



What Docs Should Know About... Voting and its Impact on Child Health and Development

www.DocsForTots.org

Why is voting important to child well-being?

- Children are not able to vote or advocate for themselves, and it is our responsibility to ensure all children have the opportunity to succeed.
- Elected officials make important decisions and pass legislation that affects the programs and policies that impact children and families, including child care and Head Start, children's health insurance, welfare, Food Stamps, and WIC.
- In recent years, states have faced serious budget problems resulting in cuts that have influenced children's programs.

A large number of Americans do not vote in elections, allowing their voices to go unheard.

- Less than half (43.6%) of the voting-eligible population voted in the 2006 Federal elections.¹
- Sixty-four percent of the voting-age population voted in the 2004 presidential election. The overall number of people who voted was 126 million.²
- Women, native citizens, older citizens, married individuals, individuals with more education, and Midwesterners are more likely to vote.³
- Individuals with higher family incomes are more likely to vote than individuals with low family incomes. In the 2004 election, voting-age citizens with incomes below \$20,000 represented 8% of the voting population as compared to 54% of voters who lived in families with annual income of \$50,000 or more.
- Of the 16 million (12%) registered voters that did not participate in the 2004 election, 20% said they were too busy, 11% said they were not interested or felt their vote would not make a difference, 10% did not like the candidates or campaign issues, and 7% were confused or uncertain about registration.⁴

Americans want a change for children.

- Almost three-quarters of voters believe that U.S. political leaders are not doing enough to ensure the health, education and well-being of children today.⁵
- Nearly half of all voters say that the health, education and well-being of children in America in the last 10 years have gotten worse.⁶
- Over 85% of early primary voters think it is important that candidates for president provide a comprehensive agenda describing what they would do to meet the needs of children, youth, and families.⁷
- Investing in kids (53%) ranks as significantly more of a priority than keeping federal taxes low (34%).⁸

How to vote

- In almost all states, you must first register to vote. To register to vote you must be: (1) a U.S. citizen, (2) a citizen of the state in which you are registering, (3) 18 years old on or before the day of the election, (4) not under guardianship for mental illness, and (5) free of a felony record. Most state deadlines for registration are 30 days before the election.
 - To register online, visit Congress.org at <https://ssl.capwiz.com/congressorg/e4/nvra/>.
 - Polling places must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals who are blind, cannot read or have trouble writing may receive assistance with voting.
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Doctors can help families register to vote

Docs can help families register to vote by providing voter registration materials in their offices. To access a free packet of voter registration materials including a poster, voter registration forms, and stickers for children, please contact Docs For Tots at dft@DocsForTots.org or 202-589-0103.

Additional Resources for Docs

What Docs Should Know About...Child Care and Impact of Poverty on Young Children, www.DocsForTots.org
The Every Child Matters Education Fund, www.everychildmatters.org

¹ "National Voter Turnout in Federal Elections." Information Please® Database. Pearson Education, Inc, 2007. 11 June 2008 <<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781453.html>>.

² U.S. Census Bureau. (2006). Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/p20-556.pdf>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ The Every Child Matters Education Fund. How Voters See Children's Issues in 2008. <http://www.everychildmatters.org/2008/combo-analysis.html>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid