

Statement of the 2019 Legislative Priorities of the Village Independent Democrats

The Village Independent Democrats (VID) supports legislation for:

- I. Voter reform and good governance, including:
 1. Passing a new constitutional amendment to end gerrymandering, where the State Legislature does not have ultimate authority over redistricting,
 2. Fully funding early voting and electronic poll books,
 3. Strengthening regulations on lobbyist activity without lowering the threshold expenditure to be deemed a lobbyist, in order to acknowledge the difference between individual and grassroots action and professional, corporate lobbying,
 4. Reforming the City and State Boards of Elections, including converting most patronage positions to civil service jobs,
 5. Strengthening of the new legislation to close the LLC loophole to attribute LLC contributions to the greater of the member's membership interest or the percentage of member's financial contribution to the LLC, instead of just proportionate to membership interest,
 6. Establishing strong automatic voter registration where any interaction with a City or State Agency which verifies residency and citizenship would result in an individual being registered to vote, absent an opt-out,
 7. Modifying the new New York City-wide special elections to prevent candidates from winning citywide office with small pluralities of the vote,
 8. Requiring all candidates for national office to disclose their seven most recent years of tax returns and their current investment assets,
 9. Reversing *Silver v. Pataki*, which gives the Governor undue control over the budget by preventing the legislature from amending the Governor's proposed budget, and
 10. Making State Legislature positions full-time jobs, limiting outside income for State Legislators, and increasing State Legislators' pay;
- II. Criminal justice and court reform, including:

1. Accelerating the closure of Rikers Island, with a special emphasis on the Rose M. Singer Center, and investigating the closure of other prisons, while using money saved for job training, drug treatment, and mental health treatment,
2. Amending the NYS Criminal Procedure Law to require open and early disclosure of evidence in criminal prosecutions, leading to fairer outcomes and deterred prosecutorial abuse,
3. Ending cash bail in all cases where the Defendant is not a serious flight risk, and allowing discretion to limit the use of cash bail even in such cases,
4. Strengthening enforcement of speedy trials including expanding the number of judges City- and State-wide, especially in the First and Second Departments,
5. Surveying the time-to-trial and to-resolution of cases starting with minor offenses and establishing reasonable limits to maximum pre-trial time (unless delayed by defendant's wishes),
6. Strengthening the Civilian Complaint Review Board to bring and resolve charges of misconduct against police officers, with the exception of sexual assault and sexual misconduct charges, and facilitating prosecution of police officers in a way that would avoid inherent conflicts of interest faced by District Attorneys,
7. Working towards creating a new city oversight agency to investigate sexual assault and sexual harassment of city employees,
8. Amending Civil Rights Law 50-A to prevent New York Police Department from hiding their disciplinary records,
9. Legalizing adult use of marijuana, allocating funds generated for addiction treatment, and pardoning retroactively all those with marijuana possession convictions,
10. Decriminalizing all consensual adult sex work, while maintaining efforts to prevent sex trafficking and coerced sex work,
11. Improving the quality of judges through increasing the transparency of their election or appointment process and using truly independent screening panels comprised of knowledgeable, unbiased practitioners and representative community members, and
12. Maintaining our effective, specialized courts;

III. Healthcare reform, including:

1. Increasing local access to quality, affordable care by ensuring that all neighborhoods and regions in New York have adequate healthcare facilities for all residents, including those that rely on Medicaid,
2. Ensuring that Manhattan, including areas below 14th Street, has adequate in- and out-patient health services for residents, including those of low-income and those relying on Medicaid, and increasing the availability of evening and Saturday hours for health services,
3. Ensuring that every New Yorker has access to affordable, easily available, high quality mental health services, and that such services are adequately funded;

IV. Transportation initiatives, including:

1. Instituting congestion pricing in lower and midtown Manhattan to supply increased funding for New York City Transit, with a means-tested exception for residents and commuters,
2. Reviewing the MTA's budget, contracts, and contracting process to identify opportunities for cost-cutting,
3. Responsibly and rapidly funding, planning, and reconstructing the Brooklyn Queens Expressway such that the process minimizes disruption to traffic and neighborhoods
4. Fully funding a completed Second Avenue Subway,
5. Funding and completing the Gateway Tunnel for trains to run between New York and New Jersey,
6. Increasing funding for MTA signal renovations and capital projects, and
7. Increasing community engagement on all transportation plans going forward;

V. Protection of civil liberties, including:

1. Ending the use of "gay panic" and "trans panic" as a defense in criminal cases,
2. Ensuring that marginalized New Yorkers have access to affordable housing by expanding affordable, supportive, and shelter housing for marginalized communities, and

3. Expanding New York State anti-discrimination laws to mirror New York City laws;

VI. Consumer protection, including:

1. Increasing individual rights to data privacy and protection, including by preventing Internet Service Providers from selling or otherwise disclosing users' information,
2. Banning excessively long, "shrink-wrapped" terms of service, including considering limiting the enforceability of consumer contracts when their length is disproportionate to their value, and
3. Creating an office for consumer advocacy over industries such as utilities and insurance;

VII. Affordable housing and the protection of small businesses, including:

1. Creating vacancy tax legislation on both residential and commercial units,
2. Curtailing vacancy decontrol,
3. Allowing artists to use the same space for commercial and residential purposes, so long as the space is zoned for commercial use,
4. Comprehensively examining and removing administrative barriers from opening and maintaining a small business in New York City, including issues relating to access to capital, taxes, and excess regulation,
5. Adding a tax when landlords remove a residential or small business tenant in favor of a new, higher-paying tenant,
6. Increasing transparency in real property ownership, and
7. Bringing NYCHA units up to code by whatever means necessary;

VIII. Improved educational attainment, including:

1. Paying schools funds owed by the state,
2. Focusing resources for students whose families are in shelters or NYCHA housing and providing them with after-school and weekend safe spaces for educational development,
3. Teaching civics and financial literacy in public schools,

4. Consistently teaching history, social studies, and current issues of marginalized New Yorkers, including the LGBTQIA+ community, holocaust education, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and women's studies, and more throughout the public school curriculum, and
 5. Ensuring that all schools are adequately funded, staffed, and equipped;
- IX. Combatting the federal government's unjust immigration crackdown, including:
1. Preventing Immigration and Customs Enforcement from entering courthouses, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and other locations where it is most important that all New Yorkers feel safe,
 2. Ending any City or State contracts with ICE or Customs and Border Protection and beginning to divest from any company that does business with ICE or CBP,
 3. Ensuring all New Yorkers have access to free or low-cost legal assistance on all immigration matters,
 4. Expanding resources to reunite families that have been separated by the Federal government, and
- X. The protection of non-human animals, including:
1. Banning puppy mills Statewide,
 2. Banning the sale of non-shelter dogs and cats in pet stores,
 3. Changing New York City's mandatory spay/neuter laws to prevent spaying and neutering prior to 16 weeks of age, excluding feral cats,
 4. Increasing penalties for kidnapping pigeons,
 5. Banning the sale of foie gras,
 6. Creating of a New York City Department of Animal Welfare,
 7. Increasing penalties for leaving pets outside in inclement weather,
 8. Ensuring that Animal Care Centers of NYC removes pets from homes that have been seized,
 9. Banning the sale of new, genuine fur products Citywide and Statewide, excluding leather, wool, and the hides of animals that are also eaten,

10. Reversing NYCHA bans on specific breeds of dogs and any other breed-specific restrictions in New York, and

11. Creating comprehensive animal cruelty laws for animal agriculture;

XI. The protection of the environment, including

1. Shifting, as quickly as possible, to clean power, particularly offshore wind power,
2. Lowering gasoline emissions through taxing oil and gas, reducing traffic, and increasing availability of public transportation,
3. Through taxes and subsidies, working comprehensively to lower emissions of buildings and construction,
4. Guaranteeing all New Yorkers a right to healthy and safe air,
5. Increasing the number of composting bins in New York City, and
6. Studying charging a fee on single-use plastics, including bags and straws with proceeds directed towards environmental protection and education;

XII. Gun reform, including:

1. Appropriating funds sufficient to successfully implement the gun reform legislation passed in February 2019, including education efforts,
2. Requiring safe storage of guns to keep firearms out of the reach of others, including children,
3. Requiring licenses for the purchase or possession of firearms,
4. Studying effective means of additional intervention efforts to reduce urban gun violence and implementing recommendations from those studies, and
5. Eliminating gun manufacturers' immunity from civil liability.