legal, a lot of what we see today is illegal. With the recent bribery convictions of Sheldon Silver, Dean Skelos, Joseph Percoco, and Alain Kaloyeros, it is more important than ever that the next Attorney General keeps a healthy distance from Albany insiders and the governor's office. I pledge to call out corruption wherever I see it, no matter how many powerful people wish I would look the other way.**

8/16/18
Date

ZT
Signature of the Candidate

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.