On November 6, North Carolinians will go to the polls to elect a U.S. President, 13 U.S. Representatives, a Governor, a Lt. Governor and all 170 state legislators. These officials will make decisions that shape our children's lives today and well into the future. But children can't vote. It is up to us to make sure children's issues, from public schools to health care, are an important part of the political debate.

**Ask Candidates For Their Positions On Children’s Issues!**

North Carolina ranks near the bottom of the nation on many conditions for children:
- One in four children grows up in poverty.
- One in ten babies is born with low birth-weight.
- Seven in 1,000 babies die before their first birthday.

The decisions made by elected officials can provide families with tools they need to thrive or can erect barriers that undermine North Carolina's future prosperity.

Adults need to ask candidates to make children a priority by investing in solutions that improve conditions and opportunities for North Carolina’s children and their families. Let candidates know that your support for them hinges on their support for children. Ask the questions to determine who's for kids and who's just kidding?

**Remember To Register And To Vote!**

The general election is Tuesday, November 6. The voter registration deadline is 5 p.m. October 12.

Voter registration forms are available online from the State Board of Elections at: [http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/](http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/) (Click on Voter Registration and then Registration Forms.) The form must be mailed to the board of elections office in your county. Forms may also be obtained from public libraries and high schools. To determine where to mail your voter registration form and where to vote, visit: [http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/](http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/).

You may also register to vote while conducting official business with or applying for benefits at other government agencies, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, county Departments of Social Services, and the Employment Security Commission.

**One-Stop Registration & Voting** - Any North Carolina resident who is qualified to register to vote may register. For more information on One-Stop Voting, visit: [http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/](http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/) (Click on Voter Registration and then How to Register.)

The State Board of Elections also provides information on where to vote at: [http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/](http://www.sboe.state.nc.us/). Click on Voting in North Carolina and then Locate Your Polling Place.
 KNOW THE FACTS

North Carolina’s children are growing up with immediate barriers to achieving well-being that directly impact the economic growth and social cohesion of our state. Issue by issue, voters need to know how children are doing and candidates must be asked about their plans to improve child outcomes.

Health and Safety

- One in nine children (11.8 percent) lacks health insurance coverage. Good health forms the foundation of future life success. As more families have lost access to private health insurance due to unemployment, Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice have played an increasingly important role in preserving children’s access to health care. More than 1 million children in North Carolina (46 percent) receive coverage through public health insurance programs.

- One in five high school students reports abusing prescription drugs at least once in her/his lifetime—a 20 percent increase over the last five years. This trend is especially troubling in the wake of recent state budget cuts that have drastically reduced or eliminated many of the programs and services that empower young people to reduce risk-taking behaviors and make better decisions for their health.

- Nearly one-third (30 percent) of children ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese. Children who are overweight are more likely to have high cholesterol and high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem.

Early Childhood & Education

- Evidence-based programs, such as early childhood development programs, have demonstrated their return on investment. Studies show that every $1 invested in high-quality early care and education returns $7 or more to families and society.

- And yet, North Carolina fails to meet the demand for high-quality early education. North Carolina’s early learning system, once a national leader in early education, has been beleaguered by recent budget cuts. Each year, more than 60,000 four year olds in North Carolina qualify for early learning opportunities through N.C. Pre-K—formerly More At Four. Currently, the state serves less than one-third of the eligible population.

- North Carolina cut more than $900 million from higher education budgets over the course of the 2011-2013 biennium. These cuts will place higher education out of reach for many young people, as full-time and resident community college students expect to see their tuition climb in upcoming academic years.

- The percentage of students who turn the tassel with their peers is rising. Graduating from high school provides, on average, an additional $8,600 in earnings annually for North Carolinians. Young people with a high school diploma are better prepared for success in the labor market and less likely to live in poverty later as adults.

QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:

QUESTION: What are your plans for sustaining and improving health insurance coverage for North Carolina’s children?

QUESTION: How can we work to prevent our youth from engaging in risk-taking activities that can negatively impact their health?

QUESTION: What should be the role of government in reducing childhood obesity?

QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:

QUESTION: What will you do to restore North Carolina’s position as a leader in the early education of our children and youth?

QUESTION: What is your plan to make college affordable for all young people in N.C.?

QUESTION: What are your plans to ensure that all students in North Carolina graduate from high-school on-time and ready succeed?

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
7 North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Development and Early Education. NC Child Care Snapshot. Available online at: http://bit.ly/1nSlR.
10 U.S. Census Bureau. 2010 American Community Survey.
Child Abuse and Neglect

- Every day in North Carolina over 340 reports of child abuse and neglect receive assessments. Children thrive when they are raised in safe, stable environments. Abuse or neglect experienced during the early years stunts the process of appropriate growth and development and jeopardizes a child’s chance for future success.

- Last year, 19 children died as a result of child abuse or neglect. Child abuse is preventable, as is child homicide due to abuse. Reviewing child fatality data can help our systems better understand the factors that put children at risk, and prevent other children from being injured or dying.

- During the 2010-2011 school year, there were more than 11,000 reported acts of school crime and violence. In order for students to learn, they must feel safe in their schools. Bullying, assaults, and threats create an environment of anxiety and distraction that can reinforce violent behavior and victimization among students.

QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:

QUESTION: What is the role of government and the community in preventing or detecting child abuse and neglect?

QUESTION: How can government help eliminate school violence?

Juvenile Justice

- Juvenile crime is down, as is the number of youth placed in secure facilities. The number of youth committed to Youth Development Centers (YDCs) has declined by 53 percent over the past decade. The state’s reduced reliance on YDC commitments is largely attributable to the increased use of community-based services provided through local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs).

- Although more juveniles are receiving services through JCPCs, funding has failed to keep pace with demand or inflation. More than 27,000 youth receive locally-provided juvenile justice services through JCPCs annually. JCPCs improve community safety by connecting youth to community supports that provide treatment and prevent recidivism.

- Three in seven complaints referred to the juvenile justice system (43 percent) were for school-based offenses. The majority of school-based offenses are misdemeanors. Local school districts can hold students accountable for minor offenses without referring them to the juvenile justice system.

- North Carolina is one of just two states that does not treat 16 and 17-year olds as the minors they are. More youth in N.C. are processed as adults than as juveniles. Research has shown the juvenile system demands more accountability from youth in trouble, increases public safety and gives juveniles access to the supports they need to get back on the right track.

QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:

QUESTION: What policies do you support to ensure that more troubled teens have access to preventive services, quality education and other community supports to avoid or minimize interaction with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems?

QUESTION: Do you support raising the presumptive age of adult criminal prosecution to 18 to better protect and treat youth?

QUESTION: How will you ensure that the N.C. Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is adequately funded to provide safety, treatment and education to the youth they serve?

11 Ibid, see note 1.
12 Ibid, see note 1.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
The number of children living in extreme poverty is on the rise. One in ten children in North Carolina now lives in a household that earns less than half the federal poverty level—just $11,500 for a family of four in 2012.

Nearly 3 in 10 North Carolina households (28 percent) are asset-poor, lacking the financial cushion they need to weather an unexpected loss of income. Families of color are 2.8 times more likely to live in asset poverty than their peers.

An estimated 603,250 children (27 percent) in North Carolina live in households that struggle to put food on the table. More than one-third of these children live in families that earn too much to qualify for help through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

**QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:**

**QUESTION:** What state policies are appropriate to make sure that struggling, working families have the tools they need to succeed and provide for their children?

**QUESTION:** What investments will you make to ensure that all children have the opportunity to be financially stable adults?

**QUESTION:** In this time of economic crisis, how will you work to ensure local economies are not hard hit and families are supported?

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**Invest in What Works**

Less than 10 percent of the federal budget is dedicated to children’s programs. As a result, state policy has a significant impact on children’s quality of life. When states prioritize child well-being, children experience better health, social and educational outcomes.

**QUIZ THE CANDIDATES:**

**QUESTION:** What are your criteria for investing state dollars?

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