#VoteKids: Op-Ed Guidelines

Write to Your Local Newspapers about Why You #VoteKids

**Background:**
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is leading a Get Out the Vote campaign, #VoteKids, with the goal of making children a meaningful part of the 2016 election conversation and encouraging all who advocate for children to vote with their needs in mind.

There is a lot at stake for children in this election. One in five children lives in poverty, one in five children live in households where food is scarce, and seven children and teens die from gun violence every day. Our campaign urges elected leaders to invest in programs and policies that address these issues and others to keep our children, families and communities safe and healthy. It will take all of our voices coming together to advocate for what children need.

**How you can help:**
Please consider writing an op-ed to your local newspaper explaining why it is important to #VoteKids in November. Op-eds are an effective medium to communicate your opinion about a timely issue in a local or national media outlet. Op-eds are typically 500-600 words in length, though it is always important to check with the individual publication for specific length requirements (most have guidelines listed on their websites).

**Important note:** Rather than copy and pasting from this document, please view the messages below as example framing, as AAP strongly recommends you tailor the language to make it your own and add personal stories or perspectives on why children deserve to be a meaningful part of the election conversation and why you plan to #VoteKids.

**State-specific resources:** To help you personalize your op-ed with state-specific statistics and data, we have included additional resources that provide information by state on issues such as health insurance coverage, gun violence, poverty and food insecurity.

**Key messages:**
Below are key messages to help guide your op-ed draft:

- There is a lot at stake for children in this election. One in five children lives in poverty, one in five children lives in households where food is scarce, and seven children and teens die from gun violence every day.
- While children cannot vote or speak up for themselves, we can, and I plan to use my voice and my vote this November to make sure their needs are prioritized by our elected leaders.
- Through the #VoteKids campaign, led by the American Academy of Pediatrics, pediatricians are using their voices to speak for children at the ballot box and encouraging others to do the same.
- I #VoteKids because [insert why you plan to #VoteKids], and I ask you to join me!
- [Share state-specific data on why it is important to vote on behalf of the needs of children in your state. Add personal stories or perspectives about why you plan to #VoteKids and why others should too].
We must put children at the top of our national agenda. I urge our elected leaders in state legislatures and governors’ offices, in Congress and in the White House to invest in programs and policies that keep our children, families and communities safe and healthy.

Children are 25 percent of the U.S. population, and 100 percent of the future.

Voting for kids is a small act that can make a big difference for children and for the country.

We owe it to our children and future generations to vote with their needs in mind.

Additional resources

- The Children’s Defense Fund state statistics on child poverty and in-depth state profiles on child poverty from the National Center for Children in Poverty
- Everytown for Gun Safety’s interactive map that tracks publicly reported incidents regarding gun incidents involving children and map of school shootings by state
- State profiles on Medicaid and CHIP programs and statistics on Medicaid and CHIP participation rates from Insure Kids Now
- An interactive map from Feeding America showing food insecurity rates for communities across the United States
- Health insurance rates for children by state and form of insurance from the Kaiser Family Foundation
- An AAP Voices blog post by Lynda Young, MD, FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on Federal Government Affairs, Dennis Cooley, MD, FAAP, chair of the AAP Subcommittee on Access to Care, and J. Gary Wheeler, MD, FAAP, chair of the AAP Committee on State Government Affairs, “A Small Act That Can Make a Big Difference: Why We Choose to #VoteKids”

Submitting your op-ed

Once you have initiated a draft op-ed, please contact Devin Miller (dmiller@aap.org) or Jamie Poslosky (jposlosky@aap.org) in the AAP Washington Office who can provide any suggestions or feedback, answer any additional questions or provide assistance with pitching.

Please note that many op-eds are considered “exclusive;” you can only submit your piece to one newspaper at a time. Should one publication decline to publish your piece, you can resubmit to another, but you should avoid sending your op-ed to several newspapers at once.