



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

## 2019 City Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire

Prepared by: **Marwan Kreidie**

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Committee Name: **Friends of Marwan Kreidie**

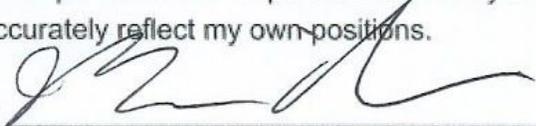
Campaign Address: **922 N. Orianna St. Philadelphia, PA 19123**

### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name:

Office Sought: **City Commissioner**

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature: 

Date:

3/1/2019

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to:  
[info@phillynn.org](mailto:info@phillynn.org) and mail a copy with the signature page to

**Gloria Gilman**  
121 South Broad Street Suite 1720  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-568-4990

### BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held? **I have never been elected to office, but I have served as Civil Service Commissioner (1996-2004) in Philadelphia and was appointed by Gov. Ed Rendell and confirmed by the PA State Senate to serve as Chairman of the Civil Service Commission (2004-2010).**
2. If you are an incumbent in an office for which you are seeking re-election, or if you have previously held this office, N/A  
  
what do you consider your three greatest achievements while serving in this position? N/A
3. If you are a challenger, what about your background qualifies you to hold this office? **I have been an advocate for voting rights for my entire adult life. Besides serving on both Civil Service Commissions, I have founded and**

worked with multiple non-profits such as the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, the Arab American Community Development Corporation, and United Voices. I have experience working with diverse, underserved communities, and helping to empower them and realize their political strength.

4. Both incumbents and challengers: What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?
  1. **Increased access to voter registration through programs I call “Transit Voter” and “Library Voter.” This would offer the option to register to vote when registering your Septa Key card and signing up for a library card.**
  2. **Increasing the availability of translators and translated materials to Philadelphia’s immigrant citizens. All too often these groups with various English proficiencies have to depend on one or two people to be available for their entire communities on election days. The city should be taking the lead on that.**
  3. **Serving as a cheerleader and advocate to the state government to enact things like early voting, same day registration, and open primaries.**

## **ISSUES**

Although many of the questions below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, please state which way you are leaning and what additional information you would need before deciding, if any.

### **I. Public Education**

Describe what would you do to:

1. **Educate the public about voting issues. Many cities and states in our country put out a voting guide before every election. This guide is available online and is also mailed to every registered address. The guide is non-partisan, written in language that is easily understood, and lays out the basic platforms and policies of every candidate and issue they will vote on. In Philadelphia, we often depend on non-profit groups to put out voting guides. They do a great job, but they should be able to spend their time and energy on other things. Philadelphia should absolutely be publishing information like this for EVERY election.**
2. **Educate those under 18 about voting issues. We can encourage civic engagement from a young age by going into classrooms and explaining how elections work, why they should care, and how they are affected by these things even if they make the choice not to participate. It’s hard to tell school students to care about the city when their schools are falling apart and their streets don’t get cleaned, so a good portion of voter education should be not only how the civic engagement process works, but how it has failed them and how they can do better by being their own political force.**
3. **Increase voter registration, particularly among high school and college students, and other traditionally under-registered groups? Similar to my Library Voter and Transit Voter proposals, I would also propose GED Voter which would allow the option to register when taking your GED exam. For high school seniors, and even some colleges, something as simple as a “Registration Bus” that goes from school to school could solve a lot of problems. Working with immigrant services groups to register New Americans and encourage their political participation (even though in their previous countries it may have been dangerous or fruitless) is equally important.**

4. Increase voter turnout, particularly among high school and college students and other traditionally low-voting groups? **Firstly, we need to do a better job raising awareness of elections in general. All too often an election passes and large blocs of people don't even know it happened. Although last year SEPTA rejected offering free service on election day, I will lobby hard for them to change their minds. In many neighborhoods, something as simple as providing resources to open additional polling stations could increase voter turnout significantly so in some sense you have to look at turnout neighborhood-by-neighborhood, community-by-community. I will also work with local businesses to ensure that they are allowing adequate time for their employees to vote.**
  
5. Increase the number of people willing to serve as election staff (e.g., judge of elections) on election day? **Part of this is increasing awareness of what these positions entail and how to get started. I think we could work with local colleges, community centers, and businesses to advertise the need.**
  
6. Assure that election staff are well educated for carrying out their duties on election day? What, if any, changes would you make to the current training program? **A friend of mine recently ran for Judge of Elections and won. I called her a little while later to congratulate her and ask what her next step was, and she had no clue. It had been over a week and she hadn't so much as gotten a phone call or an email telling her what to do. This went on for weeks until she finally received something in the mail. When she attended her training session, the power went out and everyone just sort of shrugged and said "Oh well, it's pretty basic." It was difficult for her to access the training she needed. This is unacceptable. We need to be proactive in our communication with election staff, and organized and engaged in our training sessions. If the Commissioner's office gives off the vibe that it doesn't matter, why should election staff feel any differently?**
  
7. Familiarize the public with the process for running for office? **This can be done several ways, starting with the classroom programs I mentioned earlier. We can also work with the Free Library and community organizations to set up information and training sessions. We should also have abundant guides and information available online, rather than again counting on non-profit organizations to pick up our slack.**

## II. Public Communication

1. Do you think there should be a regularly maintained published schedule of meetings among the commissioners open to the public? **Absolutely. Transparency is key. The Commissioners office is there to educate the voters and provide resources to make civil engagement easier. I can't think of anything the Commissioners office could possibly be discussing that wouldn't be appropriate to share fully with the public.**
  
2. Do you think the pros and cons of advocating for the purchase of new voting machines has been discussed and debated adequately with the public? If not, what more do you believe should have been done? **I don't believe the public was adequately informed and consulted with the purchase of new voting machines. Think about a few years back when we switched over to digital tv. There were ads and articles and reminders EVERYWHERE, for at least a YEAR! When making huge decisions that will fundamentally impact the most basic right (the right to vote) of every Philadelphian for years to come, no stone should be left unturned. The process was opaque and dependent on limited coverage. Anything that can't be done in the light raises serious concerns for me. Public hearings aren't enough; the Commissioners should be going to you, not making you come to them. Furthermore, I**

**believe the Commissioners office offered a lot of lip service to advocacy groups and concerned citizens, but never really addressed those concerns in any meaningful way.**

3. Would you advocate publishing the names and contact information for all committee persons online? **Absolutely. This is another area where we depend on non-profits to make up for our deficiencies.**
4. Do you think that the public should be entitled to obtain free copies of voter registration lists? **Yes. As I run for office for the first time, it amazes me how expensive even a small election can get. There should be no purchasing of public voter registration information. It is contrary to the entire political process.**

### **III. Voting Policies**

Would you:

1. Support early voting? If so, what would you do to get this policy implemented? If not, why not? **Unequivocally. Unfortunately, this is something that must be changed at a state level. Just because the Commissioners office cannot change this policy unilaterally, though, doesn't mean that they should not be loudly advocating for the change in Harrisburg, something I am committed to accomplishing.**
2. Support voting by home computer? If so, what would you do to get this policy implemented? If not, why not? **I support this in theory, however I have concerns about the lack of a paper trail involved. We have seen in recent years how fickle and manipulatable electronic voting can be. I support making voting as accessible as possible, but I would want to do a little more research on this before committing to it.**
3. As you are no doubt aware, the City of Philadelphia is under a mandate to purchase and implement a voter-verifiable paper record voting system no later than December 31, 2019. What type of voting machine system do you support for the City to purchase? Please be specific and give reasons why you support this system over the other ones that are available. **I agree with elections experts who say that paper ballots are the best method of voting. In this system, the voter would fill out a literal paper ballot and deposit it into a repository which would then be scanned and counted. This method is auditable, unhackable, and not at risk of malfunction or power failure. Additionally, in a city like Philadelphia, the space that our current and new machines take up is a significant factor. I read recently about a neighborhood in North Philadelphia that was about to lose its only polling station, so the owner of a barber shop made his shop into a polling location. However, with the size of the machines, he can only fit one or two which leads to long lines and disenfranchised voters. Paper ballots take up much less space, and are accessible to the elderly and to those with disabilities, another thing we currently lack. On top of that, paper ballots are much less expensive.**
4. Support voting over the course of several days? If so, what would you do to implement this policy? If not, why not? **Yes, early voting should be required in every state. This is another area that can't be fixed at a city level, but I will be the loudest voice in our state calling for reform on this issue.**
5. Do you think the office of City Commissioner should continue to be an elected one? If so, why? If not, would you have City Commissioners appointed, and by whom? **This is a question I have thought a great deal about. Electing our City Commissioners has not produced the results one would hope, and so I think it would be appropriate to turn the office into a civil service agency,**

something I know a great deal about. What we would want to avoid is the office being under the direct control of the Mayor's office, for obvious reasons. I would propose that an independent body comprised of non-partisan public officials and advocates would submit a list of qualified, vetted candidates to the Mayor's office, and that he/she could then appoint persons from that list. I would keep it as a body of 3, though, and ensure that one slot is given to a minority party like we do now. I am open to modifications of this proposal, but as a very basic outline, I think it's a good starting point.

6. What system do you think should be implemented to improve the registered voter check-in system on election day? What would your plan be to implement this and when? If your plan involves the purchase of an electronic system, how do you believe that the security of the voter registration list can be maintained? **Similar to my answer regarding voting from a home computer, e-poll lists are something I support in theory, but have some important questions about. In an ideal world, I would want to establish remote polling places so that if you live in East Kensington, but work in Old City, there is a location near your place of employment that could pull your ballot and verify that you have not voted elsewhere. However, I have a lot of concerns about preserving the accuracy of our voter rolls. Electronics can die and become outdated quickly, not to mention the expense involved. Perhaps a method similar to the paper ballots and optical scanner might be helpful? This is something I would want to research further before committing to a position.**