

New York Attorney General Democratic Primary Debate
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Manhattan Neighborhood Network, in partnership with the League of Women Voters of New York State and Gotham Gazette, presents Race to Represent, a MNN election initiative.

Ben Max: Hello, I'm Ben Max, Executive Editor of Gotham Gazette. It's a state election year in New York, including for the statewide positions of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Controller, and Attorney General. Today we are pleased to bring you a debate among all four candidates running for the Democratic nomination for New York State Attorney General.

Ben Max: The Attorney General is the state's top lawyer and chief legal officer, tasked with defending the state in legal proceedings, upholding state laws, and protecting the rights of all New Yorkers. The Attorney General is often referred to as the people's lawyer. The Attorney General's vast office protects individuals, consumers, investors, tenants, workers, and others, and investigates financial firms, non profit compliance, Medicaid fraud, and much more. Of late there's been a lot of attention on the role of the New York Attorney General, as it relates to pushing back against the Trump administration and federal laws and practices. Though like many other parts of the job, that work is dependent upon the views and legal interpretations of the Attorney General.

Ben Max: The office has also been looked to of late to take a stronger role in rooting out corruption in New York State government, though its powers in that regard are also fairly limited. We'll discuss that and more during this debate. This year's race for Attorney General of New York is wide open, thanks to the resignation of former Attorney General, Eric Schneiderman. His replacement, Barbara Underwood, who is the state Solicitor General, is not seeking election to the office. The New York primary is on Thursday, September 13th. The winner of this primary will be the Democratic party nominee in the general election facing competitors from several other parties. That vote is November 6th. So let's get to today's debate.

Ben Max: The Democratic Attorney General candidates are seated by random drawing and starting from my left, we have U.S. Representative Sean Patrick Maloney, Leecia Eve, Public Advocate Letitia James, and Zephyr Teachout. So thank you all for being here and we're gonna start with you, Mr. Maloney. How do you describe

the role of the Attorney General? How do you describe the office? What are its powers?

Sean Maloney: Alright, well first of all, thanks MNN. Thanks Ben for having us today. Look, this

is the champion for regular New Yorkers. This is the people's lawyer. This is the one office that ought to be working for you. Right now, that means working against these threats from Donald Trump and Washington. That's how I see the office, whether you're talking about reproductive freedom or the environment or immigrants' rights, whether you're talking about property taxes, whether you're talking about infrastructure projects, really, everywhere you look, New York is in the bull's eye of this crowd in Washington. You need to hold Donald Trump accountable for his own conduct, but the administration needs to be pushed back because it's coming after New York. I am the only candidate in this race with six years in Washington in that fight and that's the experience I bring to it. Because right now, the Congress is not playing the role it should as the constitutional check on the President. But the Attorneys General are. That's how I'm gonna use this office to stand up to this President and stick up for New York.

Ben Max: Thank you. Miss Eve, how do you describe the role of the Attorney General and the powers of the office?

Leecia Eve: Well, we're in unprecedented times. The office of the New York State Attorney

General is more important than it has ever been in my 54 years. Priority number one needs to be fighting against Donald Trump and the assault on our values and the rights, all that we as New Yorkers hold dear, immigrant rights, reproductive rights, women's rights, environmental rights, LGBTQ rights, fighting against the rollback of criminal justice reform that took place under the Obama administration. So, we have a lot to deal with in terms of fighting against the horrific policies of this administration as well as doing all that we can, all that I can as the next Attorney General, to hold the President of the United States personally accountable.

Leecia Eve: We have a lot of issues and a lot of challenges right here at home that New York

state owns, advancing criminal justice reform, advancing voting rights, advancing environmental rights, doing all we can to provide increased educational and economic opportunities for all New York children and families. At the end of the day, it's the job of the Attorney General of our great state to do that all that she can to make this state more fair and more just. At the end of the job, that is the job of the chief legal officer, the people's lawyer. I am the most qualified, most prepared, most experienced candidate, best to serve that role, and would be proud to have the support of New Yorkers across the state to do just that.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. James, how do you describe the role of Attorney General?

Letitia James: We're at a pivotal point in history. We're careening towards constitutional crisis.

We're in the midst of our rights are being violated as a state and across this nation. We're at a very low point in our country. We've been more divided now than we've ever been since the Civil War. What we need now more than ever is an Attorney General of the state of New York who will continue to speak truth to power, who will continue to challenge the forces that be, who will stand up for marginalized communities all throughout the state of New York, and individuals who unfortunately find their rights under attack who are hiding right now as a result of the abuses from Washington D.C. This President right now, unfortunately, has trampled on the rights of countless number of individuals throughout the state of New York.

Letitia James: What we need is someone who has a history and a record of getting things done

and speaking truth to power. It's important that we have someone such as myself, who is a former public defender, a former city council member, a former Assistant Attorney General, a former Council of State Legislature, and a Public Advocate of the city of New York, who has gotten more done than anyone who is on the stage at this point in time. That's what we need. This reminds me of the civil rights movement. I'm the only one who went to a school, which basically showed a mirror on this country and basically challenged the laws. I stand before you in the spirit of Barbara Jordan, who once served in the Congress and who was responsible obviously for bringing up impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon. We're in that moment again. What we need is someone who stands in that spirit and that's Letitia James.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Teachout, how do you describe the role of the Attorney General of the state of New York?

Zephyr Teachout: I mean, I think we're really in a real war time for our democracy right now.

There is no more important legal office in the country than the New York State Attorney General's Office. I have four priorities for the office. The job of the office changes with the context of the time. It changes with the threats of the time. The first priority is really being the firewall against the Trump administration, Donald Trump himself, somebody who doesn't believe in the rule of law, an open bigot, and open racist, somebody who is violating the Constitution. Against Donald Trump and the administration, it's important that we both protect against the administration's illegal acts and use the unique powers of the New York State Attorney General to investigate his businesses and the illegal activity that we know he's involved, in violating the Emoluments Clause, and that he may be involved in, in his businesses.

The second priority, and again, this is the context changes the job, is really

cleaning up Albany. We have a real corruption crisis and investigating corruption in Albany, being a real check on corruption crisis that is hurting New Yorkers. State money is going to big donors instead of desperately needed economic development.

The third priority involves, again, what's happening at the federal level and the unique job of the Attorney General moment in this time, we can't trust the EPA to protect our air and water. We can't trust Jeff Sessions to protect civil rights. Instead the New York State Attorney General needs to be the regulator of last resort, stepping up to protect our basic rights across the board.

And my fourth priority is to use the platform to address the ongoing crisis of mass incarceration. That means being a leading advocate for ending cash bail, discovery reform, whole series of issues that are leading to the crisis, but also really trying to work to change the culture. We should have half the number of people that we have in prisons and jails right now.

Ben Max: Thank you. We're gonna start this round with you, Miss Eve. We're gonna alternate who gets asked first. Tell voters ... We're heading towards, of course, the Democratic primary that you're all running in for September 13th, tell voters about yourself and your resume and specifically, of course, how your experience to this point matches that description that you gave for the role of the Attorney General.

Leecia Eve: Well, first of all, my roots in this state run deep. They run deep. Born and reared

in the great city of Buffalo, Western New York, proudly have called Harlem my home for the past seven years. My father was born here in Harlem, 85 years ago. I have spent my life, my life, championing social justice, fighting in the trenches for social justice, served as a clerk to the first African American to serve as full term on the state's highest court. Right out of the gate, after I graduated from Harvard Law School, having conversations with judges in this state about the most fundamental legal issues of our time.

Leecia Eve: The case that I'm most proud of, but I've got more courtroom experience in New York state across the state than any other candidate, but the case I'm most proud of is the case where I represented hundreds of women, incarcerated in District of Columbia prisons against the District of Columbia. I took on the D.C. prison system because of prison conditions that hundreds of women were living in. One of my clients had a leg shackled to a hospital bed as she brought a child into this world. It was a tough battle, fighting the D.C. prison system, but we fought, we won. That's the kind of lawyer I was when I was barely 30 years old. That's the kind of Attorney General I will be for the people of the state of New York.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. James, you mentioned some of the roles and offices, but speak a little bit more to your experience and how it fits the role.

Letitia James: The Office of the Attorney General, 70% of what the Attorney General does, is primarily defensive work. It's state work. You're the attorney for all state agencies throughout the state of New York. It's not sexy. It doesn't get a lot of attention. Then there's the affirmative litigation. Then there's the advocacy and then there's the enforcement. That is the role, the constitutional role of the Office of Attorney General. As a former city council member, who's passed laws, who's represented her community, who stood at the Vanguard against developers who would want to destroy the character of our community ... I took the case all the way to United States Supreme Court. I challenged the Empire State Development Corporation, basically challenging it, and arguing that it abused eminent domain. We took that case all the way to United States Supreme Court.

Letitia James: I stood up against Mayor Bloomberg, when he extended their term because it was in violation of the Constitution. As the city council I stood up and passed environmental laws, recycling laws in the city of New York. As a Public Advocate of the city of New York we resolved over 32,000 constituent complaints. We passed more laws than all previous Public Advocates combined. We've been very active with respect to litigation. We sued the mayor. We sued the Governor. We'll continue to stand up and initiate litigation. We were the first to follow, to be on amicus brief, on behalf of the Muslim band, against Donald Trump, on behalf of some activists who are seeking to be deported, on behalf of the LGBT community, the transgender community, and we have been very active in the progressive space and we'll continue to do that, speaking truth to power. That's what we need more than ever, is a progressive Attorney General.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Teachout, your experience.

Zephyr Teachout: We, right now, have a constitutional and corruption crisis at the federal level and in New York State. I have spent my life as an anti-corruption expert, fighting against corruption 72 hours after Donald Trump took office. I sued him in Southern District of New York for violating the Emoluments Clause of the Constitution. I have been leading a legal strategy to force him to divest his business interests. Actually that legal strategy is winning right now. My background as an anti-corruption expert is really painfully relevant right now. It's what we need to take on Donald Trump. We are gonna need to not only respond to the illegalities we know about but complex and evolving issues that are gonna arise because we are in a totally new territory right now with the Trump administration. My deep expertise really matters there. I also bring a lot of independence to the job. I am the only candidate who isn't taking corporate pack money or LLC money and I think that's really important. My campaign is funded by over 17,000 contributions, the average of which is

under \$200. I can bring that independence to the job, which is key. I started my legal career as a death penalty lawyer, representing the people who are most hated in society. The skills that I learned there, being creative, digging under every rock, building new legal theories, I'm gonna bring to this job.

Ben Max: Thank you. Mr. Maloney, your experience and how it prepares you for this role.

Sean Maloney: Well, thank you. I have 25 years in public and private sector experience. When I

got out of school, I did a year volunteering with the Jesuits in Peru in South America. When I came back, I spent 10 years off and on practicing law in this city. I ran complex investigations, negotiated major transactions. I did a lot of pro bono work for tenants and for immigrants. I worked on special counsel investigations, Congressional investigations, very relevant experience now. I worked as senior staff of two Governors. I oversaw at one time or another 13, 14 state agencies and departments, tens of thousands of employees, tens of billions of dollars of budget authority.

Sean Maloney: I worked for three years in the White House senior staff. I was the White House

Staff Secretary. I saw every document that went to the President of the United States, worked directly with him, including all the code word and top secret national security information, which is very relevant to the Russia investigation right now. I spent six years in Congress. I beat a Republican incumbent. I beat the Republicans twice after that.

Sean Maloney: I'm the first openly gay member of Congress in the history of the state of New

York. I don't represent Chelsea. I represent Orange County and Putnam County, Dutchess County, Northern Westchester. The fact is, those are tough races but I've been beating the Republicans at the ballot box. I've beaten the Republicans in the floor of the House of Representatives, where I passed 30 bills into law in my five and a half years in Congress, making our train safer, keeping oil barges off the Hudson River, helping farmers, helping veterans, doing good things wherever I could. I'm running for this office because that combination of public and private sector experience is exactly what we need right now to stand in the fight against Donald Trump and protect New York, to go after these crooks in Albany, and to stand up to the guys on Wall Street.

Ben Max: Thank you. I think we have a lot of agreement about pushing back on the Federal Government. No surprise for those following the race and, of course, the fact that you're running in Democratic primary. Let's talk a little bit more about the role closer to home in New York. We're gonna start with you, Ms. James, this round. The powers of the Attorney General are vast. There are 1,700 employees or so. There's satellite bureaus around the state. How do you manage the office? What are the issues you would focus on closer to home? A

few have been mentioned, whether it's real estate or financial firms. Talk a little bit more about the specifics of the office here in New York.

Letitia James: There are 1,800 employees, 650 Assistant Attorney Generals. The budget is

\$262 million dollars. As I criss crossed the state of New York, I've been to Buffalo. Unfortunately in Buffalo, they're having problems with lead. They have one of the highest asthma rates in this state, if not this nation. I've been to Newburg, Newburg, where they are filing a federal case against this administration for remediating their soil near their water. I've been to Brentwood on Long Island, where they are dumping in communities of color all throughout the state, all throughout the county of Brentwood, the town of Brentwood. I've been to Brooklyn, where there's a significant problem with children with asthma as well. I've been to Albany, where eight black men have been murdered. There are issues all throughout the state of New York.

Letitia James: I've spoken to consumers, primarily immigrants and low income individuals,

who unfortunately are being victimized by unscrupulous businesses and that's a subject matter of the Office of Attorney General. Then last but not least, as the former, as the Public Advocate of the city of New York, we've turbo charged the worst landlord list. There's a significant number of tenants, particularly here in the borough of Manhattan, who are facing great displacement. All of these issues and more, we need to focus on. We can not just focus on one singular issue. We've gotta focus on all of the issues that New Yorkers care about. As someone who has criss crossed this state, I am uniquely qualified and know about all of the issues and can use the powers, and leverage the powers of the Office of Attorney General to get these individuals justice because that's all that I am. That's all that I've been, as part of my life in public services, is focusing on justice and serving people.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: First, I want to say that I have been incredibly impressed with the work that

Barbara Underwood has done as our Attorney General. What I want to focus on in this answer is the areas that I would bring a particular focus to. There's incredible talent at that office. I'm incredibly excited to work with the great attorneys there. One, because of the crisis, both federal level but also in New York State, and I

think this is important, I would want to beef up the public corruption unit and the criminal capacity within the office.

Two, and investigating corruption in Albany is a really big deal. It's not something that the New York State Attorney General has traditionally done.

Because of the ongoing crisis, we can't trust the existing Washa groups, gotta take it on. Then, there's a few areas that I want to a particular focus on. One is, we have a

incredible crisis in Big Pharma, both in terms of deceptive practices by big pharmaceutical companies and outrageous drug prices. Underwood just brought a really innovative important lawsuit, I think last week, against Purdue. That's the kind of lawsuit I want to bring and it's gonna take creative thinking, new kinds of litigation, because again, we can't trust the Federal Government. Second, taking on big fossil fuel companies, making sure that we are at the leading edge of environmental litigation, not just continuing the Exxon lawsuit but I have new ideas for new areas of litigation nears, in the environment. Three, taking on-

Ben Max: Wrap it up, please. Go ahead, last one.

Zephyr Teachout: Taking on big real estate.

Ben Max: Thank you. Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Well, look. This is the most important public interest law firm in the state, maybe in the country. It's a big office. I think I'm the only one on this stage that's actually managed large organizations, managed lots of employees, managed that much budget authority. It's very important that you know how to manage a big organization. Here are the priorities. The fact is, you got real threats in Washington, terrible corruption in Albany, and you've got a core set of functions to protect consumers and citizens against business interest here in New York. You got to do it all. You got to walk and chew gum at the same time. Sean Maloney: What I'm gonna do is I'm gonna identify the key threats coming out of Washington. We see a lot of them. There's about 42 pages in a list on my desk of actions Barbara Underwood has taken. I think she's fantastic. I'd love her to stay on in any capacity, if she wants. The fact is though, there are so many threats coming from D.C., whether you're talking about the environment, where we see threats to our initiatives against climate change or our health care, not just prescription drug companies that are out of control and overcharging consumers, but also the threats to the Affordable Care Act, the essential plan here in New York, to our Medicaid system, all of those have to be stood up to. Sean Maloney: Look at what's happening in immigration with the dreamers, separating kids at the borders. A member of my team had her mom and dad deported. Her dad died during the process. As a Congressman I was able to get in that fight and give him more with his family. But an Attorney General can go into court and stop it. This office is about using the tools available to you under the law to stand up to the Trump administration, to root out corruption in Albany, and to stick up for consumers here in New York. I'm the only one with a management experience to do it.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Eve, what areas would you focus on? What are some things that the Attorney General's Office can do here in New York?

Leecia Eve: Well, first of all, let me say, I am by far the most prepared and most experienced candidate on this stage to deal with the myriad of challenges that we face. As council and Homeland Security Advisor for four and a half years to Hillary Rodham Clinton, I fought in the trenches with Hilary to advance reproductive rights, to advance women's rights, to advance civil rights, to advance voting rights, to fight against bad judges. As a first woman and as a first person of color in the history of our state to be the Chief Economic Development Advisor to a Governor, overseeing 11 agencies in state government, from Empire State Development to agriculture and markets, I'm best prepared because my knowledge of the state is unmatched. My experience fighting for New Yorkers is unmatched. I think our challenges really fall into three buckets. One, a relentless focus on fighting corruption. I am the daughter of two great public servants. I know what good public servants look like and what they can do. There are so much distrust in government right now. Fighting corruption will be a top priority because we need to restore that trust. We also need to make sure, as I'm traveling across the state, and I haven't been traveling across the state just as a candidate, I've known this state for so many years. New Yorkers are still anxious about being taken for a ride. I will be aggressively advocating, to protect consumer rights. But at the end of the day, we must reform our criminal justice system, which is totally unfair to black and brown, particularly black and brown young men. If people don't have faith in their criminal justice system, little else matters.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Eve got it just a little bit. Mr. Maloney talked about management and the size of the office and being ... I just want to give Ms. Teachout and then Ms. James a chance to, in 30 seconds, address your management experience and if you're prepared to run an office of this size or what makes you prepared, how you would do it. And then we'll start the next round of questioning with you, Ms. Teachout. So, just quickly on the idea of running such a large office and are you prepared for that?

Zephyr Teachout: Great. Look, I was the national director of the Sunlight Foundation, a large transparency organization. I've worked with large teams of lawyers. As a death penalty lawyer, we worked with large teams of lawyers on class action suits. Recently, with the Trump litigation, I've been working with an incredible team of lawyers. I see the essence of the job as leading the state's legal strategy and dealing with the genuine crisis that we're facing. My unique background as a true leader, I wrote the book on anti-corruption law, makes me uniquely qualified for this role.

Ben Max: Great. Thank you. Ms. James?

Letitia James: I'm a former public defender. I represented countless number of

individuals in the criminal justice system and in fact, still do. In addition to that, I've worked with legal services all throughout the state of New York and continue to have discussions with them now about the challenges that are facing immigrants, about the issues of consumer fraud, about a myriad of issues all throughout the state of New York. The number of legal services right now are in the hundreds, if not thousands. Then lastly, I am a Public Advocate of the city of New York. Right now I have a staff of around 52 and have transformed that office, made that office relevant, and have initiated litigation into the Office of Public Advocate, where we have filed more lawsuits than all previous Public Advocates combined, and introduced more legislation including groundbreaking legislation to ban salary history because equal pay for equal work should be more than just a slogan. So we've got the management experience and we've got the experience to get things done.

Ben Max: Thank you.

Letitia James: We've got a proven record over 20 years.

Ben Max: Thank you. We're gonna come around to start a new round of questioning with you, Ms. Teachout. Public corruption, corruption in Albany, and by that it's shorthand for state government, of course, not just the city of Albany or the state capital there, but corruption throughout the state. We've obviously seen recent examples with the Democratic State Assembly Leader, the Republican State Senate Leader in Governor Cuomo's administration and economic development program. So, let's talk about corruption in New York State government. Ms. Teachout, you talked about this. The powers of the State Attorney General in rooting out public corruption are fairly limited. So how do you do that? What is it that you do as Attorney General, and we're starting with you, to root out public corruption in New York?

Zephyr Teachout: Okay, first of all, this is a real priority. There's a crying need. I mean, the trial this summer, the Buffalo Billion trial, showed that that \$750 million dollars, showed that that was 750 million dollars of money that was supposed to go to economic development went to big donors instead of the people who most sorely needed it, so corruption is really holding us back as a state, it's hurting us, and when the Moreland Commission was shut down four years ago I spoke out loudly against that, I actually testified at the Moreland Commission. Actually I don't know that all people realize this, that Andrew Cuomo shut the Moreland Commission down in a press call. He never formally rescinded executive order 106, and laws are laws, you gotta follow the correct procedure, so there're existing authorities within the New York State Attorney General's office to investigate corruption in Albany, and I will use those authorities, I will use them right now. I will use them the minute I take office.

Ben Max: And so you think that executive order still holds? You don't need referrals to go after the type of public approval?

Zephyr Teachout: Well I'm just beginning.

Ben Max: Okay, well 10 more seconds-

Zephyr Teachout: Right, okay, so it hasn't been rescinded, second we need the governor to issue a

new Moreland Commission to make totally clear that the work is not done.

Third we need a legislative referral, all those are necessary, but the truth is we haven't had an Attorney General who's focused on this. With a strong Public Corruption unit, with a strong Criminal unit, there are areas of jurisdiction, and the key thing you wanna know is it's a focus.

Ben Max: Okay.

Zephyr Teachout: It's something that I care about.

Ben Max: Thank you, I'm gonna stop you there, Mr. Maloney?

Sean Maloney: Right, well so that was a lot about the problem. Here's I think what you can do

about it, even with an existing law, although existing law should be changed to give the Attorney General primary criminal jurisdiction of public corruption, period, full stop. Shouldn't be any referrals or anything else, judges go get it and prosecute it, we

need to change the law, but under existing law, first, let's start with the Trump administration, because that's the most serious corruption problem we face.

Sean Maloney: I want a senior official in my office coordinating on day one with Bob Bueller and

the Federal Investigation to make sure that we are hand in glove to demand accountability of this administration. That same official should coordinate with a controller, authority heads, and other entities that can refer public corruption cases, if you never get one from the governor, but I also think it's important to have a working relationship with the governor to demand all the referrals that he can provide. In addition to that you wanna partner with your local DAs, you can provide

assistant Attorneys General staff to those DAs who have primary jurisdiction for corruption, and you can do other things, like look at the existing authorities under things like the Medicaid Control Fraud Act under federal law, which gives you extraordinary jurisdiction to go after wrong doing and Medicaid funded entities. A lot of public dollars go in there, billions and billions. That's everything by the way, from sexual violence and harassment in Medicaid funded facilities, to outright theft of public dollars, so there's a lot you can do under existing law,

but you better start with Trump, and you better ask for a change in law in New York so that you can really get at this corruption and hit it with a sledge hammer.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. Eve.

Leecia Eve: I would aggressively advocate to expand the authority of Attorney General to go

after corruption both in Washington and in New York State, but the existing law is potent, and I would use it to its fullest extent. Going after the Trump administration, and Donald Trump personally for any

violation of state law that he may have committed, and that's a reason why this office is second only to Bob Mueller in terms of holding the President of the United States accountable, but there's existing significant authority for the New York State Attorney General to go after corruption across our state, including in Albany where it has been too prevalent. In 2011 the State Controller and the Attorney General of the state of New York

entered into a memorandum that is incredibly powerful and is incredibly potent, and the gist of what that document says is the State Controller, who has responsibility with respect to all public funds will automatically have direct relationships with the state Attorney General, and will refer investigatory matters to the state Attorney General's office, so any time we're talking about the use of tax payer funds, whether it is funds used to pay a legislator, whether it's funds to fund different economic develop programs, the existing authority, because of this unprecedented relationship and agreement between the State Controller, the Attorney General gives the current Attorney General, will give me as the next Attorney General, significant powers to root out corruption, and that's what exactly I'll do.

Ben Max: Thank you, and Ms. James.

Letitia James: I'm the only candidate who stands on this stage who's actually focused on

corruption. As a City Council member and chair of contracts I uncover the biggest scandals of the city of New York know as city time. We recovered 700 million dollars for tax payers working with Juan Gonzales from the Daily News.

Letitia James: We will continue to do that by following the money, so one, the first hundred

days as the next Attorney General of the state of New York, one, we will ask the state legislature to provide us with the ability to investigate corruption in Albany. Two, it's really critically important that we focus on all of the authorities that have continued to exist throughout the state of New York, these public benefit corporations that need to be investigated that focus really on alleged economic development in the state of New York, and that's what's critically important.

Letitia James: We also need to close the LLC loophole, we need ethics reform, we need public

financing of campaigns in the state of New York, we need to focus on all of those things and more, but you need to know how government works, because the Moreland Commission has ended, but the reality is that corruption continues, and what we need is another Moreland Commission, but we should not have to go to the governor of the state of New York, and that's what's really critically important. You should have the independent power to investigate corruption on your own, period, end of story.

Ben Max: Couple of follow ups for everybody, we're gonna keep these fairly brief, but related to the governor, we don't know, of course, we're gonna see the outcome of your election, we're gonna see the outcome of the gubernatorial election, but assuming Governor Cuomo is still in office, for example, or even is out of office. A couple questions related to recent allegations and revelations around the way he's run his office and things that he's said.

Ben Max: In a short answer responses to two things, and starting with you Mr. Maloney. One, the governor recently said in a New York Magazine interview that the trial of his former campaign manager and top aide, Joe Percoco, that it didn't touch the governor personally, was basically an exoneration of the governor, do you agree with that?

Secondly, there have been calls for an investigation into the governor for allowing Joe Percoco to seemingly do campaign work out of his executive office. There's calls for an investigation into that, do you support that? Do you agree that the trial exonerated the governor, and do you support calls for an investigation into the governor letting Percoco use government offices perhaps for campaign purposes?

Sean Maloney: Look, I think anytime there's corruption at that level of state government, the person at the top of state government should say, I'm the accountable person, the buck stops here with me. If there's no wrongdoing by the governor then that's fine, that'll come out too.

You shouldn't be afraid of the truth, you shouldn't be afraid of a full investigation, and that's what should happen, and I used to serve on the second floor, I worked in those offices. The fact is you know when you're there that you have public trust, and it's not good enough to say there's no evidence of wrongdoing, you've gotta avoid the appearance of wrongdoing, and you have to be willing to let that process run its course, so yes, let the chips fall where they may. Throw the book at Joe Percoco, I don't have any patience for any of these guys.

Sean Maloney: The truth is that we shouldn't be carrying water for anybody in public office who's stealing from the public. It's wrong, and if a regular man or woman did it in their workplace they'd pay the consequences. Powerful people should be no

different.

Ben Max: Okay, thank you, Ms. Eve.

Leecia Eve: Well there's no evidence that the governor engaged in wrongdoing, I agree with

Sean that we need to hold ourselves to a higher standard. As the Attorney General, hopefully on January 1, if there's wrongdoing in my office the buck stops with me, and with respect to your second question, in terms of a potential investigation, having worked for a governor for two and a half years, the rules are black and white. You are not to engage in political-

Ben Max: we should know that.

Leecia Eve: Yeah, you are not to engage in political activity in a government space, and so

yes, I would support an investigation, and wherever that investigation leads, if it leads to prosecution, I will absolutely prosecute for violations of civil or criminal law.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. James.

Letitia James: I entered into public service because I believe it's a noble profession, and I still

believe it's a noble profession. Serving others as opposed to serving yourself. We've got a problem with corruption in the state of New York. 30 elected officials on the state level have either been convicted, and or penalized, or punished, and we've become the laughingstock of the state of New York. We need a wide range of reforms, and it's really critically important that the governor of state of New York removes the taint or the appearance of impropriety, and, again, makes sure and ensures that we are there, again, to serve others, because when the public confidence in individuals who are in government is at an all time low.

What we need to do is restore confidence, and integrity in public service, and that includes making sure that every public benefit corporation is transparent, that there's accountability, that there's checks and balances, and that we engage in investigations to ensure that no one is engaging in political activity in government offices, and that not only extends to Albany, but to Washington, and into the city of New York.

Listen, we're looking at Manafort right now, and if you look at his investigations right now, it's all about tax evasion, and it's all about bank fraud, and it's really critically important that we understand that there's corruption in Washington, and we need to get to the bottom of it, but obviously we need hold ourselves to a higher principle, and that is public service.

Ben Max: So just quickly, on the use of the government office for campaign purposes,

seems like there was a lot of evidence entered into the Percoco trial that indicated that, but that wasn't a charge against him. Do you support an investigation into what happened there?

Letitia James: Again, if individuals used a public office for political purposes they should be prosecuted, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and what we as Attorney General, and I as the next Attorney General will do is follow the evidence and the facts wherever it leads, and if it leads to the second floor, so be it. It's important that individuals understand that no one is above the law, and no one is below the law.

Ben Max: Thank you, and Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, we clearly need a further investigation into state resources being used for a campaign. One thing that I wanna point out that hasn't been pointed out is that there is a agency that is supposed to investigate corruption and sexual misconduct in Albany, it's called JCOPE, and the head of that company, Seth Agata, was Andrew Cuomo's former lawyer, and according to the testimony and the Percoco trial he was fully aware of Percoco using state resources for campaigns. This is a real problem, when you have the head of an ethics agency themselves potentially violating key ethics laws. Seth Agata must resign. There are a whole bunch of other reasons, but he has shown himself to, in fact, be able to lead a watch dog group, and JCOPE needs total reformation to be clear for the listeners, the whole commission structure is, it's appointed by insiders instead of truly independent. We also need to hold Agata accountable, and clearly Andrew Cuomo has to take responsibility for the ongoing corruption scandals in Albany.

Ben Max: Okay, we're gonna start this round with you Ms. Eve. There's, I think, comments by Ms. James sparked some discussion about how much the Attorney General should really be looking at Wall Street financial crimes, the Martin Act is obviously a major factor in the Attorney General's work. There's some effort to undercut, to gut the Martin Act, there's a lot of conversation always, about obviously the power of financial institutions, so how would you approach, as Attorney General, how would you approach Wall Street, meaning financial institutions, banks, et cetera? And also if you wanna touch on real estate because real estate money is obviously often part of interacting with how those banks operate.

Leecia Eve: Well I would continue the efforts to aggressively investigate Wall Street. Wall Street has the assets of New Yorkers. It has our retirement funds. The resources that we have worked so hard for as New Yorkers, going to work day in and day

out, we have to make sure that New Yorkers are not being taken for a ride, so I would continue the very aggressive efforts.

We've been asked would we like the name Sheriff of Wall Street? I didn't hesitate, absolutely yes. I wanna be known for making our criminal justice system more fair, but absolutely the sheriff of Wall Street.

That's not to cast dispersions on our financial institutions, most of them each and every day have millions of people who call New York state home, who go to work every day playing by the rules, but there are bad apples, and those bad apples need to be held to account.

I would not-

Ben Max: What types of practices ... I'm sorry to interrupt. What types of practices by financial institutions typically raise flags?

Leecia Eve: Well misleading marketing practices, and that is where the Martin Act in particular can be such a potent tool. Yes it is a relatively broad statute that's been around for many decades, there have been efforts to roll back and narrow the significance of the Martin Act. I would oppose any such efforts because the Martin Act is an incredibly potent tool to hold all kinds of businesses, including financial services companies accountable.

Ben Max: Ms. James, I referenced your comment, you said you didn't necessarily wanna

be known as the Sheriff of Wall Street, but then you also issued a statement after saying you wanna focus on a variety of things including Wall Street, so I just wanna make that clear, but I'll give you a chance, obviously, to talk about it.

Letitia James: Listen, I live in Brooklyn. I know the foreclosure crisis, I've seen it up close. I've

represented individuals who are being evicted. I've seen countless numbers of individuals who've lost their homes, and not enough individuals on Wall Street, unfortunately, were put in jail, and or punished as a result of that.

Letitia James: Most of the individuals on Main Street lost their main asset.

Letitia James: No, I don't wanna be known as the Sheriff on Wall Street, that's reserved for

someone else. I wanna chart my own path. I want my own title, and my own title has always been, and will continue to be fighter, and fighter for the underdog, and fighter for individuals like those home owners who lost their homes.

Letitia James: Yes, the Martin Act is a powerful instrument, and the first hundred days as the

next Attorney General, what we really need to do is fix a decision which basically said that the Martin Act should be limited in their statute of limitations to three years. I believe it should be extended to six years, and we will make sure that legislative fix is corrected within the first hundred days. We will also ensure, and

I've already begun discussions with the legislature with respect to changing that pardon loophole, making sure that in the fact, if President Trump were to pardon anyone, particularly Manafort, that in fact we could charge him under state crimes, because most of the crimes that Manafort committed were committed in New York City, and we've got a responsibility and a duty, as the next Attorney General to go after those individuals, and to enforce the Martin Act, and to stand up for Main Street.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Well you know I wanna be called the Sheriff of Wall Street, but I wanna put this

in a larger frame. The real reason that it is so important to have the Attorney General's office really put a focus on financial crimes and consumer protection is because of what is happening at the federal level. It's always been important, but when you have rollbacks at the federal level of key protections, when you have the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, something that I fought hard for, be led by somebody who doesn't believe in consumer protection, it really becomes essential that the New York state Attorney General really be the regulator of last resort.

That means putting real resources into investigation. One of the things I really take from Spitzer's use of the Martin Act is that was an example of an old tool that hadn't been used being dusted off and used in new and critical ways to hold Wall Street accountable.

That's the kind of creative lawyering, creative legal strategy, that I as the next sheriff will pursue.

Here's something really important, I'll be able to pursue that with total independence because I am the only candidate up here who isn't taking corporate money. I don't take corporate pack money, I don't take LLC money, and I think it's particularly important when your job is regulating Wall Street, not to be taking money from corporations.

Ben Max: Thank you, and Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Well look, of course you're gonna be the Sheriff of Wall Street, that's literally

the job, but of course you also wanna be the Sheriff of Donald Trump, and you wanna be the sheriff demanding some accountability from the federal government when they're breaking the Constitution, breaking existing law, they aren't above the law, you have to be the sheriff, call them on that.

Sean Maloney: That's what the AGs are doing right now. I wanna be the Sheriff of Environmental Protection, because the Trump administration is trying to make our air dirtier, our water dirtier, rolling back our climate change efforts. That's what I did when I stood up and fought to keep anchorages and oil barges off the Hudson River in Congress. I wanna do that work as Attorney General. I wanna be the Sheriff of LGBT

Equality. I had to wait 22 years to get married. I've been married for four, so for 26 year my partner and I have been raising kids in a legal system that often said our family didn't count. I know what it's like to be discriminated against. I wanna be the Sheriff of Criminal Justice Reform, I've written legislation in Congress with my friend Cory Booker, to change the way we give lawyers to people, so the guarantee of effective counsel means something under the sixth amendment. That's what I've done in Congress, you wanna do that in this office, you gotta be the Sheriff of Antitrust, law, Zephyr talks about all laws, she's right. The Donnelly Act should be dusted off. We can step into the breaches the federal government steps back, and there's other things this office can do, but you better have the management experience to run it as well. You better have the experience running a large organization, and that's what I bring to this conversation.

Ben Max: All right, so we're gonna shift it up a little bit here. Were gonna do a lightning round of yes, or no, or short answers, move that right along, and then we're gonna move into our cross examination round where you get to ask one of your opponents a question, so a couple different formats coming up.

Ben Max: We're gonna start the lightning round here with Ms. James, and we're gonna start with you the next question. There's about eight questions here coming. Short answers, we'll move right along. Does Governor Cuomo deserve reelection?

Letitia James: Yes.

Ben Max: Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: No.

Ben Max: Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: I believe so, yes.

Ben Max: Ms. Eve.

Leecia Eve: Yes.

Ben Max: Yes. Does Controller Tom De Napoli deserve reelection? We're gonna start with Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Yes.

Sean Maloney: You bet.

Leecia Eve: Yes.

Letitia James: Yes.

Ben Max: Okay. Do you believe in ending cash bail? Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Absolutely, and I'd make it a top priority.

Leecia Eve: Absolutely.

Letitia James: Yes, I've spoken about it for years as a former criminal defense attorney.

Zephyr Teachout: Absolutely, yes.

Ben Max: Okay, and Ms. Eve, do you support the New York City plan to close Rikers Island,

and just a little bit, what's the general timeframe? Do you support closing the Rikers Island jails, and do you have an estimate of the timeframe it should take?

Leecia Eve: Yes, absolutely, recognize in the close of Rikers Island is hard, but I've got the

experience to work with the city of New York and the state of New York that can play a supportive role in getting Rikers closed, and getting it closed within less than 10 years.

Leecia Eve: It's not gonna happen in two or three, but we need to not have this take a decade to get it done.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. James.

Letitia James: Yes, reform cash bail, decriminalize mental health, decriminalize poverty, and

make sure that we have open discovery, and legalize marijuana, and we can do it in less than 10 years.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Look, I'm a former death penalty lawyer, I have seen up close what our mass

incarceration system looks like, and I don't think people yet know ... You want short, sorry.

Ben Max: Sure, yes. I was about to say-

Zephyr Teachout: 10 years is way to long, and New York need to lead the country in ending mass

incarceration.

Ben Max: Thank you, Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Right, we built the Empire State building in 13 months. I think you can do better than 10 years, and I support it.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. James, have you released your taxes in the running of this race? And what's been your approach to that?

Letitia James: I have released my taxes for the last five years, I've urged all of my opponents to release their tax returns, none have done so, and I'm even prepared to release my last 10 years of tax returns.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: The scenario where we totally agree, absolutely will be releasing my tax returns by the end of the week.

Ben Max: By the end of the week, okay, Mr. Maloney?

Sean Maloney: Same.

Ben Max: Same? How many years?

Sean Maloney: Five years.

Ben Max: Five years?

Zephyr Teachout: Five years.

Ben Max: Was that five years? Miss Eve?

Leecia Eve: No I have not, but I have had many years of detailed financial disclosures.

Ben Max: Okay, and we start with Ms. Teachout, if you're elected Attorney General, do you plan to run for governor someday? Or will you totally rule that out?

Zephyr Teachout: I'd totally rule it out. I want this job, and only this job.

Ben Max: Okay, Mr. Maloney?

Sean Maloney: Yeah, I want this job. I'm not running for any other job. I wanna be the Attorney General of New York.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. Eve?

Leecia Eve: I wanna be the people's lawyer, and only the people's lawyer.

Ben Max: And so you're ruling out a governor run? Or-
Leecia Eve: Yes I am.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. James?

Letitia James: I'm ruling it out, I'm running for Attorney General.

Ben Max: Okay.

Zephyr Teachout: But you ran for governor before.

Ben Max: Never again, I guess is the pledge here. Back to Mr. Maloney, are you licensed to practice law in New York? Is your paperwork all up to date? Are you a member of the Bar?

Sean Maloney: Yes I am. Proudly, since 1993, and I don't think anybody has more experience running complex investigations and working in the legal community than I do.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. Eve?

Leecia Eve: Yes, I'm licensed to practice law, I've been a member of the Bar for almost three decades, and yes, my paperwork is up to day.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. James?

Letitia James: I'm a member of the Bar since 1988, and have passed more laws than all previous public advocates, and all of the individuals who are on this stage, and gotten more things done in this state and city.

Ben Max: Ms. Teachout?

Zephyr Teachout: I've been a lawyer for 17 years, and I think by the time this ... I'm getting sworn in on Wednesday, so I think by the time this airs.

Ben Max: Okay, and we'll start with Ms. Eve, last couple here. There's a lot of calls including, I believe, from Ms. Teachout, I'm not sure, maybe yourself, but for open hearings on sexual harassment in Albany, sexual harassment in state government, but also the private sector. Do you support calls for those hearings? There were obviously laws passed in the last budget without public hearings, and now there've been increasing calls for some public hearings, and perhaps tweaks to those laws. What's your stance on that?

Leecia Eve: Absolutely I support public hearings, and let me say as council to Joe Biden it was my job more than two decades ago to help him implement the Violence Against Women Act. Absolutely we ought to have hearings on the issue.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms. James.

Letitia James: As someone who lead rallies outside of Fox 5, and as someone who believe the state legislature should pass the Crime Victims Act, particularly given the report in Pennsylvania, as the next Attorney General I will do a similar report, again, investigating the Catholic church for allegations of abuse against children. Here in the state if New York it's a sin, and it's really critically important that we stand up for victims of sexual harassment as I have done over the last 20 years of my public service.

Ben Max: So no hearings necessary at this point?

Letitia James: Hearings? Yes, to hearings.

Ben Max: Yes to hearings. Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, I stood with the sexual harassment working group Victims and Whistle

Blowers over a month ago now, calling for hearings this summer, and I think it's really important we hold them right now.

Ben Max: Okay, I'm gonna stop you there, and Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Yes, to hearings and zero tolerance to sexual harassment and violence.

Ben Max: Okay, thank you. To you Ms. James, do you support an ongoing ban on fracking in New York?

Letitia James: Yes.

Ben Max: Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Absolutely, yes.

Ben Max: Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Yes, I support it.

Ben Max: Ms. Eve.

Sean Maloney: Yes.

Ben Max: Okay, do you support completely closing the LLC loophole? We're starting with you, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Yep, and I'm closing it in my own campaign. I take no LLC money.

Ben Max: Okay, Mr. Maloney?

Sean Maloney: Yes, we should close the LLC loophole, and we should publicly finance campaigns.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. Eve?

Leecia Eve: Yes, and I strongly support, as well, public financing of campaigns.

Ben Max: Ms. James?

Letitia James: Yes, definitely without a doubt.

Ben Max: Okay, and finally we'll start with Mr. Maloney, last lightning round question, if you weren't able to vote for yourself in this race which of the other three candidates would you vote for?

Sean Maloney: I would vote for my friend Leecia Eve, she's a great person, great lawyer, I've known her and her family, and I've respected her for 20 years.

Ben Max: Thank you, Ms, Eve.

Leecia Eve: That's a good question.

Ben Max: Thank you.

Leecia Eve: I hadn't really thought about that. Well I would without question support the winner of the democratic primary, so if I am not the winner on September 13th,

I will support whomever is the winner of that race.

Ben Max: Okay, Ms. James.

Letitia James: I'm gonna support the democratic nominee, whoever that is, and it will be Letitia James.

Ben Max: No one wants to take Mr. Maloney up on actually a choice, okay, Ms. Teachout, will you?

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, I know I will. I support Leecia, I think Leecia and I both have a vision of the office, which is that the legal strategy is really at the heart of the office, and strategy is really at the heart of the office, and as Attorney General, I believe that innovation in the law is critical.

Sean Maloney: Okay, one more chance. No. Cross-examination. We're gonna start with Miss

Eve, you've gotten a pseudo-endorsement from a couple of your competitors, so we'll start with you and move this way, an opportunity to ask a brief question, not a speech, a brief question of one of your competitors, go ahead.

Leecia Eve: Thank you, Sean, for your last comment, but I did wanna ask you ... So you've

got a fellow member of Congress, Kathleen Rice, extraordinary woman, public servant, who almost beat Eric Schneiderman eight years ago, when she was seeking to be the Attorney General. She made a statement, publicly, a couple months ago, that, even though she wanted to run, she felt legally she was prohibited from doing so. Why do you believe that you can run for re-election for Congress and for Attorney General at the same time, when a fellow woman member of Congress made the exact opposite legal conclusion?

Yeah, that's a great question, but of course a court has ruled that she was wrong. The court has ruled that it's actually perfectly permissible and this happens all the time. She's the public advocate and she's running for another office, I don't think there's anything that unusual about it, and Kathleen's a great friend and a great member of Congress, but the court has actually already decided that she was wrong about that.

Ben Max: Follow up, quickly, on that. Legality aside, do you think there's anything wrong with doing it, in terms of-

Sean Maloney: Obviously not, and the fact is, that this is all about service and all about where

we can do the most good. As a member of Congress, I told you that story about a member of my team losing her parents to deportation, I was able to slow it down. This office can stop it. I don't think Democrats are doing enough. I wanna

do more, and that's-

Ben Max: You haven't heard any flak from your Congressional constituents about pursuing the AG role?

Sean Maloney: No, listen, I love my constituents and I love the work that I do. I'm proud that I passed three bills into law, I'm proud that I beat Republicans three times in a row, I'm the only guy on this stage, by the way, who's ever beat Republicans at the ballot box. I think that matters for Democrats right now, we ought to start winning. I think that the fact is, this office provides me the opportunity, just like these other folks, to take my skills and to do more, and I'm proud of that.

Ben Max: I'll quickly say, even though it's a very heavily Democratic city, Ms. James has, of course, won against Republican candidates, but general point taken. Ms. James, a question to one of your competitors.

Letitia James: Sure. It's to Zephyr Teachout. One of the worst things about being an elected official is, in my experience, I've attended too many funerals of individuals who've died at the hands of gun violence, and I've taken on the NRA-

Ben Max: Please ask your question.

Letitia James: My question to you is, why did you change your position with regards to the SAFE Act when you ran for Congress? After reading some reports, it's my understanding that you opposed it, you said that it was done in the middle of the night, and you disagreed with it, and now as running for Attorney General, you switched your position. What is your position today?

Ben Max: This was the SAFE Act gun control bill passed by Governor Cuomo and the legislature after the Sandy Hook Massacre.

Zephyr Teachout: No, and I've been a consistent supporter. I support background checks. I support closing the gun show loophole. I support assault weapons ban, and I've been consistent about my criticisms of legislation that is passed without a chance for public hearing. When I was the National Director of the Sunlight Foundation, one of the things we were pushing for, the key piece of legislation, we were working with then Senator Obama's office on making sure that legislation had the chance to be heard before it was passed-

Ben Max: Was that your only criticism of the SAFE Act?

Zephyr Teachout: That was my criticism of the SAFE Act, and that has been my consistent criticism of the SAFE Act.

Ben Max: Okay. Your opportunity to ask an opponent a question.

Zephyr Teachout: Sean, the recent filings showed that you got about 150 thousand dollars from one real estate organization, the Durst Organization, through various LLC loopholes. What I wanna know is in the conversations that you had with the Durst Organization, not what you said, but what they were saying to you about what they were looking for in an Attorney General.

Sean Maloney: They said I'm the most qualified with the most experience, and I was there when you supported, all the money you took during your Congressional race. Millions of dollars in Super PAC funds helped your race, and in fact, you took LLC contributions... contributions in your governor's race, and right now in this race effort, you're taking tens of thousands of dollars in donations from people in the financial services industry, and by the way, I was also there when you did oppose the SAFE Act, the most important gun safety legislation in the history of this state. Yes you did. Folks, Google Rockefeller Republican and Zephyr Teachout, because that's what you called yourself, and you should be honest with people if you're gonna say that-

Ben Max: I'm gonna come back to Ms. Teachout. You quickly turned the tables there. Is that your full answer, is that the Durst Organization simply said-

Sean Maloney: Yeah, listen, listen. It's a small part of my overall fundraising. We got tremendous support from lots of different people, and all the people on this stage have donors who are supporting them. Zephyr herself has taken tens of thousands of dollars from people in the financial services industry. I'm not questioning her motives, that's a political trick. I think we should be less negative on other Democrats and talk about our ideas for the office.

Ben Max: Okay, come back to you, for 30 seconds.

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, two things. One is the record, you can check the record, and it is totally clear. That my objections had to do with the process. That is totally clear. Second, I think it's really important not to take corporate money. Not taking LLC money actually is important, and especially for an Attorney General who's gonna be overseeing investigations into big corporations.

Ben Max: Lastly, on the Rockefeller Republican comment, do you wanna address that?

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, no, I was talking about my grandparents and the family that I grew up with, and those are my grandparents.

Sean Maloney: I think if you Google it, you'll find she was justifying-

Ben Max: We're gonna leave it there, but it is your opportunity to ask a question.

Sean Maloney: I think you oughta level about what you told the Daily News, which is that that's why you opposed the gun safety legislation, and you-

Ben Max: Is this your question?

Sean Maloney: Yeah, well, no. Actually, I'd like to ask a different question, if I may.

Ben Max: Okay.

Sean Maloney: Which is that, a moment ago, we were asked about our professional credentials, and all of us remembers the bar. Zephyr has never become a member of the New York bar, has never taken the New York bar, isn't licensed to practice law in New York, which is sort of breathtaking, when you think about becoming the chief legal officer of the state. But even more troubling, I learned recently that you were cited for professional misconduct by the North Carolina bar, and I think you should explain to people why you were cited for professional misconduct in North Carolina, and I believe it was in a death penalty case, was it not?

Ben Max: Go ahead, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Yeah, so first of all, I've been a lawyer for 17 years. I have been teaching law in New York for 10 years, and in fact I did take the New York bar in 1999. I started practicing in North Carolina, which is where I've had my bar license. There I was cited for not sharing a change of address, I was very upfront about it, and it was all cleared up.

Ben Max: Okay, moving on. Let's talk a little bit more about reform in state government. You have an opportunity, as Attorney General, to push legislation, and of course, a major bully pulpit. And we're gonna come back and start this round with Mr. Maloney.

Ben Max: What are some things that you would push for changes in Albany that aren't really the powers of the Attorney General that haven't been mentioned yet?

What are some things that you really think are fundamentally broken in New York that you'd like to see changed?

Sean Maloney: Criminal justice system needs to be completely reformed. In Congress, I passed,

I've worked on legislation that would make real the guarantee of effective assistance of counsel, I've spent a lot of time on prison education programs. I delivered the commencement address inside a prison here in New York State, I don't know if a member of Congress has ever done that. I think the Attorney General could absolutely help direct seized funds to prison education programs, which would work miracles in terms of lowering the recidivism rate. I think there's so much we can do on law enforcement, assisted diversion to get chronic drug addicts, particularly in the opioid and heroin epidemic, directly into treatment and out of the criminal justice system. Those are some of the areas where the Attorney General could really lead in the area of criminal justice reform.

Ben Max: Okay. Ms. Eve?

Leecia Eve: Criminal justice reform would be top of the list. I'm 54 years of age, and in 1971,

my father was the very first person, non-civilian, to enter the Attica prison during the Attica prison riots. I didn't know it at the time, but I later realized that my father entered that prison not knowing whether he would come out. So, ending mass incarceration, criminal justice reform, it's not just a talking point, it has been my family's work, and it's been my life work, going back to when I represented hundreds of women incarcerated in District of Columbia prisons. I support the legalization of marijuana, I support the expungement of any person, particularly our young people, who have convictions for recreational use of marijuana. There's no more important issue than reforming our criminal justice system. But we also need to make it easier to vote. We have led the suffrage movement. We have led the LGBTQ movement. We have led so many civil rights movements, and yet we have some of the worst voting laws in the nation. I am proud that when I was counsel to Hilary, I worked with voting rights and civil rights organizations across the country to craft legislation that had election day registration, felon re-enfranchisement, no excuse absentee balloting. The New York Times editorialized as a gold standard for election reform. New York should be, not following, we should be leading the way, and helping New Yorkers exercise this most fundamental right.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. James?

Letitia James: ...labor. We need to protect the rights of labor, organized labor, in this state of New York, at a time when they're under attack as a result of the Janus decision, it's really critically important that we support labor, and I'm so glad that the vast majority of the labor organizations in the state have

endorsed my candidacy. Two, criminal justice reform, as was mentioned. Poverty should not be a crime, and/or mental illness. And it's really critically important that we reform our criminal justice system. As someone who went to court to seek the grand jury minutes in the aftermath of the death of Eric Garner, it's really critically important that we transform our criminal justice system, and I'm so glad that the governor of the state of New York has signed the bill with respect to prosecutorial misconduct. Corruption, as was mentioned, we need to close the LLC loophole, the public financing of campaigns. We need to ban outside income and we need term limits.

We also, obviously, need to focus on tenants. As someone who has turbo charged their worst landlord list, tonight in New York City, 70 thousand individuals, who unfortunately are homeless. We need to strengthen our tenant's laws, tenant protections in the state of New York, because too many of them, unfortunately, being harassed and abused by powerful landlord interest.

Ben Max: I'm glad you mentioned that, we haven't got to that yet, but maybe in closing statements, other people will be interested, because of course, the Attorney General does help lead the Tenant Protection Unit. Just quickly on criminal justice reform, do you support repeal of the 50A aspect of the civil rights law, that shields police records?

Letitia James: Without a doubt, I support it. It is part of my platform.

Ben Max: Okay. Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: As do I, and I think it's critical that New York lead in transparency with police

violence. Right now in Las Vegas, if there is a police shooting, you know the name of the police officers within two days, and full, unredacted video within 72 hours. It is embarrassing that New York is so far behind. Okay. Three key priorities for legislative leadership. The first is leading the fight

against mass incarceration. We've talked a little bit about this, about cash bail, discovery reform, re-entry, expunging records, second chance sentencing, parole reform, but also changing the culture. Second, voting rights. I am a voting rights expert, and we in New York are at the back of the pack when we should be at the front of the pack. Have the best voting laws and the strongest voting rights in the country. And third, corruption and campaign finance reform. So that means really being a

leader on publicly financed elections. Being a leader on changing the three men in a room culture in Albany. Being a leader on closing the LLC loophole and on investigations.

Ben Max: Okay, I have one final question, 30 seconds each, and then we'll go to closing statements. This is obviously a democratic primary, there's a lot of division in the Democratic Primary right now, a lot of fighting over who is a true Democrat, there's obviously the gubernatorial primary that's being waged, lieutenant

governor primary, and this primary. There's no incumbent here, obviously, so it's a little bit different, but, in 30 seconds, where do you fit into this discussion about who's a real Democrat, what it means to be a progressive or a centrist, how do you describe who you are to your fellow Democrats, who you're seeking votes from right now? We'll start with you, Miss Eve.

Leecia Eve: I'm a progressive. I have been a fighter and a champion for social justice for my entire legal career, ever since I graduated from Harvard Law School 28 years ago. But I will also say, the name calling, that doesn't help our party. We gotta come together. We're all on this stage seeking to be the next people's lawyer, but we're each committed to supporting whoever wins the primary, if we, ourselves, aren't the victor. And I think we need to do much more of that. If we do that, Albany will have a Democratic Senate. The House will become blue, and we will be able to advance Democratic values for all New Yorkers and all Americans.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. James.

Letitia James: I am a progressive, but you're right. I don't know what it means these days. The reality is that individuals are calling themselves progressive, and individuals who unfortunately are ignoring 20 years of public service and abandoning the fact that we are in the midst of making history in the state of New York. It's really critically important that we have someone who has been uncompromised and someone who has been unbossed and unbought for over 20 years, and someone who has spoken truth to power, and someone who has stood up for marginalized individuals, and individuals who are hiding in the darkness at this point in time. It's really critically important that we have someone who is fearless and someone who will continue to use her bully pulpit, her passion, and her power to get things done, as I have done in the office of Attorney General, and as the public advocate, currently.

Ben Max: Okay, well we got a preview of your closing statement, I think. We'll get more from you. Ms. Teachout, the Democratic party infighting, where do you stand?

Zephyr Teachout: Well, I gotta be clear, there's one area where in New York, they're really, really

clear lines, and this is about the IDC. The Independent Democratic Conference, which are Democrats who ran as Democrats, and then voted for Republican leadership in Albany. I've been fighting against the IDC for a long time, and I'm the only candidate up here to support every single Democratic challenger to the IDC. And the reason this is so important, is that these aren't people, they're running as progressive Democrats, but actually then giving their vote to, essentially, Paul Ryan. I think it's really important that all Democrats stand up with the IDC challengers this year. That's your litmus test. Okay, Mr. Maloney?

Sean Maloney: Well, look, I'm the first openly gay member of Congress from New York. I have an interracial family, my children are African-American-Latino. I won a seat in Congress in a district that voted for Donald Trump. So that is being a progressive, where it counts, and winning a tough fight against Republicans. Not once or twice, three times in a row, and I outperformed Hilary Clinton by 14 points in 2016, but I believe in a Bobby Kennedy Democratic party. I believe in a party that is inspiring young people, has some new ideas, some new leadership, isn't afraid to try something new, but I also believe in a party that can go into the city and give hope to people who need it. I believe in a party that has to, like I do, go onto the farm, go into agricultural areas, go into Appalachia, talk to people who have been deserting our party, and talk about new ideas and new hope. And we don't have a Democrat to waste, so all this infighting and all this negativity from one Democrat to the other, I think it weakens us. The real fight is Donald Trump, and that's what I'm gonna focus on.

Ben Max: Thank you. So we're moving to closing statements, we're gonna start with Ms. Teachout, and go to Mr. Maloney, Ms. Eve, and Ms. James to close us out. So you have about a minute and a half to two minutes, give us your closing statement please, Ms. Teachout.

Zephyr Teachout: Well thank you so much. Thank you for being a great moderator, thank you to my opponents, and thank you to those of you who are listening. This job is so important. We've talked about some issues tonight, but we haven't really talked about the legal strategies that we need to bring to bear against Donald Trump. And a New York Attorney General has a unique capacity to really respond to this threat, for a few reasons. First, because Donald Trump's businesses are here in New York. And ever since he was elected, I have been leading the legal strategy to investigate illegality in Donald Trump's businesses. As I mentioned earlier, I was one of the lawyers on a lawsuit filed three days after Trump took office, in the Southern district of New York, demanding that he divest his business interests. That legal strategy is ongoing, I have been working with the Attorneys General in Maryland and D.C., and they just had a major victory where the judge, the federal judge in that case, explicitly adopted my theory of the emoluments clause. I have been out front on the ways in which we can use anti-corruption laws to restrain this truly lawless administration. I take this threat very seriously. This is about the future of the rule of law. And when the federal government is run by somebody like Donald Trump, is overridden with fossil fuel lobbyists and big corporate lobbyists in the Republican party, that we can no longer trust the federal government to protect our rights in New York. It is so important to have an Attorney General who doesn't take corporate money, who is independent, who is ready to bring creative, legal thinking to evolving and complex theories that we haven't actually had to push before. State courts have never been more important than right now, in the last 30 years. And I am ready to lead that fight. Thank you so

much for listening, and I hope I earn your vote.

Ben Max: Thank you. Mr. Maloney.

Sean Maloney: Well thanks, Ben, for a great debate. Thank you, to all of you. Look folks, right now, Donald Trump, and the Republicans in Washington are on the verge of taking over the Supreme Court, and that means everything from Roe v. Wade to our environment is on the line. More than ever, we need an experienced attorney, with real management experience and real legal experience, to lead this office, to get in that fight. I'm the one with the most experience in the fight, not talking about it, not writing about it, in the fight, every day against Donald Trump, and before that, the Tea Party. Beating Republicans at the ballot box, on the floor of the House of Representatives, and in the courts. If you give me an opportunity to run this office, I will be your voice and I will be your champion, and we will stand up to whoever is coming after your rights or your family. My rights and my family are on the line, too. This is a fight we have to win. Please give me your vote on September 13th, and I'll stand up to Donald Trump, I'll stand up to the crooks in Albany, and I'll be the people's lawyer.

Ben Max: Thank you. Ms. Eve.

Leecia Eve: I am running as the most qualified, most prepared, most experienced person to be the next Attorney General we must have. We are in a crisis right now. More than ever, New Yorkers need an Attorney General to protect, defend, and empower them, and I am that woman. I'm the daughter of two great public servants. My father created the EOP and HEOP program, through which more than 100 thousand New Yorkers, mostly Black and Brown young men and women, have gone on to college. My mother was a teacher for 33 years in New York, and founded what became the largest and most comprehensive alternatives to incarceration in the state of New York. I know what good public servants look like, and I stand on my parents' shoulder, best prepared to take on Donald Trump, having served in the trenches with Joe Biden, with Hilary Clinton. Advancing civil rights, advancing women's rights, advancing environmental rights. And I stand before you, the best prepared person to deal with the challenges that we in New York State own. We own the need to improve our criminal justice system, to protect Roe v. Wade, to advance voting reform, and to make sure that all children, across our state, have the kind of educational opportunity that I had, that enabled me to stand before you as the most prepared, and the most qualified and the most experienced candidate, ready to be the people's lawyer of our great state.

Ben Max: Thank you. And Ms. James.

Letitia James: Thank you for this debate and for allowing us to be on this stage. My faith

in the

Constitution is complete. It's whole. And right now, the Constitution is being subverted. These are not my words. Those are the words of Barbara Jordan, when she was investigating Richard Nixon. And we find ourselves at that point again, in the history of this country. So it's really critically important that we all understand that no matter who you love, no matter the color of your skin, no matter your gender or where you live, that all of our rights right now, all of our values, all that we believe in, as Americans, is at risk. And there's just too much at risk at this point in time, and so we've gotta fight back against this individual who believe that he is above the law and that the rule of law doesn't apply to him. But we also need to understand that it's really critically important that we should be more than a one trick pony, that we should focus on all of the issues across the state of New York. From environmental laws, to equal protection, to tenant's rights, to discrimination, to issues affecting farmers upstate, and to immigrants. As someone who has litigated and protected immigrants, as someone who has

represented a family, a mother whose child was taken from her, and this child right now has been reunited, and they have been released from detention, as someone who represented a DACA child because she believe in Dreamers. As someone who's been to Puerto Rico because she believe that Puerto Rico needs our help, and as someone who recognizes the power of Israel, and recognizes that all of us need a fighter, and someone who has a history and a record of getting things done. 20 years of public service. 20 years of independent, who stands before you in the spirit of Shirley Chisholm. And that's why, as someone who is a proud graduate of Howard University, who transformed this nation, and legalized, who challenged legal segregation in this country, what we need now is someone in that spirit, because this is the moment in time when we need a fighter. And that fighter is Letitia James. I look forward to getting your support on September 13th.

Ben Max: Thank you, and thank you all for being here and for a great debate. It's been my

pleasure, thank you. And thank you for watching. Please remember to vote. The Democratic primary election will be held Thursday, September 13th, and the general election will be Tuesday, November 6th. For more information on voting, locating your poll site, and all the candidates and races, you can visit the racetorepresent.com website, or us at gothamgazette.com, or the League of Women Voters of New York, LWVNY.org. Thank you for watching Race to Represent on Manhattan Neighborhood Network. Goodbye.