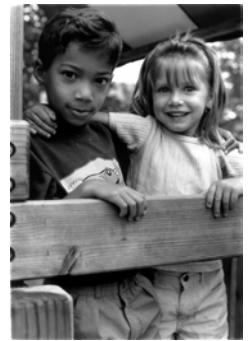


Vote For Kids:

A Guide for Child Advocates in Wisconsin Election Year 2006



The people we elect to public office in November will face many pressing priorities. Make sure the candidates talk about how they will address the needs of children and families. Use this voter guide in public forums, debates, face-to-face meetings or in written correspondence, with the candidates. If you would like additional information on any of the topics or other children's issues, please visit our website, www.wccf.org

Campaigns are already underway and with your help we can make sure children are not forgotten. It is also crucial to vote and help mobilize parents and others who care about children to register and vote. Voter information is available on our website or at the Wisconsin Elections Board at <http://elections.state.wi.us/>

Poverty:

FACT: According to the Census Bureau the number of Wisconsin children living in extreme poverty nearly doubled from 2000 to 2005.

FACT: By the time they are 17, one in four children will have lived in or near poverty (*One Nation, Underprivileged: Why American Poverty Affects Us All*, Mark Robert Rank 2004).

FACT: The deprivation of poverty diminishes children's ability to enjoy healthy childhoods and realize their full potential as adults (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

QUESTION: What ideas do you have for addressing the rise in child poverty?

Afterschool/Extended Learning Opportunities:

FACT: Just over 74 percent of Wisconsin children have both parents in the workforce and 31 percent of Wisconsin's school-age children are responsible for taking care of themselves when school is out (Annie E. Casey Foundation analysis of the 2000 Census; *America After 3 PM*, Afterschool Alliance 2004)

FACT: On school days, the hours from 3 to 6 PM are the peak hours for children and youth to be a victim of crime, commit crime or engage in other risky behaviors (*America's After-School Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement*, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids 2000).

FACT: Numerous studies point to the link between after-school program participation and education success including improved homework completion and quality, improved grades, higher scores on achievement tests and reductions in grade retention (*Critical Hours: Afterschool Programs and Educational Success*; Dr. Beth M. Miller and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation 2003)

QUESTION: What would you do to help keep school-age children safe, support their working families and improve their academic achievement?

Achievement Gap:

FACT: In 8th grade reading and 4th grade math, the achievement gap between White and African American students in Wisconsin was larger than any other state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

FACT: The percentage of Wisconsin students who do not graduate from high school is almost seven times higher among African Americans and more than four times higher for Hispanics than for whites. (Based on DPI graduation data)

FACT: To be ready for college, high school students should be encouraged to complete 4 years of English, 3 years of Math, 2 years each of natural science, social science and foreign language as well as graduate from High school. In 2002, 14 percent of African American high school seniors were considered college ready while 38 percent of white students had been academically prepared for college. (The Manhattan Institute)

QUESTION: What steps will you take to ensure that every child in Wisconsin has access to a quality education that eliminates the current racial disparities in educational outcomes?

Economic Security:

FACT: Nearly 28 percent of low-income working families in Wisconsin have a parent without a high school diploma (American Community Survey data).

FACT: Men with some college or an associate's degree earned 21 percent more than those with only a high school diploma, the earnings jump was higher for women, at 27 percent more (American Community Survey data).

FACT: Jobs requiring a post-secondary credential are growing 60 percent faster than those requiring high school or less (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

QUESTION: What would you do to address the growing "skills gap" faced by workers and employers in Wisconsin?

Juvenile Justice:

FACT: Nearly 5,000 17 year olds, high school juniors and seniors, were admitted to adult jails and the bulk of arrests are for non-violent offences such as disorderly conduct, curfew violations and possession of alcohol and drugs (Office of Justice Assistance Statistical Analysis Center).

FACT: According to scientists who study adolescent brain development, the area of the brain responsible for reasoning and impulse control is the last to develop, making children under the age of 18 more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior and are less able to comprehend the long-term consequences of that behavior (Journal of Neuroscience 22, 2001)

FACT: A decade of studies around the country found that children who are tried and incarcerated in the adult system recidivate more quickly and with more serious crimes than minors tried and incarcerated in the juvenile system where treatment is more readily available.

QUESTION: Would you support allowing juvenile court judges to decide when juveniles (under the age of 18) are tried in adult court?

Health Care:

FACT: About 91,000 children were without health care for all or part of 2004. (2004 Family Health Survey, DHFS)

FACT: About 88 percent of the uninsured children in Wisconsin have an employed parent. (2004 Family Health Survey, DHFS)

FACT: About 34 percent of Hispanics in Wisconsin and 15 percent of African Americans were uninsured in 2004, compared to just 5 percent of whites. (2004 Family Health Survey, DHFS)

FACT: Uninsurance doesn't just adversely affect the uninsured individuals and their families. It is also associated with financial instability for health care providers and institutions, reduced hospital services and capacity, cost-shifting to private sector insurance, and strains on public health programs. (Institute of Medicine. 2004. Insuring America's Health, p. xi)

QUESTION: What strategies, if any, would you pursue to improve access to health care services for Wisconsin's children and families?

Early Education and Care:

FACT: Less than 35 percent of all four-year-old children attend four-year-old Kindergarten in Wisconsin (Department of Public Instruction, 2006)

FACT: Only 15 percent of Wisconsin's child care programs are good or excellent, according to a 2002 study by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership

FACT: Learning deficits that contribute to the school achievement gap are present at the time children enter school (Lee & Burkam, *Inequality at the Starting Gate*, Economic Policy Institute, 2002).

QUESTION: What would you do to assure that Wisconsin's young children have access to high quality early learning experiences so they are ready for school?



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The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is celebrating its 125th year as a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan advocate for effective health care, education, safety and economic security for Wisconsin children and families.

