

2009 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Questionnaire for NYC Candidates

Candidate for New York City Council
(Borough President, City Council, Comptroller, District Attorney, Mayor, Public Advocate,)

City Council District: 12

Borough: Bronx

Name: **Larry B. Seabrook**

Campaign Address: **707 East 215th Street - Bronx, NY 10467**

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Email Address: seabrook.2009@yahoo.com

Political Party Affiliation: Democratic

Occupation: Member, New York City Council & Adjunct Associate Professor

Current Employment / Employer: **New York City Council & John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

Are you an incumbent: Yes No Number of years in office: **7 (with NYC Council)**

Under the current term limits law, how many more additional terms, after this one, will you be able to serve? 1

Education:

High School: _____

College: **A.A., Kingsborough Community College;
B.A., John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

Graduate / Professional: **M.A., Long Island University; J.D., CUNY Law School at Queens College**

1. I received support to pay for college from:
(Please check all that apply)
- Pell Grant
 - NYS Tuition Assistance Program Scholarship
 - Student Loans
 - Family

- Self
- Other Source _____

2. In my view, paying for public higher education (CUNY) should primarily be the responsibility of: (check only one)

- Students
- Parents / Family
- Government
- Employers
- All of the above

(Please attach additional sheets as necessary to answer the following questions.)

Our nation must make greater public investments in the area of education. We must provide additional incentives to ensure our children pursue and have proficiency in the areas of math and the physical sciences (biology, chemistry and physics).

3. Public funding to public higher education has fallen sharply over the last two decades. Since 1991, NY State funding per student for CUNY senior colleges fell 14% and, for CUNY community colleges, it fell by 25.6%.¹ Though NY City began to restore funding to CUNY community colleges five years ago, proposed budget cuts this year will eliminate this advance. What would you do to increase public investment in CUNY?

As a member of the New York City Council, I serve on several committees, including the Higher Education, Civil Service & Labor and the Budget Negotiation Team. The dramatic increase in CUNY community college enrollment will impact the City’s employable workforce. In addition, there are numerous New Yorkers, who are attempting to advance their skills, through job training and placement programs.

I conceived and coordinated the New York City Council’s “Job to Build On” Initiative,” which is a \$20 Million initiative to assist chronically unemployed New Yorkers. Unemployment figures are especially high among African Americans and Latinos. This initiative focused on various employment areas such as nursing, the automotive industry, and commercial drivers licenses. Applicants were pre-screened through designated, local community not-for-profits, and their applications were subsequently forwarded to the Consortium for Worker Education (CWE) to coordinate skills training and employment placement. The City University of New York will play a role in administering this initiative.

Furthermore, I am working with the Building Trades Council of Greater New York, as well, to examine additional employment opportunities with the construction trades.

4. More than 50% of CUNY students come from households with annual income below \$40,000, but students will pay 15% more on average next year to attend a CUNY senior college and 14% more to attend a community college if tuition hikes go through. Overall, student tuition makes up 40% of CUNY’s total operating revenue and the CUNY Master Plan (“CUNY Compact”) calls for regular, annual tuition hikes.

¹ Fiscal Policy Institute Report: “New York State’s Underinvestment in Public Higher Education, “ January 15, 2009

- 4a. Do you support or oppose the current tuition increases? **Oppose current tuition increases.**
- 4b. Do you support or oppose the CUNY Compact's call for annual tuition increases? **Oppose.**
- 4c. What would you do to relieve the burden on students and families to pay for CUNY?

Increase TAP and provide waivers of tuition for service in education, day care centers and community service.

- 4d. Some economists argue that earning a college degree enables a student to get a good-paying job upon graduation, and, therefore, government policy should be structured around an expectation of students to finance their education by taking out loans. Do you agree or disagree with a higher education financing policy that is structured around students taking out loans to finance tuition increases? Why or why not?

It is important for students to become involved in developing their career paths and educational pursuit. However, I believe that government on a national, state and local level should provide additional economic incentives to subsidize study in various technological and education related fields, especially for those interested in becoming teachers or interested in mathematics and the physical sciences (chemistry, biology, physics, etc.).

Additionally, the private sector must be willing to partner with the federal government in this endeavor. The lack of investment in education has a corresponding affect on our economic standing and advocated immigration needs and policies. The H1 B Visa program became especially more important over the years to the financial services industry, as a result of our lack of public investment in education.

- 5. CUNY enrollments are higher than at any other time in its history, but in 1975 (the last enrollment peak), CUNY had 11,500 full-time faculty and now it has 6,800. Similarly, there has been a decline in the number of professional and support staff. CUNY now has 9,000 adjunct faculty and 1,000 adjunct professional staff who are part-time and low-paid. The dramatic decline of the full-time workforce and reliance on an exploited and over-stretched part-time workforce compromises the quality of education and the University's ability to deliver educational services to students.

- 5a. What specific policies would you advocate to provide CUNY with the resources to hire more full-time faculty, counselors, professional and other staff?

First, I am currently an adjunct associate professor with my alma mater, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I have been an adjunct for over fifteen years in African American Studies within the Social Science Department.

5b. What specific policies would you advocate to improve the wages and working conditions of part-time adjunct faculty and staff that currently provide half the instruction at CUNY?

First, adjunct professors do not have good job security. We are contracted for a semester at a time or a school year. Most adjuncts do not have economic support during the summer months. I support enhanced job security for adjuncts as well as access to unemployment benefits during the summer months.

6. What are your views on New York City's current tax structure? If you are elected, what specific tax and revenue policies would you advocate?

NYC government should consider modest increases on the tax rates paid by the insurance industry. Over the last several years, the financial services industry has received countless tax abatements. Due to the inaction of the New York State Senate, New York City stands to lose substantial sales tax surcharge revenue. This combined with the inadvisable repeal of the commuter tax by the New York State Legislature several years ago, threatens the New York City's overall financial health. The state's tax rates need to be restructured, so that those earning higher salaries are not taxed at the same rate as those earning less.

7. What fiscal policies would you advocate to help New York City maintain public services during the current recession?

First, I support progressive and fairer income taxation as a means to preserving essential City services. Persons earning more than \$250,000 annually should be taxed at higher tax rates.

A large segment of the City's tax receipts are based upon the finance, insurance and real estate industry.

8. In your view, where does CUNY stand, as a priority, in New York's economic development and economic recovery?

I believe government, must covet better strategic partnerships with CUNY and all educational institutions, during New York's period of economic recovery. CUNY and its cohort of community and senior colleges, serve as an economic multiplier. They provide access to quality and affordable education to New Yorkers. Through CUNY's several construction related projects, they have provided numerous employment and economic development opportunities within the New York City. Therefore, they are providing much needed construction trade jobs.

Over the last year, my office has partnered with CUNY's Citizenship & Immigration Project. Every Tuesday and Saturday, attorneys and/or paralegals offer free, legal assistance to the immigrants within the 12th Council District. Immigrants who become naturalized citizens add to economic tax base of our City.

9. Academic freedom is important because adherence to it allows colleges and universities to best serve the public interest. For this reason, the university must be a place where all ideas, even those that are unpopular, may be freely expressed and debated without interference from management, trustees or public officials. Yet, for short-term political advantage, politicians have undermined academic freedom by publicly attacking unpopular speech by faculty and calling for punitive action by college or university managements. Such public calls go beyond simple disagreement.

9a. Do you agree that it is necessary to uphold academic freedom at CUNY and other colleges and universities? Will you agree to avoid taking unfair political advantage of unpopular speech on campuses?

I have the unique role of serving as an elected official for over twenty five years in the New York State Assembly, New York State Senate and now the New York City Council, as well as an adjunct associate professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I fully support the principles of academic freedom at CUNY and all colleges/universities. I have never taken unfair political advantage of unpopular speech on college campuses.

9b. Academic freedom also extends to pedagogical practices, academic standards and curriculum and program decisions. Who do you believe is best placed to make determinations about these matters: faculty, college administrators, community organizations, private businesses, or public officials?

Faculty and college administrators are best equipped to make decisions on education related practices, academic standards and decisions regarding curriculum. However, I do believe that universities and colleges should have positive collaborative working relationships with elected officials, governmental policy makers, private business and community based organizations.

I believe it is very important for colleges & universities to include local community based institutions and businesses in their development plans. Through their degree and adult education certificate based programs, government and private industry can prove helpful in identifying needed educational and technical skill sets for the workplace.

10. Do you believe that public employees should have the same right to strike as private employees? Please explain?

I believe that public employees should have the same right to strike as private employees, which is prohibited under the Taylor Law. Organized labor has an obligation to pursue all necessary steps to achieve fair wages for their members. In periods where all options have been pursued or when faced with verified unfair labor practices, the option to strike to achieve fair wages and benefits is essential. This is especially true if prior efforts to mediate or resolve disputes do not succeed.

11. In general, public employees have had more generous health and pension benefits than private employees. Some politicians have used this disparity to argue for a diminution of public employee benefits and blamed New York's fiscal problems on such benefits. Do you believe public employees' health and pension benefits should be maintained, reduced, or enhanced? Please be as specific as possible.

I believe that wages and benefits as well as the health and pension benefits of working people, should be negotiated and won at the bargaining table. Organized labor has traditionally had a history of partnering with local and state government, during difficult financial times. Both during the fiscal crisis of the 1970's and today, labor has partnered with the City's administration.

I applaud the City's Municipal Labor Coalition on their recent efforts, prior to passage of the fiscal year 2010 budget.

12. Incumbents, please list your committee and subcommittee memberships and indicate if you are chair:

NYC Council Committee Memberships: Chairman, Civil Rights; Civil Service & Labor; Higher Education; Labor; Sanitation & Solid Waste Management; State & Federal Legislation; Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises; Rules and Vice Chairman, Black, Latino & Asian Caucus.

13. Please list the bills you have introduced or co-sponsored in support of CUNY and higher education, or other actions you have taken in this cause:

Although, I have sponsored a number of bills over the years. Resolution 229 which was introduced in 2004, specifically sought to adequately fund CUNY, in order to make it once again a tuition free system. Other bills include:

Intro. 93 (2002): Emphasis on comprehensive education and training for those participants in welfare reform programs.

Resolution 585 (2002): Co-sponsor resolution to urge both New York City and New York State to avoid cuts in financial aid programs – TAP, SEEK, and College Discovery Programs.

Resolution 703 (2003): Sponsor resolution to congratulate CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, Medgar Evers College President, Dr. Edison Jackson and Dr. Gerald W. Lynch, Former President of John Jay College, their faculty, staff, students and alumni for their efforts to modernize their campus facilities to promote access for the benefit of future New Yorkers.

Resolution 331 (2004): Co-sponsor resolution encouraging Congress and President Bush to repeal year 2003 tax breaks for wealthy Americans and large corporations, and to restore funding for critical domestic programs.

Resolution 1211 (2008): Co-sponsor resolution to have New York State Legislature to recognize Medgar Evers College for capital budget purposes.

In addition to my leadership and advocacy in conceptualizing and developing the City Council's "Jobs to Build On Initiative," I have been a stalwart advocate on behalf of ensuring financial support for CUNY at continued levels. I have advanced the legislative program needs of various CUNY institutions in support of curriculum needs. This has included support for the Peter Vallone Scholarships as well as the Black Male Initiative. My position on the City Council's Higher Education Committee and Budget Negotiation Team has proven beneficial to CUNY's students and institutions. Over the years, I have also hired many staff members and interns, who have either graduated or matriculated at CUNY.

14. Please list other legislation that you have introduced or co-sponsored in the last two legislative sessions:

A sampling of the legislation introduced or co-sponsored by me in the last two legislative sessions include the following:

Intro. 1, (2004): Amending the NYC Pro-Voter Law by mandating annual training for agencies, verbal assistance for public and agency transmission of voter registration forms.

Resolution 1213 (2008): Co-sponsor resolution encouraging the MTA to adopt a Subway Riders Bill of Rights. The resolution seeks to guarantee well trained station and train personnel to provide information and directions, maintain a human presence in the subways, and provides for consumer friendly communication, as well as a safe and secure transportation related environment.

Intro. 888 (2008): Co-sponsor of bill to provide for the participation of minority women-owned business enterprises in construction projects, where properties receive tax benefits from the Industrial & Commercial Abatement Program. Mayor Bloomberg signed this into law, otherwise known as Local Law 67-2008.

Resolution 1874 (2009); Sponsor of resolution condemning the New York Post for its racist depiction for President Barack Obama in a political cartoon.

15. Please describe other actions you have taken in support of union-related initiatives:

I have a strong record of supporting labor union organizing drives, strikes and contract campaigns of several unions, during my tenure in elected office. Over the years, I have been very supportive of drives conducted by District Council 37/AFSCME, SEIU 32BJ, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 237, and SEIU Local 1199. On a number of occasions, I have provided office space to SEIU Local 32BJ, in preparation for possible strikes against unfair employers. I have walked the picket line with members of Transport Workers Union - Local 100 and was one of the steadfast supporters of District Council 37's legislative victory over Mayor Bloomberg, on the residency requirement for certain City employees.

Additionally, I am a union member of the Professional Staff Congress. Earlier in my professional career, I was a member of the Social Services Employees Union, Local 371 of DC 37.

Return completed questionnaire and brief personal biography to:

Professional Staff Congress / CUNY
61 Broadway, Suite 1500
New York, New York 10006
(212) 354-1252
Fax: (212) 302-7815
Attention: Amanda Magalhaes
amagalhaes@pscmail.org

We encourage you to send the questionnaire and attachments via email or by fax.

LARRY B. SEABROOK

New York City Council Member District 12, Northeast Bronx



In 2001, New York City Council Member Larry B. Seabrook made history as the first African American to hold an office in three legislative branches: New York State Assembly (first minority candidate to be elected from the 83rd Assembly District), New York State Senate (33rd District of the Bronx/Westchester), and in his current elected position as a Member of the New York City Council.

Representing the 12th District of the Northeast Bronx, Council Member Seabrook continues to build on his pro-taxpayer, community service, pro-public safety record, focus on education, job training and economic development, workplace equality, youth services, increase senior benefits and crime prevention. He serves on several committees: Civil Service & Labor, Higher Education, Transportation, Land Use, Sanitation & Solid Waste Management, Zoning and Franchises, Governmental Operations.

For nearly twenty years, Council Member Larry B. Seabrook has compiled a distinguished record of public service representing many communities of the Bronx. His accomplishments reflect his deep, on-going commitment to the needs of the people in his district. His tireless efforts resulted in the creation of the SUNY North Bronx Career Counseling and Outreach Center that opened its doors in 1997 to offer academic and vocational training programs for residents of all ages living in the Northeast Bronx. The center provides GED prep and computer literacy programs, as well as career training in home healthcare, medical billing and security. To date, more than 750 students graduated from this program, over 430 have taken advantage of its employment placement services, and thousands have benefited from its course management and counseling services.

An outspoken advocate for equal opportunity during his tenure with the New York State Assembly (1984-1996), he launched an investigation into hiring practices by employment agencies that resulted in significant legislation barring employment discrimination and increasing penalties for civil rights violations. He created the "Drug Trader Arrests and Conviction Program" (DTAC) that led to over a thousand drug-related arrests and liberated Bronx neighborhoods from the scourge of drugs and drug-related crimes and violence. This model program won strong bi-partisan support and recognition and earned editorial praise from the Daily News, which declared, "If ever there was a gold medal in the war against drugs, Assemblyman Larry Seabrook should be considered".

As a New York State Senator (1996-2000), he served a number of committees: Housing; Construction and Community Development; Cities; Veterans and Military Affairs; Civil Service and Pension; Codes; Social Services and Higher Educations. He was the Ranking Minority Member of the Judiciary Committee (1989-1998) and as Assistant Minority Whip for the Democratic Conference.

Drawing on his experience and expertise, he also served as the Chairman of the New York State Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Equal Opportunity, Chairman of the Sub Committee on Crime Victims and Criminal Procedures and Chairman of the Assembly Sub-Committee on Drug Abuse and the Criminal Offender.

In 2005, he was re-elected to the New York City Council serving once again the Northeast Bronx community in District No.12. In addition, New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn designated the Civil Rights Committee as a new standing committee and Councilman Seabrook was given the honor to serve as its Chairman. The Committee's jurisdiction includes oversight responsibility for the New York City Human Rights Commission, the Equal Employment Practices Commission, and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services' Office of Citywide Equal Employment Opportunity.

Seabrook is currently an Associate Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and holds a BA Degree in History and Urban Studies from John Jay College, a MA Degree in Political Science and International Affairs from Long Island University and a JD Degree from CUNY Law School in Queens. He was a recipient of a graduate certificate from the United Nations, the John Jay College Distinguished Award, and the President Medal. Seabrook was also listed in *Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities* in 1973.

Council Member Larry B. Seabrook resides in Co-Op City in the Northeast Bronx.