

2014 VOTER'S GUIDE

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT
THE ISSUES THAT MATTER



**ARKANSAS
ADVOCATES**
FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

JULY 2014

DATES TO REMEMBER

General Election Date:

November 4, 2014

Early voting:

October 20-November 3, 2014

Early voting begins for the general election between the hours of 8:00a.m. and 6:00p.m., Monday through Friday, and 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. on Saturday.

Early voting ends at 5:00 pm on the Monday prior to the election.

Kids can't vote and don't write checks to campaigns, but they are still affected by decisions made by elected officials. Today's candidates, if elected, will cast votes that will shape the well-being and opportunities available to Arkansas children. You have the opportunity to be their voice.

One way to advocate for kids is to ask candidates their thoughts on issues that affect children.

Not sure what to ask? Pick from some of our questions below. The goal is not to ask "yes or no" questions or questions that imply a "correct" answer; instead, let's prompt a thoughtful dialogue.

EDUCATION

Pre-K: Kids enrolled in quality pre-K are more likely to go on to college and end up with better jobs. They're also less likely to be arrested. However, there hasn't been one increase in pre-K funding for 7 years. What are your thoughts on supporting quality pre-k for all eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in Arkansas?

Grade-Level Reading and Common Core: Common Core State Standards were developed by a group of states to determine the academic goals for each grade. Local school districts are still responsible for determining how to effectively teach students to meet those learning goals. What is your position on Common Core?

Privatization of public schools: There is a movement in place to shift public education tax dollars to private organizations. Proposals to accomplish this include vouchers, tax credits, and scholarship programs. What is your position on using public tax dollars to support private schools?

HEALTH

ARKids First: ARKids First has reduced the rate of uninsured kids in Arkansas from 22 percent in 1997 to 5.9 percent today. ARKids First helps families stay economically secure, and it helps kids stay healthy. How can we protect ARKids First?

Private option: Almost 180,000 Arkansans now have affordable health coverage through the Private Option, including many parents and caregivers. How will you protect the future of this legislation and ensure Arkansans learn about and enroll in coverage?

School-based health: School-based healthcare is an important part of access to care for many Arkansas children whose parents are at work. Schools should be a part of the team that serves as a child's medical home. How will the Legislature improve access to needed health services on a school campus, including school nurses, full health centers, and mental health services?

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND FAIR TAXES

Minimum wage: More than three quarters (77 percent) of Arkansans agree that if you work hard and play by the rules you should be able to make ends meet and support your family. What's your position on the minimum wage proposal that would make a living wage possible for more working Arkansans?

Personal income tax: Several proposals to reduce the personal income tax have been proposed by various candidates. These tax cuts could undermine our state's ability to fund programs such as ARKids First and the Arkansas Better Chance pre-k program that have proven crucial to the well-being of Arkansas children. What are your thoughts on protecting state revenues so that critical programs that support children and families are fairly and fully funded?

AFTER-SCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS

Funding for after-school and summer programs: In 2011, an overwhelming majority of state legislators voted to provide grants for local after-school and summer programs, but the programs remain unfunded. What should the legislature do in order to fund this legislation that has already passed?

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Incarcerating fewer kids: Community-based programs that serve non-violent, low-to-moderate-risk youthful offenders cost less money and are more effective at ensuring public safety than incarceration for these young people. Arkansas continues to put these kids in prison, though, due to a severe lack of quality community programs. How do you propose the state address this gap?

IMMIGRATION

Immigrant child health: Arkansas has the opportunity to extend ARKids First health coverage to all lawfully residing immigrant children that meet the coverage requirements. How should the state government respond to this opportunity?

DREAM Act: The number of undocumented children graduating from high school continues to grow in Arkansas. An overwhelming number of these kids came to our state as very young children and have gone to Arkansas public schools their entire lives. Thirteen states, including neighboring Texas, allow these graduates to attend state-funded colleges and universities while paying in-state tuition just like their fellow graduates. How can the state government act to remain competitive with states like Texas?

CHILD WELFARE

Child abuse and neglect: Child abuse and neglect continue to plague Arkansas. Last year the state confirmed more than 7,467 cases of abuse and neglect involving almost 9,969 children. The majority of these were cases of neglect by parents, which we know can be addressed through preventive services and programs. What are your thoughts on the role that state government can play in reducing child abuse and neglect?

Foster care: During fiscal year 2013, 7,700 children were in the foster system. The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) budget from state general revenue is shrinking. How do you plan to address this developing crisis?

ARE YOU REGISTERED?

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CAST VOTES IN**

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