



THE CENTER
FOR
THE **NEXT**
GENERATION



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Dear Ms. Raddatz and Ms. Crowley:

We are writing to ask that you make the federal policy issues that matter most for children a principal focus of the upcoming vice presidential and presidential debates.

Candidates for federal office often talk about children, but voters don't often have a clear picture of candidates' stands on the critical national policy issues that matter most for kids. In fact, voters rarely know whether candidates even understand how federal policy and budget decisions affect children. To a great extent, that is because journalists rarely challenge candidates on children's issues.

Last week's presidential debate illustrated the problem. Both candidates returned repeatedly to the topic of education, but the conversation never moved beyond bumper-sticker slogans and simplistic accusations. And the debate's education discussion was the most substantive children's issue conversation of the evening. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly, Food Stamps) was barely mentioned. And – with one-in-five children living in poverty and more kids victimized by abuse or neglect than the total population of Denver – neither child poverty nor child welfare came up at all. Why? In large part, because the moderator did not raise these questions.

Children's issues are timely issues. The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a budget plan that would make deep cuts to critical investments in children's health, child care, family tax credits that lift children out of poverty, child nutrition, and child abuse and neglect prevention and response. The winner of November's presidential election will play an important role in advancing or impeding this divestment from children, and the American people should know where each candidate stands before casting their ballots.

Children's issues are priorities for voters. A national survey of parents, released in September by the Center for the Next Generation and *Parents Magazine*, found that 58 percent felt the presidential candidates were not spending enough time talking about children and family issues. And the sentiment is not limited to parents. A nationwide poll released in September by the First Focus Campaign for Children found that 63 percent of likely voters – including 59 percent of those without kids – wanted the presidential campaigns to focus more on children's issues.

The campaigns will not put those issues on the table. In fact, an analysis of the presidential campaigns' websites released by Voices for America's Children found that neither campaign offered a "children's issues"

section, and sections highlighting other issues made only incidental references to children. Only a forceful and independent voice can put children's issues front-and-center.

You can be that voice. You can help voters make better decisions on timely debates that will literally shape the nation's future. You can give voters what they want: presidential campaigns that focus more on kids. You can help, by including key federal children's issues in your questions for the October 11th vice presidential debate and the October 16th presidential debate.

We stand willing to help you explore these issues with the presidential and vice presidential candidates. We have attached a recommended set of questions on timely children's issues. We will gladly provide additional context on any or all of these questions or on the problems facing America's children and the role of federal investments in addressing those problems.

You do not have to do it alone. But we cannot do it without you.

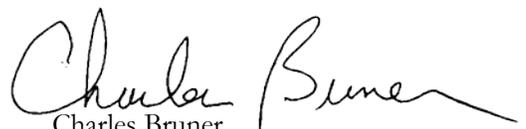
In a month, it will be too late. This is the moment to put timely issues on the table. This is the moment to give voters what they want. This is the moment to focus on kids.

Thank you for your service to the American people.

Sincerely,


Bruce Lesley
President
First Focus Campaign for Children


Ann M. O'Leary
Director, Children and Families Program
Center for the Next Generation


Charles Bruner
Co-Chair, Electoral Advocacy Committee
Voices for America's Children

Recommended Children's Issues Questions for Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates

1. Child poverty is nearly double the rate of poverty among adults and nearly triple the poverty rate for senior citizens. Should the United States make a national commitment to eliminate child poverty within a generation, as the United Kingdom has?
2. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and Medicaid have protected children from becoming uninsured during the recession. Should Congress support or reject a budget plan that cuts CHIP and Medicaid, resulting in more kids without health insurance?
3. About half of every Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollar goes to children. With one in five children already living in families affected by hunger, would you sign or veto legislation making deep cuts in child nutrition?
4. The Child Tax Credit lifts more than one million U.S. kids out of poverty every year. Should Congress ensure that any changes to the Child Tax Credit do not result in the credit's denial to any eligible child?
5. Child care costs consume up to 15% of a typical family's income. Yet investments that make child care more affordable are on the chopping block in the upcoming budget "sequestration" debate. Would you sign or veto sequestration legislation making deep cuts to child care?
6. The U.S. House of Representatives' budget plan would eliminate a grant program that 35 states use for child abuse and neglect prevention and response. Would you sign or veto legislation that cuts funding for child abuse and neglect prevention and response?
7. The federal government has a detailed budget for weather forecasts, but it does not compile an official record of federal investments in kids. Will you commit to sending Congress an official "children's budget" in 2013?