

Thank you for agreeing to complete the South Central Brooklyn United for Progress District Leader AD51 candidate questionnaire. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with how our endorsement process works - a candidate must receive $\frac{2}{3}$ of the ranked choice vote in order to win our endorsement. [More details here.](#)

Your answers to these questions will be made available to the public on our website, <http://scbkunitedforprogress.org/>, and will be promoted on our Facebook page and twitter feed.

Answers are due 24 hours prior to your scheduled interview time if you want to be considered for endorsement!

Campaign Information

What is your name?

[Julio Peña III](#)

What are your preferred pronouns?

[he/him/they/them](#)

What office are you running for?

[District Leader/State Committee Member, Assembly District 51](#)

Who is the point of contact for your campaign and what is the best way to get in touch with them?

[Carlos Jesus Calzadilla carlosjesus@ypamerica.org](#)

What is your campaign address?

[n/a](#)

What is your campaign phone number?

[646-820-8093](#)

What is your campaign email?

info@juliopenabk.com

What is your campaign website?

www.juliopenabk.com

Is your campaign on social media? If so, what platform(s) and what are the names?

twitter.com/julio_penabk

facebook.com/juliopenabklyn

instagram.com/juliopenabk

Campaign Issues

What do you see as the role of district leader? What would you bring to that role? What are/or would be your priorities as a District Leader?

The role is very much what you make of it; voting for the Executive Committee Chair, in my opinion, is the most important vote we have. It sets the tone for our entire term as a District Leader and the Party Leader should represent the values of the Democratic Party.

There are other unofficial roles of a District Leader that I think are just as important. You can be a neighborhood organizer. Galvanizing around specific issues or educating voters around ballot initiatives, candidates for office, legislation, or land use issues.

There is also an opportunity to work with your elected officials in your district to better your neighborhood. I also see the role as a link to these elected officials, someone who can bridge everyone together.

What do you see as the role of the Brooklyn Democratic Party, both currently and in the future? How does County Committee and the Democratic clubs fit into this?

I think the problem is the Democratic Party doesn't have their own policy and advocacy agenda. The party took no position in supporting the ballot initiatives to expand absentee voting and same day voter registration this past election which should have been a no-brainer.

We will have another opportunity, in the November 2022 general election, to educate voters on the NYC Charter proposals and the party can play a critical role in educating Brooklynites. As a District Leader, we have a unique role to play in educating residents about what's happening at the ballot box, important policy issues, and to lead on advocacy.

As to what I would do/have done, I will hold registration and education events on the ballot initiatives so that people know what's going to be on the ballot in November.

Are there any things the Brooklyn Democratic Party can do to be more transparent and accessible to the average Democrat?

A county party that live streams all of their executive committee meetings. A party that actually has their committees organized and with Chairs and county committee members engaged and participating, and energized to do the work. I'd like to see greater proxy reform so that no one person can control the outcome of every meeting.

In broader terms, I would like to see the Democratic Party be more engaged with the lives of everyday Brooklynites - voter registration events, education events, and engaging around issues all around the borough.

Are there any rules changes the Brooklyn Democratic Party made in the last two years that you do not agree with / would like to change (reducing the number of yearly county committee meetings, limiting the scope and the subject of resolutions, automatically proxying votes to district leaders, etc.)?

The most egregious rule changes were the ones proposed and passed in November 2021 and December 2020. If given the opportunity, I would like to introduce rules to restore the number of meetings back to 2 per year, remove the resolutions committee and remove the automatic proxy.

How should the Democratic party handle party members that do something to harm the party or its name (e.g., What if a party member runs for election as a Democrat but does not caucus with them once elected? What if a party member runs on both the Democratic and Republican lines)?

Being a Democrat means you need to uphold the values and ideals of the party - if you cannot, you should not be a member of our party, or be supported by the Democratic Party.

What do you think about the current process by which judges are chosen to receive the Democratic nomination and how, if at all, should it be changed?

The judicial process is often shrouded in mystery. Often, voters do not know who the candidates are until they go vote and are not making informed decisions - sometimes even leaving the choices blank. Changing the judicial nominating process would require significant amendments to state law, but I do think we can work to improve the screening process by making it more transparent, rotating its members more frequently, changing the appointment process, and making it as independent as possible. Further, we should work to amend state law so that we are no longer electing judges.

What do you think about the current process for determining the Democratic nominee in special elections for state-level races and how, if at all, should it be changed?

I struggle with the special election process because I'm not quite sure what we can do to replace the process - what I do know is that we can communicate better about special elections in NYC. There should be more lead time for community members to learn about candidates. There should be proper mailers and outreach so people can get out to the polls. Not to mention the outreach of county committee members prior to the special meeting to fill vacancy.

Do you have any suggestions to improve how poll workers and Board of Elections staff are hired and used?

Yes! We should be removing the political appointments from commissioners and staff. We also should begin the professionalization of staff positions and require a merit based hiring and appointment process as well as begin nationwide searches for top level staff.

How independent should district leaders be from other elected officials? Should district leaders be allowed to hold another elected position? Why or why not?

Last year, when I completed this questionnaire, I wrote that I was against District Leaders holding elected office as I was challenging an incumbent who was an Assemblymember and an absent District Leader. However, over the past two years, my position has evolved slightly. While I still have issues with folks holding dual positions, I think there needs to be safeguards in our party rules to protect those from abusing their powers as well as those who remain absent and do not participate/hand over their votes to the establishment.

What other issues should a district leader take a position on?

I think any issue that can be elevated to County Committee a District Leader can take a position on, particularly issues that have the ability to shape a party position and impact communities. There are also several advocacy issues that District Leaders can and should be involved in that affect their community.

For fun (answers to these questions are not required)

If your district had a musical anthem, what would it be and why?

Un Montón De Estrellas, by Polo Montañez (A Ton of Stars)

What is your favorite restaurant in your district?

Tacos Matamorros or Georges Restaurant