



COMMUNIQUE

TERM LIMITS CLEAR OUT CITY COUNCIL 300+ Candidates Line Up for Union Endorsements

By Marci Rosenblum
Local 1180 Communications Director

Term limits for the New York City Council and other top leaders might have seemed like a good idea in 2001 when New Yorkers voted to approve it, but that was before more than 300 candidates vying for open Council seats came knocking on labor's doors in search of support and endorsements.

Thanks to term limits, 35 out of the 51 Council seats are up for grabs in this year's election. Records show that so far there are already more than 300 candidates registered to run with the city's Campaign Finance Board. **CWA Local 1180 Second Vice President and Political Director Gerald Brown** can vouch for that. He's been receiving phone calls and emails from campaign staff representatives since the end of last year looking for the union's endorsement.

"Candidates seem to have started earlier than ever, as this is expected to be a very heated six-month race leading up to the June 22 Democratic primary," Brown said. "I don't know if we have ever started getting requests for meetings so far in advance of an election before."

Local 1180 started its official candidate screening process with the mayoral candidates, continued with public advocate and district attorney, and is in the midst of comptroller. Members are encouraged to participate in the virtual screening; notices are emailed to all members with registration information prior to each screening.

"These candidates will be our next leaders, so we need and want our members to be involved," Brown said. "This is an opportunity to ask questions and find out where each candidate stands on issues that impact us directly. The City is in a dire situation now due to the pandemic. Who we put into office now will become the leaders we count on to help bring us out of this crisis without destroying the labor movement."

Several Council Districts have upward of six or more contenders, making screenings difficult and time consuming. In Central Brooklyn's Council District 40, for example, at least 10 people are running. Council Districts vary in size according to the redistricting process, but typically cover between two and four neighborhoods.

With the slew of candidates appearing on the ballot comes the complication of rank choice voting taking effect for the first time in 2021. Combine some districts seeing dozens of candidates running to replace term-limited officials with voters dealing with a new ballot format in this year's primaries and special elections that allow them to rank candidates from most- to least-favorite, and Brown said it could be a recipe for disaster.

"We are going to be doing everything we can at Local 1180 to explain rank choice voting and how it works," Brown said. "We have already given one seminar on the process, and we will continue to give others in the next few months in order to reach as many members as we can."

As for endorsing City Council candidates, Brown said Local 1180 is only going to be interviewing and screening candidates in districts the union considers crucial target points. "It is almost impossible for us to realistically interview 300 people," he said. "We have to decide in which districts our support is going to have the most impact and put our focus there." ■