



VOTER GUIDE

for Children's Environmental Health

How Americans can protect kids' health
and their environments in the
2026 elections



YOUR VOTE MATTERS



All children deserve clean air and water, safe food, toys and products, stable climates, and healthy environments in which to live, learn, play, and work.

There is an intensifying federal spotlight on children's chronic illnesses, including the contributing role of environmental hazards. We must meet this increased attention with evidence-based solutions.

The 2026 elections offer an opportunity to reset our national, state, and local priorities in support of science, public health, and a robust federal workforce to protect children's environmental health.

Children cannot vote, but YOU can.

We need political leaders at all levels of government who put the health of children, their future, and their families **FIRST**.
When children thrive, we all thrive.

As you go to the polls, think about the following 8 issues and consider where each candidate stands. These issues are to also encourage campaigns to get their positions on record.





Vote for

DEMOCRACY



Our country was founded on democratic ideals. The expansion of these ideals and rights to all citizens is ongoing, and vigilance is needed to preserve and build upon this progress.

Additionally, we must uphold our constitutional concepts of Federalism and Separation of Powers to prevent a slide from democracy into tyranny.



Vote for candidates who:

- Support voter protections
- Uphold the constitutional checks and balances on power
- Represent, engage, and uplift civil society
- Aim to make government actions and processes more transparent



Vote for **CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND EQUITY**

Children experience higher rates of poverty than adults in the United States and often need greater support to access health care, as nearly half of all children rely on Medicaid. Children's health is also shaped by the conditions in which they live, learn, and play.

This includes access to affordable housing, quality child care, safe communities, essential resources, and access to green and blue spaces. Black, brown, and Indigenous children and those living in under-resourced communities face the greatest barriers to access these healthy living conditions due to longstanding inequities.

Vote for candidates who:

- Support health coverage and access and delivery of quality health care for all children
- Support policies and programs that promote equity by addressing poverty and systemic racism
- Ensure that communities have a leading voice in decisions that impact their health, their environment, and their quality of life
- Support access to safe and healthy, high quality, affordable housing, child care, and schools for all children
- Support policies that promote walkable communities and safe green and blue spaces, including parks, recreational areas, and clean waterways



Vote for **CLIMATE ACTION**

Children are especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. Those most at risk include children of color, those living in poverty, those with pre-existing illness or disability, infants, and pregnant women.

Vote for candidates who:

- Acknowledge that climate change is a threat to public health
- Support policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Prioritize community-led mitigation and adaptation plans
- Support clean energy alternatives and a just transition away from coal, oil, natural gas, and waste and biomass incineration
- Support policies to build equitable, prepared, climate-resilient communities
- Support policies and investments in community-led mental wellness programs and services





Vote for **CLEAN AIR**

Approximately 35 million children in the U.S. live in counties with unhealthy levels of air pollution. Of these children, approximately 2.5 million have asthma.

Vote for candidates who:

- Support strong and equitable clean air policies and regulations, including those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and criteria and hazardous air pollutants
- Support active transportation policies and promote cleaner cars, trucks, planes, trains, and ships
- Support expanded monitoring, especially in communities nearest to polluting industries or high-traffic roadways, and support strict enforcement of standards




Vote for **CLEAN WATER**

Many children in the U.S. drink contaminated water, whether from public systems or private wells. Contaminants may include disease-causing bacteria such as E. coli, neurotoxic metals such as lead, and carcinogens such as PFAS (“forever chemicals”).

Vote for candidates who:

- Restore and support policies that ensure clean water for all
- Support equitable investment in state and local infrastructure, including accelerated full lead service line replacements
- Support testing and reporting standards for privately owned water sources
- Support maintaining—not reducing—EPA's protective jurisdiction over water bodies such as wetlands under the Clean Water Act





Vote for **TOXICS-FREE ENVIRONMENTS AND PRODUCTS**



Children in the U.S. are exposed to thousands of chemicals every day through food, drinking water, air pollution, building materials, furnishings, and consumer products. Of the over 86,000 chemicals in use in the U.S., many can be found in toys and everyday products, and most are untested for safety.

Pesticides and toxic chemicals such as PFAS (“forever chemicals”), volatile organic compounds, and phthalates, are associated with a number of children’s health concerns, including childhood cancer which has increased by 41% since the 1970s.



Vote for candidates who:

- Support full and transparent implementation and enforcement of the 2016 updates to chemical safety policy, towards a toxic-free economy
- Support state and federal bans on toxic pesticides and the non-essential use of PFAS
- Prioritize an end to lead poisoning by eliminating lead exposure via paint, pipes, food, and products
- Support the reduction of plastics and petrochemical production and use



Vote for **SAFER INDUSTRY PRACTICES**

U.S. production and technological advancements should not come at the expense of the well-being of children and their families. Corporations with large industrial bases or technological data centers must minimize their hazardous emissions, resource consumption, and carbon footprint to reduce risk to the environment and to communities.

Polluting and extractive industries are often sited in rural areas and areas of lower wealth and communities of color. The children and their families in these communities pay with their health.

Vote for candidates who:

- Uphold robust and transparent—not accelerated—environmental permitting programs and corresponding environmental statutes
- Uphold enforcement and compliance with standards and processes to prioritize protection of public health and the environment
- Support expeditious clean up of hazardous waste sites to standards established to best protect children’s health
- Support zoning and planning practices that reduce risks from siting housing, schools, and other facilities serving children near hazardous sites.



Vote for SCIENCE

Protecting children's health requires a foundation built on and continuously informed by rigorous research findings, and the courage to act on them. To achieve this, we must sustain and strengthen our nation's scientific infrastructure and capacity. Cutting federal research programs, freezing grants, silencing or dismissing scientists, and undermining public trust in established science endangers children's health.



Vote for candidates who:

- Support objective scientific research in children's environmental health, climate change and health, and health disparities
- Support policies and regulations grounded in sound scientific research
- Support federal scientific integrity in conducting, managing, using, and communicating science
- Reject corporate capture and industry-funded research's influence on policy
- Support making scientific information more accessible to the public
- Support K-12 and beyond science education



Vote for CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Together we can build a healthier, brighter future for every child. Showing up at the polls is an important tool in our toolbox for children's environmental health. Learn how to put this guide into practice and assess the candidates on your ballot at cehn.org/Vote4Kids.

Help us improve: Provide feedback on the Voter Guide and Companion Toolkit in [this two-minute survey.](#)



For nearly 35 years, the Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) - a national multi-disciplinary organization - has been working to protect all children from environmental health hazards and promote a healthier environment and stable climates.

Share how you're voting to protect kids' health:

#Vote4Kids #ChildrenAtTheCenter

