

Voices

For Virginia's
Children

The Future of Virginia Starts Today



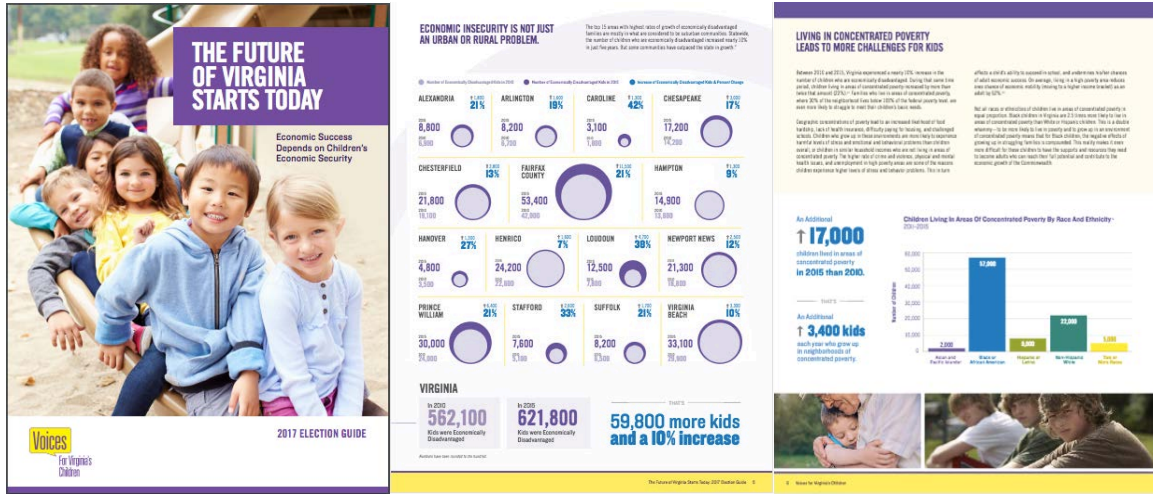
2017 Election Guide: What It Is & How to Use It

Introduction

The *Future of Virginia Starts Today: 2017 Election Guide* is a powerful tool that can be used by organizations and individuals for voter education and advocacy. It features data and talking points on the issues that affect Virginia's children the most.

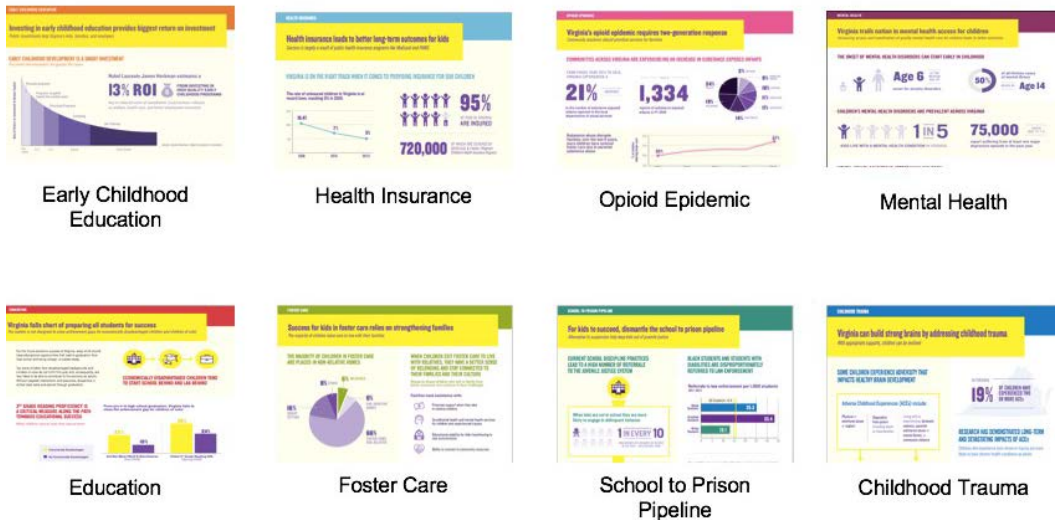
Part 1: Report- Economic Success Depends on Children's Economic Security

Part one is a report on the well-being of Virginia's children, which highlights demographic shifts and the impact of economic insecurity on the future economic success of Virginia.



Part 2: 8 One-Page Infographics and Questions for Candidates by Topic

Part two is a series of one-page “cheat sheets” with infographics and questions for candidates. They cover critical issues on child well-being that we hope candidates will highlight during this election: Childhood Trauma, Early Childhood, Education, Foster Care, Health Insurance, Mental Health, the Opioid Epidemic, and the School to Prison Pipeline.



The front of each one-pager includes data and talking points, while the back page consists of questions for candidates that can be asked in variety of settings.

How to Use the Election Guide

- Keep these resources available, by your front door or in your bag, to use when a candidate is door-to-door campaigning.
- Invite candidates to meet with your organization or tour your facility. Use the guide for your discussion with the candidate(s).
- Share this information with your clients or members as a resource to identify policy topics relevant to children and families.
- Highlight responses from candidates on social media using the hashtag- #VAVotes4Kids.

And, you can use the data and talking points on the Election Guide in your presentations and conversations with stakeholders and policymakers throughout the year.

Voices in the 2017 Elections

Given that each year is an election year in Virginia, electoral advocacy has always been an important part of Voices work. During the 2017 elections, Voices has distributed a questionnaire to all candidates running for a seat in the House of Delegates and will host a gubernatorial candidate forum this fall.

Check out our website for more information on the gubernatorial forum and responses to the candidate questionnaire: vakids.org/elections.

Our nonpartisan commitment

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Voices does not endorse candidates for office. We work with Bolder Advocacy at the Alliance for Justice to ensure we adhere to federal laws on political advocacy. More information on guidelines for non-profits can be found at bolderadvocacy.org.

Our Election Guide does not include policy solutions. By asking open-ended questions in the one-pagers, candidates are given the opportunity to provide detailed and meaningful responses. It also ensures that Voices does not prescribe to a position that aligns with a specific candidate.

If you wish to access more information about our policy issues, please visit our website and blog posts at vakids.org.

2017 Races to Watch:

Statewide Offices

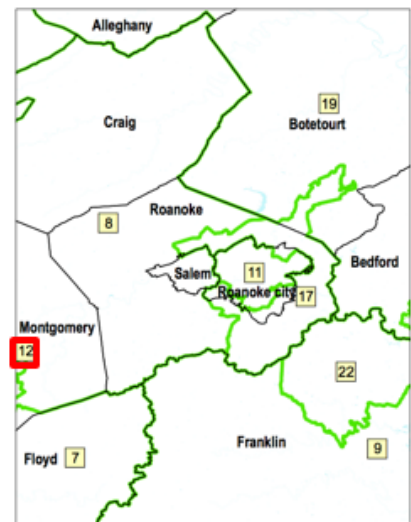
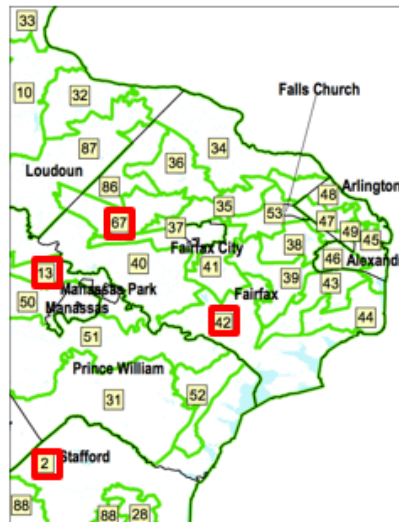
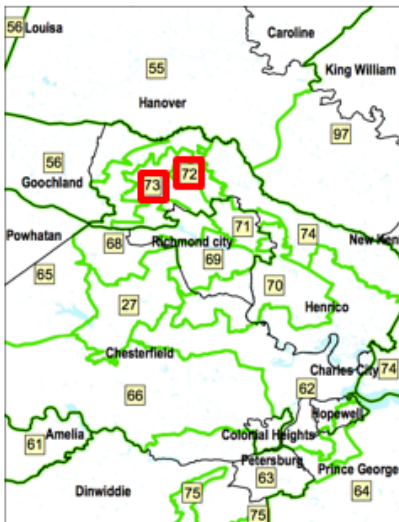
With the primary contests over, we know who our general election candidates will be for each of the statewide races:

- ✓ Governor: Ed Gillespie (R) vs. Ralph Northam (D)
- ✓ Lieutenant Governor: Justin Fairfax (D) vs. Jill Vogel (R)
- ✓ Attorney General: John Adams (R) vs. Mark Herring (D)

House of Delegates

Many of the newly-contested House of Delegates races will provide yet another opportunity to use the 2017 Election Guide. Sixty-seven of the one hundred House of Delegates seats are contested this year. For example, District 42 (Fairfax), District 72 (Henrico), and District 2 (Stafford) are some of the races Voices is keeping an eye on. We are also watching contested races that have received high levels of media attention and more donations, such as in Districts 67 (Fairfax), 73 (Henrico), District 12 (Giles) and 13 (Prince William).

As the run-up to the November general election continues, these candidates will be participating in multiple forums, debates, and town halls. This gives us, as advocates, the opportunity to learn their positions on many issues.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is electoral advocacy, and why does it matter?

In the simplest of terms, electoral advocacy is a way to champion issues and bring them to the forefront of an election. We want candidates to engage with the issues that matter most to the Commonwealth, and there are a variety of ways to do this. You could ask a question at a town hall or forum event, or by sharing on social media. In the past, some candidates have held virtual town halls on Facebook Live, which is a perfect opportunity to ask some of these questions.

With the national spotlight on Virginia's off-year governor race, as well as all 100 seats in the House of Delegates up for reelection, 2017 is shaping up to be a great year for advocates looking to have their voices heard on critical issues.

2. How can social media be used in this election?

Uniting through social media can be a powerful way to share information and call voters and candidates to action. In the coming weeks, Voices will be preparing a social media resource guide with sample tweets and Facebook posts to be used by all our partners. We hope that in using these prepared resources or modeling your own posts in this format as well as using the hashtag #VAVotes4Kids can help track conversations and amplify attention to the issue.

Throughout the election, Voices will be sharing a variety of articles and media from candidate forums and debates as well as facts and images from our report to bring issues to the forefront. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter (@vakids) and Instagram (@va_kids) and check out our blogs throughout the election cycle.

3. What can nonprofit organizations do to get involved in elections?

Elections provide nonprofits with opportunities to connect with community members, interact with elected officials, and promote children's issues. Electoral advocacy through social media and public events, such as town halls and forums, can be a powerful way to educate and empower your audience to go out and engage with candidates and vote.

As 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, it is important to know what precautions are needed to maintain your 501(c)(3) status.

Do's and Don'ts of Social Media

Do:

- Share media coverage of candidates' positions on important issues
- Encourage followers to become informed and vote
- Create and share media on the issues that matter to you

Don't:

- Show approval or disapproval for candidates directly or indirectly on social media
- Share or retweet candidate posts
- Share media from partisan sources

Quick Tips for Forums and Candidate Events

Do:

- Invite as many candidates as possible (at least two) to participate
- Use a nonpartisan individual as a moderator for discussion who will ask a wide range of questions
- Allow media to record and share feeds of these events

Don't:

- Ask one candidate more questions than another or give candidates unequal time to respond
- Distribute candidates' literature or campaign materials

4. What role can individuals play during campaign seasons?

Individuals are not held to the same regulations as the nonprofits they may be affiliated with, and have the freedom and opportunity to interact directly with candidates. However, as employees or board members of a nonprofit, there are still considerations you should keep in mind as you engage in electoral advocacy.

Recommendations for individuals associated with nonprofit organizations

Do:

- Talk with candidates during door-to-door campaigning
- Ask a question at a town hall or forum event
- Connect with candidates to learn about their policy platform
- VOTE!

Don't:

- Use personal social media accounts during the work day or on company computers to discuss the election
- Connect personal political opinions to your nonprofit in public or online

The simplest way to avoid 501(c)(3) violations is to ask yourself one question: **Could anyone potentially mistake this post as a position of my organization rather than my own personal beliefs?**

Conclusion

We hope that this brief guide will help you and your organization confidently navigate the electoral regulations and empower you to engage in electoral advocacy. For additional resources or information on child well-being in Virginia, we encourage you to check out Voices' website (vakids.org) or email us at info@vakids.org.

Go out and add your *Voice* to the 2017 Virginia Elections!

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