



## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 2009 MAYORAL CANDIDATES

**Generally.** What is your greatest accomplishment that has helped immigrants, and what are your top policy priorities for immigrant communities if you are elected mayor?

Throughout my tenure, I've sought to maximize the economic contributions of immigrants while facilitating their integration into the civic life of our communities. I signed Executive Orders establishing a uniform policy and standards for translation and interpretation services for City agencies, and forbidding City workers from asking immigrants about their legal status unless they are suspected of a crime. My administration published the City's first Directory of Services for Immigrants, and I've demonstrated my commitment to protecting immigrants from exploitation through our Day Laborer and Scaffolding Task Forces. From establishing Immigrant Heritage Week to partnering with immigrant advocacy groups for the 2010 Census, I've tried to advocate for immigrants at every available opportunity. I also believe strongly that our nation needs more immigrants, not fewer, and I will continue to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and the DREAM Act. My vision for the future is available at [www.mikebloomberg2009.com/immigrants](http://www.mikebloomberg2009.com/immigrants).

**Drop-Out Crisis.** English language learners in our public schools have one of the highest dropout rates in New York City schools. What concrete steps will you take to increase the graduation rates and decrease the dropout rates of these most vulnerable students?

I have made it a priority to improve outcomes for English Language Learners (ELLs). As a result of new initiatives and a revamped funding formula, the City's ELL graduation rate is up significantly and the dropout rate has decreased. According to the State Education Department, 35.8% of students in the class of 2008 who entered high school as ELLs graduated after four years—up 10 percentage points over 2007. The ELL dropout rate fell seven points, from 29.3% in 2007 to 21.7% in 2008.

But we can do more. That's why Chancellor Klein appointed Laura Rodriguez as the first Chief Achievement Officer for Special Education and English Language Learners. We will launch a Mayoral Blue Ribbon Task Force on ELLs for further recommendations. Finally, we will undertake a citywide campaign to inform ELL parents about the charter school options available to their children.

**English Classes.** Learning English is key to surviving and succeeding in our city. Many programs that offer affordable adult English classes have suffered drastic cuts, however, making long waiting lists for these classes even longer. What will you do to increase the availability of free and low-cost adult English classes for immigrant communities?

It is critically important to me that New Yorkers have the opportunity to learn English. Over the past four years, we expanded adult education by over \$5 million and have not cut back on ESL classes during the fiscal



downturn. Most new funding went to CBOs offering ESL. Funding of CBOs is at a record high: nearly \$8 million per year. After baselining the new City funding, we allocated \$4 million in stimulus funds. I have charged my administration with developing a ten-year plan to provide English learning opportunities for everyone who wants them. We will expand ESL classes, recruit an army of volunteers to host new conversation and tutoring groups, and make "We Are New York" English videos and workbooks available on-line for free. In the first year, we'll make a \$3 million down-payment of City funds and I will work with State and Federal leaders to expand their commitments.

**Legal Services.** A shortage of quality, affordable immigration legal services is one of the most pressing concerns in immigrant communities. It gives rise to scam artists who prey on the community. To address this shortage, will you commit additional funding to support non-profit community-based legal service providers? How much of a funding increase will you propose?

I am well aware of the need to enhance the legal services available in immigrant communities. That's why, as part of my "Immigrants: The Lifeblood of New York City" campaign plan, I have developed a plan for the City to partner with private law firms to dispatch deferred legal associates to immigrant communities in need of quality legal assistance and representation. The City will commit \$2 million to the effort, and will work with local law schools to engage alumni in a Call to Service for the Legal Community to provide pro-bono legal assistance to immigrants. At the same time, a new reporting and regulation policy is required to protect immigrants from exploitation by unscrupulous, non-attorney "immigrant service providers." As a first step, I will convene a Task Force on Immigrant Service Providers, co-chaired by the Commissioners of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Office of Immigrant Affairs.

**Worker Centers.** In these tough economic times, more New Yorkers are heading to street corners in search of work, making the need for worker hiring centers greater than ever. Will your administration support or contribute to the creation of worker centers that provide job training, safety training, and a more organized way for workers and employers to come together?

I know the impact that the economic downturn has had on vulnerable low-wage workers, and we are committed to doing everything we can to improve the skills and training available so they can work their way into New York City's middle class. That's why I commissioned a report on Day Laborers within our city, which has led to a series of important actions. First, we are using stimulus funding (\$4.59 million) to support a low-wage worker initiative to increase English language skills and employability skills (vocational training, job placement, resume writing, interview techniques), help workers better understand their rights and become familiar with essential on the job safety principles and rules and regulations. Second, we are also amending 26 current contracts in our immigration/literacy portfolio for this initiative to serve approximately 2,566 immigrants. And lastly, we are recruiting additional organizations to participate that have expertise in teaching these kinds of skills.



**Police Relations.** Many immigrants feel they are victims of racial profiling and harassment by the police. What steps will you take to address these concerns and to improve community-police relations in immigrant communities?

There is nothing I take more seriously than my duty to keep New Yorkers safe. New York is now the safest big city in America and I intend to keep it that way. NYPD is the best trained, best prepared police department in the world. I do not tolerate racial profiling and signed a tough law to ban it. We've worked very hard to improve the tone of police-community relations, in part by having a police department that is more reflective of the city. Today, for the first time in our history, the rank of police officer is majority minority. And I've repeatedly made it clear that, unless immigrants are suspected of a crime, they cannot be asked about their immigration status, and I've repeatedly urged immigrants to turn to the police if they are the victims of a crime. Our Immigration Outreach Unit also promotes collaboration between immigrant leaders and the NYPD.

**Immigration Enforcement.** For years, federal immigration agents have been stationed at Rikers Island, where they are given access to detainees and can begin the process of deportation, even though most detainees have not even had their day in court. As a result, thousands of New Yorkers are deported every year, regardless of whether they are found innocent or guilty. Will you end the city's participation in the federal immigration enforcement program at Department of Corrections facilities?

We have recently instituted a number of reforms as it relates to our policies with federal immigration agents. Today, ICE agents may have contact with only those inmates who consent in advance and in writing to speaking with federal officials. Foreign born inmates may elect not to see and to speak with an ICE agent at all or not to see and to speak with an ICE agent without their attorney present. It is their choice.

**Immigration Reform.** What specific actions will you take as mayor to fight for federal immigration reform on behalf of immigrant communities in New York City?

I believe strongly that our nation's suicidal immigration policy is holding back our progress. We need comprehensive immigration reform and the DREAM Act. I've advocated for it in the past, and I will continue to use all of my powers to make this case in Washington, DC. While we advocate, we also need to make sure that we're prepared for the day when reform becomes a reality. That's why I've charged my Office of Immigrant Affairs to support efforts to help undocumented immigrants build their records of good moral standing through a variety of actions, such filing tax returns and greater civic involvement, to facilitate their eventual pathway to citizenship. And we are an active partner in the CUNY Citizenship Corp program.



**Health Care Access.** Hospitals and clinics have closed throughout New York City, exacerbating the shortage of primary health care facilities in our most vulnerable neighborhoods, and putting even more pressure on nearby hospitals. Moreover, national health reform will exclude hundreds of thousands of immigrant New Yorkers, who will have to continue to rely on the safety-net health care system. What will you do to make health care more accessible to immigrant communities, and how will you ensure adequate support for safety-net facilities in New York City?

An important philosophy of the NYC public hospital system is that every City resident has a right to quality health care. Despite the budget challenges, HHC continues to be committed to providing quality care to all, regardless of their ability to pay. HHC provides care to all regardless of immigration status, and offers services to those who do not speak English. HHC partners with the New York Immigration Coalition and other advocacy organizations to get the message to immigrants about the patient-centered care HHC offers everyone. ACCESS NYC is a free service that identifies and screens for over 30 City, State, and Federal health and human service benefit programs and is available in seven languages. And, the Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) provides health insurance outreach and enrollment to immigrants throughout New York City at venues such as schools, places of worship, and community events.

**Parent Engagement.** Many parents are frustrated that the school system does not respond to or effectively resolve issues they raise with the school or the Department of Education. How will you improve the way parents' concerns are addressed, and how will you expand avenues for meaningful parent engagement?

When Albany turned control of the school system over to the mayor, I knew that we needed parents to help affect the change the system desperately needed. That's why the City conducted the largest survey of parents any city has ever undertaken, hired parent coordinators so parents could get the information they need about their child's education, and began the annual school Report Card. This year, my administration introduced two significant new tools that will empower parents even more: ARIS Parent Link, a new online tool to help families follow their children's academic progress and collaborate with teachers to address their children's academic strengths and weaknesses, and 'P311' – 311 for Parents. Parents will be able to call 311, identify themselves as a parent or guardian, and get answers without getting the run-around.

**Affordable Housing.** New York City continues to face an affordable housing crisis. What is your plan for creating *permanent* affordable housing in the city (that is, affordable units that do not expire)? Do you support policies that would mandate public and private developers to include affordable units in their projects (in contrast to voluntary incentives such as tax breaks)?

I've launched the most ambitious municipal housing plan in the nation. The plan's goal – to create or preserve 165,000 units of housing, enough to house the entire population of Atlanta – is well underway and on target to be completed by 2014. In the end, we will have created enough affordable housing for 500,000 New Yorkers.



We have created a number of programs that use zoning and tax incentives to create new affordable housing that are essential to the success of the New Housing Marketplace Plan. As an indication of the priority this holds for me, I released “The Next Generation New Housing Marketplace Plan,” available at [mikebloomberg2009.com/housing](http://mikebloomberg2009.com/housing), which details my third term vision for preserving affordable housing, keeping New Yorkers in their homes, strengthening vulnerable neighborhoods, and continuing to expand the supply of affordable, sustainable housing throughout the five boroughs.

**Asthma.** New York City has one of the highest asthma rates in the country. Studies show a correlation between poor housing conditions and asthma prevalence. In light of this, do you support legislation such as Intro 750, The Asthma-Free Housing Act, which seeks to reduce asthma triggers (such as mold, roaches, and rats) by strengthen housing code enforcement against such triggers?

We must lower the asthma rates that are plaguing our neighborhoods and children. The Health Department is currently undertaking the first comprehensive effort to monitor street level air pollution in neighborhoods across the five boroughs, as well as working closely with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development on a proactive and robust enforcement program that targets neighborhoods with the highest incidence of poor housing conditions and asthma rates. Two years ago, I launched **PlaNYC, a master plan for building an environmentally sustainable New York**. MillionTreesNYC is an ambitious program to plant and care for one million trees throughout New York’s five boroughs in the next decade. “Trees for Public Health” neighborhoods receive high priority restoration services due to their lower than average tree canopy cover and higher than average asthma rates. The six neighborhoods are Hunts Point and Morrisania, East New York, East Harlem, the Rockaways, and Stapleton.

*Please email your responses to [neng@thenyic.org](mailto:neng@thenyic.org) by Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.*