



## Opportunities for Action: Roles for Child Advocates and Electoral Policy Campaigns

During elections, everyone can contribute to advancing child policy dialogue. During the last few weeks of an election, people will be inundated with media and political advertisements generally trying to sway the least informed voter to support one candidate or another. The most important thing child advocates can do, however is well before that time, in working to make voters MORE INFORMED about child policy. The following first describes what individuals can do, including children and youth who are not yet of voting age, to raise child policy issues. These are key to ensuring that our democracy works. It then describes the types of actions that child policy electoral campaigns can take to support individual child advocates and raise child policy in campaigns – federal, state, and local. While *Securing America's Future* is directed to candidates for federal office, the same general issue areas apply to candidates for state office and often to candidates for local office, as well.

### Things Individual Child Advocates Can Do

Concerted campaign efforts to get candidates to present child policy agendas is important (see “Things Child Policy Electoral Campaigns Can Do”), but actions also must come from the grassroots. The guide, *20/20 Vision for Children*, can be used as a resource for advocates to call for candidates to address child policy needs. The following are meaningful action voters and advocates can take:

1. Discuss the importance of children to America's future with family, friends, and co-workers, drawing upon information in the guide.
2. Contact candidates or their staff about child policy issues to express concerns and views.
3. Review candidate positions related to child policy.
4. Identify and join local or state organizations advocating for children.
5. Consider what candidates say about children when voting.
6. Be proud in being an advocate for children.

### Things Child Policy Electoral Campaigns Can Do

In addition to individual actions, child advocacy organizations in many states and communities have taken a lead in organizing an electoral campaign effort to advance child policy. Often, these organizations have build coalitions with child-serving organizations and civic groups concerned about children to elevate child policy issues. Generally, such efforts seek out grassroots advocates and support them in the work described in the first section. While different child advocacy organizations have developed different strategies, based upon their own state's political culture and on the resources and capacity they have to take action, the following summarizes the different ways they have raised child policy issues to greater electoral focus.

### **The What: Materials – for Candidates, the Media, Advocates, and Voters**

- Description of the status of child well-being, current government responsibility to children, and issues candidates need to address (questions candidates need to answer) – brochures, fact sheets, one-pagers, etc.
- Infographics, facebook pages, twitter feeds, and other social media highlighting different key issues
- Guest essays and letters to the editor (and templates for same) on child policy and the election
- Public opinion polling showing why kids issues are important
- Legislative scorecards showing how current legislators (incumbent candidates) voted on children's issues
- Establishment of a coalition/steering group/network of organizations/leaders to “represent” the electoral education activities

### **The How: Contacts with Candidates and Parties**

- Dissemination of “what materials” to candidates with ask from candidates
- Questionnaires to candidates, with responses for posting and sharing and/or facebook live chats to secure responses to child policy questions
- Individual meetings or sessions or forums with candidates, to discuss child policy issues
- Individual meetings with political party staff or chairs, to explain work, consider inclusion into party platforms
- Gubernatorial or Congressional debates/forums for all candidates to discuss child policy issue out on child policy
- Post-election follow-up to candidates/elected officials, to continue to build relationships around child policy

### **The How: Getting the Information Out with other Advocates and Groups**

- Presentations at conferences or to boards, advocacy workshops, community meetings to inform grassroots and grasstops persons and activate them to speak out on child policy
- Sign-on petitions and follow-up to those signing onto encourage further activity supporting child policy
- Meetings with editorial boards, media, to elevate child policy, letter-to-the editor efforts to raise child policy
- Encouragement and support to child-serving organizations to invite candidates to visit their programs, meet with their boards, or otherwise learn about their work.

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