



Close Rikers Voter Guide

To construct this voter guide, we sent a questionnaire with five questions about New York City’s criminal legal system through the lens of jail population reduction, human rights, community reinvestment, democracy, and environmental justice to all mayoral candidates on the Democratic Primary ballot. Five candidates responded to our questionnaire, and their full responses are displayed below. For candidates who did not respond to our questionnaire, we sought out emblematic written responses, where available, and transcribed verbal responses from candidate forums, when written responses were unavailable. Candidate responses are listed in alphabetical order by last name, prioritizing the candidates who responded to our candidate questionnaire. Where the candidate holds a current position in government, we have noted that in their title.

QUESTION 1: The existing plan to Close Rikers Island involves closing the Rikers Island jails (including the Boat in the Bronx), reducing the jail population to approximately 4,200 people in custody or less, and establishing four borough based jails as well as therapeutic housing units in three city hospitals. How would you support this implementation? Is there anything you would do to improve on this plan?



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

“We must permanently close Rikers Island. It is the law, and it is a moral and public safety imperative. It is the mayor’s responsibility to advance the steps needed to close Rikers, in partnership with other stakeholders. The current administration has failed to meet this responsibility, prolonging the humanitarian crisis at Rikers and ignoring the steps needed to accomplish it.

As Mayor, I will urgently advance these necessary steps to close Rikers and replace it with borough-based jails rooted in dignity, rehabilitation, and true public safety. That also means expanding programs that reduce recidivism, the City’s mental health infrastructure, and investments into communities. No one should be funneled into jails because they need mental healthcare. I will bolster significantly more mental health beds and invest in community-based care so that people receive treatment, not incarceration.”

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Question Response: Implementing the plan to Close Rikers



Michael Blake

“I strongly support the closure of Rikers Island as a moral, legal, and policy imperative. My administration will treat the existing deadline as non-negotiable and reject any excuses for delay, which I view as a failure of political will, not logistics. I will aggressively push forward the construction and completion of borough-based jails that are smaller, more humane, and directly connected to courthouses.

Additionally, I will expand therapeutic housing units at local hospitals to ensure people receive care instead of punishment. I will prioritize Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) at every stage, especially for those awaiting trial, to reduce the jail population below the 4,200 thresholds. I will invest in wraparound services like mental health care, substance abuse treatment, legal aid, and family reunification support to reduce recidivism.

Given that Kalief Browder and his mother Venita were our constituents and that I have had family incarcerated at Rikers, I carry the moral urgency to bring both justice and humanity to this process. Through fiscal discipline and redirected funds, I will expand reentry and vocational programs that treat justice-involved individuals with dignity. The plan can be improved by making sure community stakeholders are consulted during each phase of borough-based jail development. I will implement a public oversight dashboard to ensure transparency on timelines and conditions. Finally, Rikers Island must be transformed into a site of healing, not harm.”



State Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani

“Firstly, I would comply with the law, and close Rikers. This includes ensuring we decarcerate our jail population. The city has for years paid lip service to decarceration while doing nothing to make it a reality, with a non-existent investment in actually reducing the number of people locked up.

We have not sufficiently invested in alternatives to incarceration, and our courts have taken that lack of investment as a cue to continue shuffling people to Rikers. Dozens of people have died as a result, and tens of thousands of lives have been disrupted. My administration will change that. We will push the courts and DAs to pursue accountability while fully utilizing alternatives to incarceration as much as possible, invest in supportive housing, champion sentencing reform, and expand restorative justice processes.

In tandem with my administration’s investment in alternatives to incarceration, I will work closely with MOCJ and OCA to ensure that our courts view the city’s support services, finally operating with meaningful funding, as viable alternatives to Rikers. I’ll coordinate with DAs to get more people to spend the pretrial period at home, and to use electronic monitoring rather than Rikers. I will also work to change the culture within DOC, which under Eric Adams has not cooperated with federal investigations into abuses and altogether stopped reporting on jail deaths.



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[Zohran Mamdani, continued] We'll further drastically drive down the jail population by investing in supportive housing and mental health outreach. It costs \$42,000 to provide someone transitional housing and services for a year, but the city instead spends \$550,000 to lock someone up on Rikers. That's not just cruel; it's poor governance, too. My administration will invest in transitional housing and services which allow the City to decarcerate in a way it has not to date."



State Senator Zellnor Myrie

"Rikers has long been a symbol of systemic failure, a place where abuses of power have occurred for decades. I support the closure of Rikers and the transition towards a borough-based jail system. Moreover, the opportunities provided by Renewable Rikers will be critical for helping New York City meet its carbon reduction goals.

There are several steps we can take towards ensuring the transition is completed effectively. First, we must double down on strategies that address the root causes of incarceration. This includes investing in diversion programs, expanding mental health and substance use treatment, and ensuring robust support for those re-entering society after incarceration. As the lead author of the Clean Slate Act, I've sought to take steps to help individuals economically reintegrate after incarceration.

Second, while the plan for borough-based jails is a step toward a more community-connected system, we need to ensure these facilities are designed with input from impacted communities. These facilities must prioritize rehabilitation which is critical to reducing recidivism. Finally, we must hold ourselves accountable to these goals by creating transparency around the progress of this plan. The Adams administration is failing to meet the 2027 deadline for Rikers' closure, and as mayor, I will move forward Rikers' closure."



Scott Stringer

"Rikers isn't just broken—it's a moral failure. The conditions have long passed negligent, and every person who is sent there is at risk mentally and physically. I called for its closure in 2015, long before it was politically popular, and I still believe we need a system that treats people with dignity while keeping New Yorkers safe.

But the city's current plan is off-track, over-budget, and mismanaged. The inhumane conditions – exacerbated by the limited access to healthcare and overuse of solitary confinement – jeopardize any hope for rehabilitation the incarcerated have. We can't let red tape get in the way of long-overdue solutions. I support borough-based jails, but they must be built responsibly—smaller, safer, and with a real plan for rehabilitation.



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[Scott Stringer continued] The recent implementation of federal monitoring is long overdue and a step in the right direction. The immediate problem, however, is that borough-based jails will take time that the people currently being held at Rikers just don't have. The removal of the Department of Corrections from the helm of Rikers will begin to better the conditions in the facility, but we must also look at alternatives to incarceration for the offenders it makes sense for. Instead of sending everyone to Rikers, we invest in rehabilitation programs, mental health services, and restorative justice programs in order to give people the help they need to be rehabilitated with dignity. Those who do not pose a threat to public safety should not be locked up and separated from the resources they need to live and heal. We must address the root cause of criminal behavior, not just punish it."



Selma Bartholomew

Response transcribed from College and Community Fellowship Mayoral Candidate Forum on 4.22.25 in response to audience question about committing to closing Rikers as a top priority:

Absolutely. One of the largest factors, I have actually been to Rikers. It feels like an old slave plantation and I fundamentally understand it.

But one of the questions that we have to address, which people want to know is, which is what I'm talking about, that quality of life index to what is in your zip code? So I'm in the North Bronx, in 10469, they have a property in Jacobi hospital, and we can't get clear communication from the city about what do they want to do with it.

So you have to have worked with the community to have some transparency around what is it that we need to now do when you close by design. I work with schools all around the country. In New York City, you've socially reproduced failure. You've closed your large schools and created hundreds of small family schools. So we need to be clear about the culture of what is it that you want your guards and your individuals? What's the training that they need?

They need to see themselves as part of a network of kin versus that violent relationship that they have. So yes, the size matters, right? So you need smaller spaces, but it is a culture. It is a mindset that you are dealing with. So you have to now, as Mayor of the City of New York, I have to go after the culture, whether they're in Rikers or whether they're in the community. It is a culture of passive violence which is fueling that physical violence. So absolutely close it. But now let's have conversations about what is it that we want individuals who are incarcerated? How do we treat people? Have you ever seen the food? If you don't feed people, the toilets, the individuals? We treat individuals with such low expectations. The City is not good in terms of actually building successful models. So let me help you understand what a good model looks like. And let's go down replicating and have conversations about what it should be. So yes, close it. And then make sure what we rebuild is happening."



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Question Response: Implementing the plan to Close Rikers



Andrew Cuomo

Response transcribed from National Action Network Mayoral Candidate Forum on 4.3.25 in response to question about whether he is committed to closing Rikers with urgency:

“First, we have to stop the flow of young people into the criminal justice system. That’s job one. That’s providing real job training, apprenticeships.

We’re gonna be doing a lot of construction, we have to build affordable housing. Let’s get people apprenticeships in those projects. If you’re spending public funding, be training the at-risk youth as a part of those public projects that we’re doing. We did a project that I’d like to continue where we paid half the salary for private sector jobs. If a company hires a young at risk person we’ll pay half the salary. So keep them out of the detention center. But Rikers has to close. Rikers has to close. It is inhumane, it does more damage. Rikers has to close.

Additionally, after we sent out our questionnaire, THE CITY published this written response from Cuomo to a questionnaire in which candidates were asked to what the next Mayor should do about the current jail population exceeding the capacity of the borough jails:

“We need to face the facts that the new borough jails will not be completed in time to close Rikers by 2027. We need to stop massive budget overruns and develop an interim plan for the operation of Rikers while we do an overall assessment of what the right pathway forward should be.”



City Comptroller Brad Lander

Written response to questionnaire from Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats asking a nearly identical question to ours:

“I was one of the earliest elected officials in New York City to support closing Rikers Island. I remain firmly committed to that goal. As Mayor, I would get it done.

We are, sadly, not currently on track to close Rikers by 2027 and the longer we hold off, the worse the dysfunction and dangerous conditions grow. I was encouraged to see OCA’s recent commitment to help speed case processing in line with my office’s detailed report. But the Courts alone cannot reduce the jail population. While the City is making progress toward constructing the Borough Based Jails, City Hall has lost focus on the critical inter-agency work and leadership needed to close Rikers, as required by law.

As Mayor, I will commit to:

- Expediting the construction of the borough-based jails without sacrificing design or opportunities for community input.



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Question Response: Implementing the plan to Close Rikers

[Brad Lander continued]

- Reducing the City’s jail population through court processing reform, the expansion of ATI/ATD and strengthening of supervised release programs. (See more in Ensuring Timely Trials, a report I released as Comptroller)
- Expediting construction and dramatically expanding secure outposted therapeutic beds that will provide the 20% of New Yorkers on Rikers Island with the intensive medical and mental health treatment they need.

I support the recommendations of the Nunez Federal Monitor, and would take every effort as Mayor to comply with them. Toward this end, as Comptroller I created a Department of Correction Dashboard, which provides previously unavailable transparency about conditions and trends at Rikers. I support the call for the appointment of a federal receiver for Rikers. I would work with the court to identify an appropriate receiver, and work with that receiver to establish a collaborative structure that would allow for the implementation of the Nunez recommendations and reform of DOC, alongside the work to close Rikers Island as outlined above (and by the Lippmann Commission).”



Paperboy Love Prince

We were unable to identify any public statements from Paperboy Love Prince regarding Rikers from the current election cycle.



State Senator Jessica Ramos

Written response to questionnaire from Stonewall Democrats of NYC asking what should be done now to address the issues on Rikers:

“Eric Adams has done everything he can to fill Rikers and delay the shut down. Even this week it was reported that the process has moved backwards, and he has reopened facilities with plans to increase the population even more!

Rikers must close. It is a humanitarian crisis for the people incarcerated, for the COs, and for the support staff who work there. It is evident that many of the people awaiting trial on Rikers would be better served awaiting their trial in mental health care. I would like to quickly reopen and staff the mental health facilities Cuomo shuttered so we can move people into treatment and reduce the population on Rikers overall. Next, I would like to assess with the District Attorneys who can safely be released with ankle monitors while awaiting trial. Finally, I would like to work with the Council to adjust the deadline to the closest feasible date for the borough-based jails to be finished.”



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Question Response: Implementing the plan to Close Rikers



Whitney Tilson

Response transcribed from Community Service Society Candidate Forum on 4.21.25 in response to question nearly identical to ours:

“Rikers is an abomination, we can all agree on that. I do not see any way to safely close it, at least based on anything close to current numbers. The City Council five years ago, when crime was trending downward, only budgeted to build four borough based jails with roughly 4,000 beds.

The problem is, Rikers today has 7,100 inmates, and I don't see any way to get down. What do you do with the 3,000 that would have to be released, unless we can change this? So I would also point out that there's been an increase in Rikers of about 10% this year. This year, murders are down 35% in this city. The police have started enforcing -- the extra 10% at Rikers are chronic recidivists of lower level crimes -- the people, the reason you have plexiglass across all of your drug sources. The police had stopped enforcing low level crimes like that. So I think we are going to have a system in which we will have a smaller and rebuilt Rikers that will be much safer combined. So we will have five jails in the city, not four.”

QUESTION 2: Recent reporting on the practice of “deadlocking” as well as allegations of sexual assault have highlighted the dangerous and dehumanizing conditions on Rikers, alongside several class action lawsuits, some decades-long. Yet, in recent years, Emergency Executive Orders have continually been issued to suspend portions of the Board of Correction’s minimum standards, including limits on solitary confinement, while internal conflicts have affected the Board’s work. As Mayor, what would you do to protect the human rights of incarcerated people?



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

“I would implement the local law to prohibit solitary confinement in any form, which the current mayoral administration has refused to do and led me to sue them on behalf of the City Council. I would also work constructively with the federal court-appointed monitor and forthcoming receiver in the Nunez case to address the civil and human rights violations occurring as a result of the conditions on Rikers.

While advancing the necessary steps towards the closure of Rikers, I would also pursue efforts to establish evidence-based reforms within a current jail that transforms it into a model for the City. I will also take steps to transform the Department of Correction into a better managed agency that is highly reliable and accountable, with increased professional development, support and training for officers to ensure improved and safer outcomes for everyone in our jails.



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Question Response: Human Rights in Jails

[Adrienne Adams continued] This would include greater management that incentivizes positive behavior through recognition and rewards, while ensuring swift, certain and graduated accountability for misconduct – for both people detained and staff.

Abusive policies that isolate people in counterproductive ways, like deadlocking, would not only be prohibited in policy but also in practice, as they contribute to increased violence in our jails.”



Michael Blake

“As Mayor, I will immediately end the misuse of Emergency Executive Orders that undermine the rights and dignity of people incarcerated in New York City jails. Solitary confinement must be severely restricted, with clear limitations aligned with international human rights standards. I will prioritize strengthening the Board of Correction’s authority, ensuring it operates independently and transparently, with full access to DOC facilities and data.

My administration will establish a Correctional Justice Oversight Task Force composed of formerly incarcerated individuals, health professionals, and legal experts to monitor conditions and recommend reforms. All reports of abuse, including deadlocking and sexual assault will be thoroughly investigated, with perpetrators held accountable. Substantially increasing mental health services within Rikers is an immediate step we must take, even as we work toward long-term decarceration. I will expand legal services and ensure that every person in custody has access to medical and mental health care. Family visitation, vocational training, and educational opportunities will be prioritized to affirm dignity and reduce isolation. My plan centers human rights and sees justice as a pathway to healing, not harm. I will also rescind contracts with providers or administrators that violate basic care standards. Rikers cannot remain a black box of abuse, we will bring it into the light.”



State Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani

“The first thing that needs to happen in order to protect the human rights of incarcerated people is to reduce the jail population. The city has for years paid lip service to decarceration while doing nothing to make it a reality. The city committed to reducing the jail population to under 4,000; when Eric Adams took office, 5,400 people were incarcerated. As his term nears its end, on May 24, the jail population sits at 7,564. This year, five people have died in DOC custody, and 38 under Eric Adams (a number that is likely an undercount). That is in part a function of jailing too many people.

My administration will drive down the jail population by investing in supportive housing and mental health outreach, transitional housing and other services. This will allow it to actually decarcerate in a way it has not to date. We will also improve treatment within DOC facilities, which is woefully inadequate. Rikers is the second-largest mental health facility in the country – and the largest in our city. More than half of the people held on Rikers have mental health needs, yet mental health treatment in DOC facilities falls well short. Under my administration, the City will pair its decarceration efforts with an investment in community-based mental health treatment.



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Question Response: Human Rights in Jails

[Zohran Mamdani continued] That inadequacy extends to healthcare, too. Some months, people incarcerated on Rikers miss over 10,000 appointments – medical neglect for which DOC is responsible. My city will end that neglect and ensure adequate healthcare for all incarcerated people. Solitary confinement is torture and my mayoralty will end its practice after Eric Adams has fought to maintain its use. I will do so by ensuring Local Law 42 is enforced and charging my Department of Correction commissioner to implement an end to solitary confinement in NYC jails. I will also change the culture within DOC, which under Eric Adams has not cooperated with federal investigations into abuses and altogether stopped reporting on jail deaths. My administration will conduct a comprehensive survey of DOC staffing patterns and provide an affirmative vision for effective deployment. For years the City has lacked that vision, which has led to catastrophic mismanagement and preventable deaths. My administration will ensure that incarcerated people’s basic needs are met, that their rights are respected, and that abuse is rooted out. That vision will also include cooperating with the federal monitor overseeing Rikers, which the Adams administration has flouted to disastrous effect.

Finally, I will implement recommendations from the Taskforce on Issues Faced by TGNCNBI People in Custody in order to ensure the law is actually followed and incarcerated trans New Yorkers are treated with dignity, including Intro 625.

And above all else, I will talk regularly with formerly incarcerated New Yorkers about how to guarantee the rights of incarcerated New Yorkers.”

State Senator Zellnor Myrie



“New York City cannot claim to be a place of justice while Rikers continues to exist in its current state: a facility defined by neglect and systemic failure.

In the Senate, I co-sponsored the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, which ended the use of long-term isolation and replaced it with more humane, trauma-informed alternatives. I also co-sponsored legislation to protect the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ people in custody, including bills to preserve trans-affirming housing placements and improve access to gender-affirming healthcare behind bars. My record makes clear: I’ve fought for the most vulnerable people in our system, and as mayor, I’ll keep doing so.

As mayor, I will take immediate action to reduce harm and save lives by improving conditions by addressing staffing shortages, increasing access to medical and mental health care, and ensuring basic standards like sanitation, food, and safety are enforced. I will also invest in community-based supports for people reentering society, such as the Clean Slate Act I championed.”



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Question Response: Human Rights in Jails



Scott Stringer

“We cannot compromise on human rights. Deadlocking is inhumane, and the allegations of sexual assault are unacceptable. The federal monitoring of the Department of Corrections and of the officials stationed on Rikers Island is a welcome relief and should put us on a path towards ending these disturbing conditions, actions, and methods. Reforming the Department of Corrections, nonetheless, will be a priority for my administration so the same dangerous and inhumane conditions are not implemented in the borough-based jails once completed.

We will create the Deputy Mayor for Quality of Life, who will oversee whole-of-government oversight and facilitate and enhance accountability to allow quick remedial actions and ensure the safety, security, and civil rights of incarcerated individuals are being preserved. This conduct compromises the rehabilitation process, endangers New Yorkers, and will not stand during a Stringer administration.”

QUESTION 3: The Independent Budget Office reported that the Department of Correction’s budget has remained relatively stable since 2014 despite a 45% reduction in the jail population, and despite approximately 1,400 anticipated vacancies among uniformed staff in FY2026 (out of 7,060 budgeted positions). The Independent Rikers Commission estimated that the borough-based jail system will require no more than 3,240 uniformed officers. What steps, if any, would you take to reduce DOC’s annual operating budget, transition their workforce, and redirect funding to resources like community based mental health services, supportive housing, alternatives to incarceration, and reentry services?



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

“The Independent Rikers Commission’s report would be a guide for my administration’s efforts to close Rikers and establish more effective, safer borough-based jails. I will direct funding where it is needed to advance the goals of a safer jail system and city, which clearly requires increased investments into mental health, recidivism reduction, and supportive housing programs that remain underfunded. The Department’s budget and headcount should align with clearly defined needs and our strategic imperatives to improve public safety.”



Michael Blake

“I will significantly reduce the Department of Correction’s bloated operating budget by aligning staffing with the borough-based jail system’s actual needs. We do not need over 7,000 officers when projections show fewer than 3,300 are required. I will implement a phased workforce transition plan that includes early retirement packages, reassignments to social service roles, and retraining opportunities for DOC personnel.



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Question Response: Community Reinvestment

[Michael Blake continued] Vacant positions will not be refilled unless critical, and budget savings will be reallocated to proven public safety investments like mental health services, supportive housing, and ATI programs.

My administration will launch a “Care Not Cages” initiative that redirects funds toward community-based care infrastructure. Nonprofits providing reentry, substance use treatment, and youth services will receive prioritized contracts and expedited payments. I will also establish performance-based budgeting across DOC to ensure every dollar leads to safety and rehabilitation, not bureaucracy. We cannot justify maintaining inflated budgets that do not reflect the reduced jail population. These reforms are not just fiscal, they are about honoring the humanity of people who, like my family members, have endured the harms of a broken correctional system.”



State Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani

“We need to invest our resources in solutions that actually deliver safety. That's why I've proposed a Department of Community Safety, which will keep New Yorkers safe by pioneering evidence-proven approaches that have worked elsewhere in the country. Rikers Island inflicts immeasurable trauma and harm on incarcerated people, corrections officers, and their broader communities, which in the end makes us all less safe. Currently, attrition at DOC is very high.

We can reduce DOC spending by simply eliminating uniformed vacancies and redeploying existing officers in critical posts instead of administrative roles. It is also crucial that we invest in better training for officers in de-escalation, mental health, and resilience. Doing so will improve conditions for officers and incarcerated people alike. Ultimately, however, we must reduce our overreliance on incarceration, shifting city funds so that we focus on preventing instability and crime instead of simply reacting in their aftermath with punishment.”



State Senator Zellnor Myrie

“The current conditions on Rikers Island are morally reprehensible. As long as Rikers remains open, I believe the City has a duty to maintain the necessary resources to ensure the safety, health, and dignity of everyone in our custody and care, including both staff and incarcerated individuals. Reducing the Department of Correction’s budget before we’ve meaningfully improved those conditions risks further deterioration and more harm.

Under a Myrie administration, we will maintain the DOC budget at current levels in the short term, not to sustain inefficiency, but to make urgent improvements in living conditions, medical care, staff training, and oversight. These investments are critical to stabilizing a system that has for too long teetered on the edge of collapse.



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Question Response: Community Reinvestment

{Zellnor Myrie continued} That said, a Myrie administration will root out the inefficiencies and abuses that have plagued the department, starting with the rampant misuse of overtime. I will implement strict oversight and management reforms to eliminate waste and bring transparency to how taxpayer dollars are being spent. As we transition to a borough-based jail system, we will reevaluate the overall structure, size, and staffing levels of DOC, including the number of uniformed officers. We will also explore workforce transitions that are both fiscally responsible and fair.

At the same time, I will make bold and sustained investments in the supports that actually prevent incarceration and reduce recidivism. My public safety plan includes citywide deployment of 150 PACT teams (police and clinician trios) to respond to behavioral health crises with care instead of force and stabilization centers in every borough that offer safe, voluntary spaces where people in crisis can access wraparound services. Through my Rebuild NYC housing plan, we will build and preserve one million homes over the next decade, including 50,000 new units of permanent housing for city-issued voucher holders to help people exit shelters and jails and stay housed. We will prioritize housing as a tool for justice and stability.

Finally, I will prioritize providing reentry services, including job training, housing placement, and trauma-informed care. Reentry support must begin at the point of detention and continue long after release. That's how we stop the revolving door and build safer, stronger communities. I led the passage of the Clean Slate Act in Albany because I believe people who have served their time deserve a fair chance at employment, housing, and stability. As Mayor, I'll bring that same commitment to reentry here in New York City, ensuring people can truly rebuild their lives, not remain trapped by the consequences of past incarceration.

We will maintain DOC's budget as necessary to immediately improve conditions at Rikers, but we will demand accountability. And as we move toward closing Rikers, we will redirect resources toward the systems, housing, health care, education, and employment, that truly create public safety."



Scott Stringer

"I know how to balance a budget, the DOC's annual operating budget needs to be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the services they provide. My QualitySTAT program is designed to collect and analyse real-time data and find budgetary and resource inefficiencies within each department, and allow us to reallocate those funds and resources accordingly. This program will allow us to transition our correctional resources away from

Rikers and towards housing, social services, and reentry programs without compromising the rehabilitative services currently available from the Department of Corrections or compromising the services available to currently incarcerated people."



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Question Response: Voting in city jails

QUESTION 4: The majority of people incarcerated in New York City jails retain the right to vote, but few are able to exercise this right. Would you direct the Department of Correction, and encourage the Board of Election, to increase their efforts to facilitate voting in city jails? If yes, what specific actions would you take?



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

“Facilitating civic participation, particularly voting, for those with criminal justice involvement has a positive impact on reducing recidivism. I would prioritize greater engagement in elections for people in our city jails who are eligible to vote.

There are public education efforts that can be implemented through NYC Votes specifically for this population, and the Board of Elections can improve the process for people in jail to cast their ballots and have them counted. I would pursue both greater electoral education and voting access as an important contribution to a safer New York.”



Michael Blake

“Yes, I will direct the Department of Correction and strongly encourage the Board of Elections to ensure all eligible voters in city jails can exercise their rights. First, I will mandate that all facilities distribute voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications upon intake and at regular intervals. My administration will appoint a Voter Access Liaison within DOC to coordinate logistics, assist with ballot requests, and ensure confidentiality.

We will provide civic education sessions, in partnership with community organizations, so people know their rights and how to participate. Voting materials and instructions will be available in multiple languages and accessible formats. I will also ensure that ballots are securely collected, timely submitted, and tracked. Furthermore, I will explore secure, supervised in-person voting opportunities at borough-based jails. Voting is a cornerstone of democracy, one that does not vanish with incarceration. Civic engagement for justice involved individuals must be treated not as charity, but as a constitutional commitment, especially for those detained pretrial close to home. Finally, we will publicize and celebrate participation rates to shift public narratives around the civic worth of justice involved people.”



State Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani

“Yes, I will. Mass incarceration shapes our elections and weakens our democracy. Public defenders say that DOC ignores its legal requirement to inform people in jail of their right to vote; I will instruct DOC to provide all eligible incarcerated voters with a packet of voter information, including an absentee ballot application, and also facilitate voter registration and early voting.



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Question Response: Voting in city jails

[Zohran Mamdani continued] I will also make more DOC resources available to guarantee the voting rights of incarcerated people. Finally, I will encourage the Board of Election to use nursing homes as a model for the level of support required in our jails. That includes the appointment of election inspectors in DOC facilities to eliminate the curing process.”



State Senator Zellnor Myrie

“Yes. I believe voting is a fundamental right, and I have a proven record of fighting to ensure that right is accessible to all New Yorkers, including those in custody who remain eligible to vote.

As Chair of the Senate Elections Committee, I co-sponsored and passed legislation (S830B, 2021) requiring local jails to provide voter registration forms, absentee ballot applications, and information about voting rights to

eligible individuals. That law was an important step forward in ensuring that incarceration does not equate to disenfranchisement. As Mayor, I will uphold the values that guided my work in the State Senate: that the right to vote must be equitably protected, implemented, and respected for every eligible New Yorker, no matter their ZIP code or incarceration status.”



Scott Stringer

“The right to vote and participate in the democratic process is fundamental to our continued existence as a nation. We must go out of our way to facilitate and assist all eligible voters in doing their civic duty. Incarceration should never act as a barrier to lawful representation, it is clear that the status quo is not working.

I will work with the Department of Corrections and the Board of Elections to create a streamlined communication process so incarcerated people have the opportunity to fill out and correct voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications. Vote in NYC Jails have been going above and beyond for years, it is time for the city to step in. We will work with the organization to send people to assist in the registration, application, and voting process in every facility. This disenfranchisement cannot stand; we need swift action to ensure the will of the people is being followed.”

QUESTION 5: Legislation passed in 2021, known as the “Renewable Rikers” laws, established a process for transitioning control of Rikers Island from the Department of Correction to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services for sustainability uses as the jails are closed, and feasibility studies released last year outlined the benefits of using the island for wastewater recovery and renewable energy. What immediate next steps would you take toward implementing this plan?



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Question Response: Repurposing of Rikers Island



City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams

“The Council is currently considering legislation to require a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes, which would advance Renewable Rikers. In our recently released action plan of next steps for the closure of Rikers, we included this bill as a priority. As mayor, I will advance implementation of this law and all necessary steps to implement Renewable Rikers.”



Michael Blake

“I will take swift action to transition Rikers Island from a symbol of harm to a hub for healing and sustainability. My first step will be to fully fund and staff the Renewable Rikers planning division within DCAS, ensuring coordination with environmental justice advocates and impacted communities.

I will establish a public project timeline, with quarterly updates and accountability mechanisms, so New Yorkers can track progress.

I will work with environmental scientists and engineers to begin pilot programs for wastewater recovery and solar and wind energy generation. Additionally, I will seek state and federal climate resilience funding to support this transformation. My administration will prioritize workforce development for formerly incarcerated individuals to participate in this green transition, creating jobs in solar installation, environmental remediation, and infrastructure development. This will be a model of restorative justice and climate action. We must convert a site of generational trauma into a source of generational opportunity for jobs, for healing, and for justice. I will also ensure that all environmental remediation is handled with community health and long-term monitoring in mind. Rikers must never again be used for incarceration. Instead, we will reimagine it as a public asset that serves environmental justice and community well-being.”



State Assemblymember Zohran Mamdani

“My administration will support the immediate commencement of the master planning process for Renewable Rikers. The City will also transfer all lands no longer in use by DOC to DCAS, as mandated by Local Law 16 of 2021.

After the land transfer, buildings will be demolished, allowing for geotechnical studies and remediation of land (80% of Rikers is built on decaying landfill) to proceed showing a commitment to the repurposing of land. Finally, I will appoint and empower an official whose sole job will be to coordinate the planning and implementation of Renewable Rikers.”



Close Rikers Voter Guide

Question Response: Repurposing of Rikers Island



State Senator Zellnor Myrie

“As Mayor, I look forward to reaching our state’s and city’s climate goals, which will require significant investment to decarbonize buildings, including through electrification, energy efficiency, and the use of new technologies and energy sources.

I support the Renewable Rikers vision of transforming the site long associated with injustice into a hub for environmental sustainability and climate justice.

As Mayor, my first immediate step would be to begin the transfer of jurisdiction of vacated or underutilized parcels on Rikers Island from the Department of Correction to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), as required by the Renewable Rikers legislation. If jail facilities are no longer in use, my administration will move those parcels into DCAS control and begin pre-development planning for sustainable infrastructure.

This transfer would allow DCAS, the Mayor’s Office of Environmental and Climate Justice, and other relevant offices and agencies to accelerate the work of planning wastewater recovery systems, renewable energy installations, and battery storage, all of which were confirmed to be feasible and beneficial in last year’s studies.

As someone who has fought for environmental justice and equitable infrastructure investment throughout my legislative career, I will act with urgency to realize the Renewable Rikers promise.”



Scott Stringer

“We need to meet the moment and the needs of the people who are still currently incarcerated in Rikers. Maintaining the rehabilitation services and maintaining the safety, security, and dignity of all incarcerated people on the island until such a time that they are no longer necessary needs to be the immediate priority.

The immediate next steps my administration would take in facilitating this transfer would be to invest heavily in the construction of the borough-based jail system and invest in alternative programs, mental health services, and restorative justice programs to rehabilitate people without sending them to Rikers, thus allowing sections of the facility to be closed and repurposed without compromising the services provided. This transition will not happen overnight, and we must take a measured approach to this transition and take decisive steps towards closing Rikers forever.”

