

2026 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE'S NAME and ADDRESS: Adem Bunkeddeko 1460 Bedford Ave, Brooklyn, NY
11216

Position for which you are a candidate: New York State Comptroller

Telephone: Cell Phone: E-mail: adem@friendsofadem.com

Name, cell number and e-mail for staff person who will be your liaison with the DRC:
Jordan Jayson 646-716-1747 jordan@ademfornewyork.com

YOUR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE DRC WEB SITE.

List your qualifications for this office including but not limited to other offices you have held, educational background, etc.

Please address these questions, but make your answers brief so the entire questionnaire does not exceed 4 pages.

1. ABILITY TO LEAD THE ENTIRE STATE – What contact and experiences have you had with parts of the state, other than where you currently reside, which demonstrate your recognition of the geographic, demographic and economic diversity of the state and your ability to provide leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers?

As State Comptroller I would prioritize the needs of New Yorkers living in rural communities. I was born and raised in New York, and my career has given me opportunities to travel across the state and to contribute to policies and programs that impact New Yorkers in rural and urban communities. In leadership positions at the Empire State Development Corporation and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), I built affordable housing and reviewed infrastructure investments across the state, supported small businesses, and strengthened economic mobility across New York. Most recently as Executive Director at Coro New York, I led a financial turnaround for the organization after COVID. I also developed a leadership development program that recruited emerging leaders from across the state. We ensured diverse voices were represented across cohorts and embedded issues including education, health care, housing, and more into our programming to prepare leaders to engage meaningfully with these challenges. My career has given me direct exposure to the economic pressures facing rural and upstate communities. As State Comptroller rural communities will not be an afterthought or left behind.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES – What issues do you believe are of most concern to voters in rural counties, and what will be your message in addressing those issues?

The Comptroller's office plays a critical role in whether New York works for rural working families. I believe the Comptroller can play a vital role in advancing DRC's priorities if we reimagine the role. I've set forth specific plans in childcare, energy infrastructure, constituent services and housing.

Energy: I propose using the pension fund's investment leverage to co-own renewable transmission lines that bring lower-cost hydropower into upstate New York, thereby directly reducing energy costs for rural families and businesses. I am proposing to develop modern industrial parks in cities like Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica that create good-paying jobs across surrounding rural regions.

Housing: I am proposing a dedicated housing investment sleeve within the pension fund to finance workforce and affordable housing in communities that private capital has passed over. I am also proposing policies to unlock capital to incentivize the development of affordable housing on underutilized land, such as parking lots or assets owned by faith-based communities.

Education and Childcare: Through the "Opportunity Trust Fund," I propose investing a portion of the state's unclaimed funds while always protecting the principle for rightful claimants, thereby generating additional revenue

for New York State. I will put this capital to work to support maternal health, early childhood care programs, and seed accounts for every child born in New York, including those born in rural counties.

Constituent Services: I will enhance the constituent services structure within the Comptroller's office so that elected officials and community leaders from DRC counties have a direct, more effective channel into my administration's work.

A Commitment to Nation-to-Nation partnership with New York Tribes: For the first time ever, I am proposing the Comptroller's office hire a dedicated Tribal liaison to serve as a centralized point of contact for Tribal leaders. This position will serve as a centralized point of contact between Tribal leaders and key divisions within the Comptroller's Office. In tandem, my office will develop a formal Tribal Consultation policy — the first of its kind within the New York State Comptroller's Office. This policy will reflect key principles in Executive Order 13175, which directs federal agencies to engage in meaningful consultation and collaboration with Tribal governments prior to substantive changes in law or policy affecting their communities. This will improve nation-to-nation relations, cultural competency, trust, and collaboration.

3. PARTY BUILDING – How have you expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building our party statewide and what are your ideas for future party building, specific to rural counties?

I got my start as an organizer for the Working Families Party, making the case to voters who did not already share my perspectives. That experience shaped how I think about building a diverse coalition of support in New York State. It is essential to be inclusive and show up in communities that feel ignored, not just mobilize an urban-centric base.

As a candidate, I am committed to campaigning in DRC counties and making the case for Democratic governance on the merits: fiscal responsibility, investment in working families, and honest stewardship of public resources. If elected, I will use the Comptroller's platform to surface audit findings that protect rural taxpayers and highlight fiscal challenges facing rural county governments.

This is a people-powered campaign. We are not accepting corporate donations and will refuse contributions that create conflicts with the independence required of the Comptroller.

4. In the event of a primary for the office you are seeking, will you support the winner of the Democratic primary? (This calls for a YES or NO answer ONLY.)

YES

5. FAIRNESS IN SHARING POLITICAL POWER - How have you and how will you defend and further the rights of small counties to be represented in the decision-making process and in governmental and political positions?

I will enhance the constituent services structure within the Comptroller's office so that elected officials and community leaders from DRC counties have a direct, more effective channel into my administration's work. The Comptroller produces audits, reports, and fiscal analyses that shape how New York lawmakers allocate resources. I will ensure the needs of DRC counties are prioritized in this analysis.

6. INCLUSION – If elected, how would your administration include the people from DRC counties and address the issues of concern in those counties?

If elected, I will ensure that the pension fund's investment strategy explicitly considers the economic development needs of upstate and rural communities, directing capital toward workforce housing and clean energy infrastructure. I will also address the passive mismanagement of pension resources to bring better returns for members. As mentioned, constituent services are a top priority for me to ensure no one is overlooked, and I will restructure and invest internally within the Comptroller's Office to deliver better service to all New Yorkers. Clean energy transmission through upstate New York runs through Indigenous land. You cannot build that future without strengthening these nation-to-nation partnerships, and I am the only candidate in this race who has made that commitment explicit.

7. VOTER APPEAL – What qualities or experiences do you have that would attract support from voters in DRC counties, not just from Democrats but also from unaffiliated voters and cross-over Republicans?

My parents came to the United States from Uganda as war refugees seeking asylum. They arrived with little and built lives working as home health aides. Because of my parents' sacrifice, I was the first in my family to graduate, and later continued my education at Harvard Business School. My background gives me a real understanding of what it means to depend on public institutions that work. I'm aware that my path from refugee family to economic security is less and less attainable. Systems that once expanded mobility now often entrench inequality. I am looking to bring change to the State Comptroller's Office and ensure that our systems and programs work as they are intended for all New Yorkers, including those in DRC counties.

I am also a candidate with a positive track record of stewarding public funds, most recently in my role as Executive Director of CORO NY, where I led a financial turnaround for the organization after the pandemic and leveraged resources to create programs aligned with our mission to serve all New Yorkers. I propose managing New York's money and assets with greater discipline and purpose. Unaffiliated voters and Republicans who are frustrated with the status quo will support me as a candidate who can improve efficiency for New York's financial future.

8. CAMPAIGN IN DRC COUNTIES – How would you campaign in DRC counties? Will you personally appear with local candidates?

I will personally campaign in DRC counties and engage with local candidates whenever an opportunity arises. My approach in DRC counties is built around direct engagement: town halls, meetings with county Democratic committees, and conversations with voters and local elected officials. Showing up in person is important because it builds trust and meaningful collaboration. I want to show up for DRC counties in-person, during this campaign, just as I intend to if elected as State Comptroller.

9. OTHER CRITERIA – Please set forth anything else you want us to consider

Adem Bunkeddeko

04/17/2026

Date and Signature of the Candidate

Please return THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE at your earliest convenience but no later than **April 12, 2026** to Bill Thickstun, DRC Chair at wthickstun@gmail.com.
315-527-1291