



Dear 2022 Candidate:

The Village Reform Democratic Club is interested in knowing about your qualifications, thoughts and plans for the office you're seeking. We have prepared this very brief set of questions to help us know you better as we decide on our Club endorsements.

Please provide your name, website URL, the office for which you're running and contact information in case our members wish to request additional information or clarification.

Candidate: Ryder Kessler

Office: State Assembly, District 66

URL: www.ryderfornewyork.com

Contact Info: Charlie Goldensohn (Campaign Manager)

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1) What are your top 2-3 issues going forward? If elected or re-elected, what will be your specific approach to each of them?

I will champion all efforts to increase the equity, justice, and opportunity of New York State — especially for its most marginalized people. This includes fighting for universal healthcare, pre-K, and childcare; reproductive rights, immigrant rights, and worker rights; and racial action on climate change, segregation of schools and neighborhoods, and mass incarceration and over-policing. However, to elaborate on top priorities, I will emphasize issues of particular interest to the 66th district — places where our largely affluent neighborhoods of Greenwich Village, Soho, Noho, and Tribeca can leverage our privilege in service of all New Yorkers — and make our neighborhoods leaders on addressing existential challenges.

Housing: Our rental market is the most expensive in America, with consequences including housing insecurity, displacement, homelessness, and sprawl. First, we must build abundant housing, including increasing density in high-opportunity, high-transit areas; legalize ADUs and conversion of hotels; and develop fully affordable units wherever possible. Second, we need maximal renter empowerment, via the Housing Voucher Access Program, statewide right to counsel, and Good Cause Eviction. Third, it's time to end the congregate shelter response to homelessness, via more supportive housing and private shelter rooms. Additionally, we must ban gas hookups in apartments and retrofit buildings to end reliance on fossil fuels.

Streets: Car dominance of our streets has adverse effects on safety and sustainability. We must prioritize improvements to bus, bike, and subway infrastructure, funded by congestion pricing and payment for parking; support outdoor dining; implement containerization of trash and expanded frequency of sanitation service; expand speed camera use and other automatic traffic enforcement; and ban car designs that increase accident fatalities.

Public Safety: The violence and quality of life issues suffered citywide are failures of the status quo. We must expand non-policing approaches to service calls (e.g. mental-health-first responders, violence interrupters, and community-led crime prevention); decarcerate through parole reform, clemency, ending needless arrests (e.g. sex work decriminalization); and invest in communities through universal healthcare and childcare, better-paying jobs, affordable housing, and high-quality education.

2) Please list 2-3 things you have done for our community (the greater Greenwich Village area) and the results you achieved. What were the challenges, how did you address them, and how did you involve the community?

(1) Our community is the queer center of New York City. As a gay man who has spent my entire life downtown, it has been vital for me to support other queer New Yorkers in the neighborhood and beyond. The technology company I started, whose product I invented, DipJar, has been used to collect donations for many New York nonprofits — including The Center, our premier service-provider to queer New Yorkers. I also served as a youth mentor at The Center, while also continuing to foster queer spaces as a member of other organizations. Doing this work has directly involved engaging both leadership and community members from these organizations — across all socioeconomic, racial, and geographic parts of New York's queer population.

(2) As a member of Community Board 2, I work to address the many needs of the community. During my first tenure in 2019-2020, I organized a major forum for community members to provide feedback to Northwell Health providers as a member of the Social Services committee. I was also proud to lead advocacy for an increase to the street vending permit cap as a member of the Quality of Life Committee. I was elected by

my peers to the Executive Board of CB2 in recognition of my service and collaboration with Board members and community residents.

(3) Rather than representing all New Yorkers, too often our representatives prioritize the desires of wealthy homeowners and car owners. Powerful interests block building new housing that would generate density and stop us from reclaiming our streets from cars. I have advocated publicly for actions that will allow us to truly live our progressive values in our neighborhoods: recognizing the [need for housing density](#) to drive affordability, integration, and sustainability; [support for vibrant streets](#), designed to reduce incentives to drive; and [fair, inclusive elections](#) supported by aggressive pro-democracy leadership. Beyond writing in support of these issues, I have testified about them to state and city legislators and advocated as a CB2 member. This work has involved attending to all voices involved in these issues — including those not usually represented in our local political processes.

3) What do you most want our club members to know about you and why you believe you're the best candidate for the position?

I am a lifelong New Yorker, community leader, and gay man. Born at St. Vincent's Hospital and raised near Union Square, I attended Hunter College High School and Harvard. After graduating, I moved to the West Village and have lived here ever since (with two short-term temporary placements outside the city on Democratic political campaigns in 2018 and 2020). My work has led me from social impact entrepreneurship, to progressive organizing, to voting rights and democracy advocacy.

I founded DipJar, a social impact technology company that helped generate tens of millions of dollars in new earnings and donations for low-wage service workers and nonprofit organizations. Since 2016, I have worked in Democratic politics, specifically on campaigns to take back the House, Senate, and White House, with a focus on voting rights. I am also a member of Community Board 2 in Manhattan, where I have proudly and forcefully advocated against entrenched interests for more vibrant, equitable, sustainable neighborhoods downtown.

New York is the greatest city in the world, but we are facing extreme challenges. We need bold new leadership to take them on. We're emerging from a once-in-a-century pandemic, facing an existential climate emergency, and continuing to suffer from segregation in housing, schools, and the justice system. Though the city is bigger than ever, with 8.8 million people in the five boroughs, we lost 4.5% of our Black population since 2010 — a reflection of the ways New York's vibrancy and vitality aren't available to everyone.

New York is a blue state, but we fail to fully enfranchise all people: antiquated systems and unaccountable administrators undermine access to our elections, excluding too many — mainly BIPOC and lower-income New Yorkers — from the ballot box. New York

should be a beacon of affordability, equity, and sustainability — and our neighborhoods should be a model for the city and state — but we're not living up to our potential.

I was born and raised in downtown Manhattan, and so I am deeply rooted here. As a gay millennial and progressive Jew, I come from and represent both the longstanding communities and changing demographics of our neighborhoods — and I am committed to ensuring the flourishing of all the communities that make New York the greatest state in the union and NYC the greatest city in the world.

Our current Assembly isn't delivering, and I'm running to change that.