



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

City, State and Federal Leaders Call on CNN to Host Presidential Climate Town Hall in Either Queens or Brooklyn

MICHAEL GIANARIS August 12, 2019

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New York City Hall — New York City elected officials joined with environmental advocates this morning to implore CNN to host its Sept. 4 climate town hall either in Queens or Brooklyn. They argued that Democrats vying for the 2020 presidential nomination should have to make their case before communities most at risk by the effects of climate change in the coming decades.

“Climate change is the defining issue of our lifetime. It will influence our national security, our economy, and our health,” said **Council Member Costa Constantinides**, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection, who organized the rally. “I applaud CNN’s decision to host a climate town hall right here in New York City, which saw the effects of climate change nearly seven years ago when Sandy struck. But these candidates should have to answer directly to the people most at risk of climate change — so we have to take this show beyond the bright lights of Broadway.”

“Every candidate running for president should be treating climate change as the existential crisis that it is. I’m glad to see that CNN is doing a climate change town hall but let’s get these candidates out to where real, everyday people are going to be affected by climate change the most,” said **Council Member Justin Brannan**, Chair of the Committee on Resiliency. “Let’s get them to Coney Island or the Rockaways or someplace else besides Manhattan, where these kind of events usually happen. There are venues that not only can accommodate a presidential town hall, but would force candidates to see for themselves exactly how vulnerable our outer borough waterfront communities are.”

“Queens is on the front line of the climate debate. While some debate the merits of climate change, we live its effects every day,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “I’m proud to support Councilmember Constantinides’ effort to push climate issues to the forefront of the national dialogue.”

“Climate change is a very real threat with very real consequences. Almost every day, a new report is released showing the harm that greenhouse gases have on our environment, and we’re seeing the effects of extreme weather events all too often. Future generations are

relying on us to enact change so they can inherit a planet not choked by pollution and harmful chemicals, and it's not far-off generations – it's kids right now who are facing an uncertain environmental future,” **Assemblywoman Stacey Pheffer Amato (D-Rockaway Beach)** said. “While I commend CNN for hosting a climate town hall in NYC and for bringing this conversation to the forefront, we hope they will consider hosting in an area that was and is continuing to be directly impacted by the effects of climate change. Thank you Council Member Constantinides for your advocacy and continued partnership!”

“Climate change threatens the world’s food supply, destabilizes economies and poses a housing crisis to our nation. CNN and many other media outlets have done great work in bringing climate change into the mainstream and to our city, but we cannot leave the communities that are affected the most out of these crucial conversations. It is critical that these presidential candidates answer to the people of Queens and Brooklyn that have been negatively impacted by the concentrated fossil fuel-burning power plants that have been shoved in our communities. I urge CNN, alongside Councilmember Costa Constantinides to host its Sept. 4 climate town hall either in Northwest Queens or Brooklyn to truly account for these communities and have their voices be heard,” said **Assemblymember Aravella Simotas**, Member of Committee on Energy.

Council Members Constantinides and Brannan were joined on the steps of City Hall by One Queens Indivisible; Women’s Action Group of Forest Hills; Rockaway Revolution; Queens Climate Project; Queens Democratic Socialists; Sunrise Movement; San Energy Project; Indivisible Nation Brooklyn.

The rally coincided with a letter signed by 13 City, State and Federal elected officials to CNN

Worldwide President Jeffrey Zucker, asking the climate town hall be held in either Queens or Brooklyn. A copy of the letter has been attached. Home to roughly two-thirds of the Big Apple's population, both boroughs are home to communities on the front lines of climate change every day.

Last month, CNN announced it would host a climate change-focused town hall in New York City for candidates who meet the Democratic National Committee's threshold.

Constantinides has joined with environmental advocates in calling on the DNC to sanction an official debate focused on climate change, which experts warn will increasingly influence the economy, healthcare, and national security in the coming decades.

Council Member Costa Constantinides represents the New York City Council's 22nd District, which includes his native Astoria along with parts of Woodside, East Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. He serves as the chair of the City Council's Environmental Protection Committee and sits on three additional committees: Sanitation, Resiliency, and Technology. For more information, visit council.nyc.gov/costa.

The leaders full letter appears below.

August 8, 2019

Jeffrey Zucker, President, CNN Worldwide

30 Hudson Yards

New York, NY 10001

Dear Mr. Zucker,

We write to you as representatives of a city under siege by climate change. New York City, where you recently announced will host CNN's climate town hall on September 4, is nowhere near prepared for the next big storm. We have already tragically experienced the effects of climate change: In 2012 Hurricane Sandy's wrath cost us 43 lives and \$19 billion.

Since that time we've recovered from that trauma and made great strides to make New York more sustainable. Our City recently passed the Climate Mobilization Act, which will be the largest carbon emissions reduction ever mandated by a city, but we need a real partner in the White House for the sake of the 500,000 New Yorkers who live along our coast.

While we are inspired by CNN's leadership in hosting this town hall, we respectfully ask you to consider locations in either Queens or Brooklyn, which have several suitable options for this discussion. While Manhattan's iconic skyline may define New York City, these two boroughs account for about two-thirds of the city's population. Here reside the families who are the economic backbone of our city. Qualifying candidates should answer to the Rockaway, Coney Island, and Long Island City residents who every day face toxic air, unprecedented sea level rise, heat waves, and other extreme weather. Protecting them means protecting the livelihood of New York City.

Queens and Brooklyn offer several meaningful venues close to communities constantly at risk of climate change, which also meet logistical requirements of hosting a presidential forum. Both boroughs are easily accessed from John F. Kennedy International and LaGuardia Airports - which could be leveled and drowned by sea level rise - in addition to mass transit.

CNN has done great work in bringing climate change into mainstream conversations. This is as much an economic, national security, and housing crisis as it is about the environment. Queens and Brooklyn residents know the everyday struggle of climate change; they feel it as they grapple with the stress of dangerous weather taking away their jobs, their homes, or even their lives. They live near fossil fuel burning power plants shoved in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, choking on toxic air as the President makes bizarre statements against windmills. In fact, over half of the residents in the Rockaways, the Sandy-ravaged peninsula just a few miles from where our climate change-denier-in-chief grew up, could experience major flood damage to their homes within the next 40 years.

As proud representatives of these neighborhoods, we are happy to assist the network in finding a suitable location. Both boroughs have excellent choices at public colleges, local theatres, and along our at-risk shoreline. Together, we can have a meaningful discussion on fighting climate change in places where it matters the most.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Regardless of wherever you decide to hold this town hall, we look forward to watching a constructive discussion on how we can fight this existential crisis.

Sincerely,

U.S. Rep. Grace Meng

Senator Michael Gianaris

Senator Jessica Ramos

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Senator John C. Liu

Assembly Member Stacey Pheffer Amato

Assembly Member Aravella Simotas

Assembly Member Nily Rozic

Council Member Costa Constantinides

Council Member Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.

Council Member Justin Brannan

Council Member Karen Koslowitz

Council Member Adrienne Adams