



COMPANION TOOLKIT

for the Voter Guide for Children's Environmental Health

Put the 2026 Vote Guide into action with practical, step-by-step guidance to help you evaluate candidates' records, policy positions, and commitments.



YOUR VOTE MATTERS



Help build a better future by exercising your right to vote and prioritizing a #Vote4Kids.

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.

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.

The 2026 Voter Guide for Children's Environmental Health outlines eight core issue areas critical to protecting children’s environmental health. This companion toolkit provides practical, step-by-step guidance to help you evaluate candidates’ records, policy positions, and commitments.



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Looking for the Voter Guide? Get it at cehn.org/vote4kids.



Before you begin GET READY TO VOTE



Step 1 - Confirm Your Eligibility

In most states, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen
- Meet your state's residency requirements
- Be at least 18 years old by Election Day (although some states allow 16 and 17 year olds to preregister)

Eligibility rules, including those related to felony convictions, vary by state. Always verify requirements through your state's official election office.



Step 2 - Register to Vote

It is possible to register to vote in person or via mail, but the fastest way is online. Because registration deadlines vary by state and processing times can differ, it is important to register as early as possible before missing your opportunity to vote.

- **Register Online:** Visit [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov), click 'select your state or territory to begin,' and follow the instructions on the website to register.
- **Register In-Person:** If you would prefer to register in person, this can be done at your state or local election office, state motor vehicles office, or at many government public assistance offices.
- **Register By Mail:** If you would prefer to register via mail, visit [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov), select your state or territory, print off the necessary forms, fill them out completely, and mail them to your state election office.



Before you begin **GET READY TO VOTE**



Step 3 - Check Your Registration Status

After registering, confirm that your registration is active and accurate. You can verify your status through your state election website or by starting at [vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov).

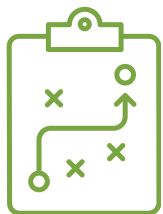


Step 4 - Know Your Deadlines and Voting Requirements

Each state sets its own:

- Voter registration deadline
- Early voting dates
- Mail ballot request deadlines
- Identification requirements

Check these details in advance to ensure you can exercise your right to vote. [U.S. Vote Foundation](https://www.vote.org) has a helpful tool for voting deadlines. [Ballotpedia](https://www.ballotpedia.org) keeps records on voter ID laws by state.



Step 5 - Make a Plan to Vote

- Confirm your polling location ([vote.org](https://www.vote.org) has a helpful resource)
- Decide whether to vote early, by mail, or on Election Day
- Review [CEHN's Voter Guide](#) and this Companion Toolkit





Step 1 IDENTIFY CANDIDATES

For each candidate you'd like to assess, print off an evaluation form (page 17) or [copy this Google Doc to customize](#). Use the following nonpartisan resources to learn who is running for each office.

- Ballotpedia.org
- Vote411.org
- Vote.gov



Step 2 EVALUATE CANDIDATES

As you review your candidates' records, policy positions, and commitments, evaluate them based on the considerations outlined in the [Voter Guide for Children's Environmental Health](#).

Check the back of this guide for a list of suggested research questions, sources, and search queries for each of the eight areas in the Voter Guide.

In this step, we'll:

- Review Voting Records
- Review Bills Sponsored or Cosponsored
- Review Public Statements and Policy Platforms
- Review Campaign Funding and Industry Ties



Step 2- Evaluate Your Candidates

Review Voting Records:

Voting history reveals how candidates act, not just what they say.

For U.S. Senate or House of Representatives candidates

Many policies relevant to children's environmental health are implemented under foundational federal environmental and public health laws, such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and Toxic Substances Control Act (just to name a few).

These laws, key funding, and public health regulations and guidance are administered by federal agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Food and Drug Administration.

When reviewing voting records, consider whether candidates have supported maintaining the authority and capacity of these agencies and whether they have voted to protect or weaken the implementation of foundational protections.

Use these sources to research federal candidate voting records:

- Congress.gov
- GovTrack
- League of Conservation Voters

Search using keywords from the Voter Guide, like PFAS, Clean Air, Clean Water, EPA, Climate, or Chemical Safety

What to look for:

- Votes on Clean Air Act protections
- Votes on Clean Water Act protections
- Votes on EPA funding
- Votes related to PFAS regulation
- Votes on chemical safety reforms
- Votes on climate legislation
- Votes affecting scientific funding
- Committee Assignments

✓ Step 2- Evaluate Your Candidates

For state legislators

Start with your state legislature website and either visit the candidate's page or search the site using keywords from the Voter Guide, like PFAS, Clean Air, Clean Water, EPA, Climate, or Chemical Safety.

Find your state legislature website:

- Go to [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)
- Look under "Other Resources"
- Click "State Resource"

For local candidates

Check minutes from the meetings local candidates are a part of, like:

- Town or City Council
- County Board of Supervisors
- School Board
- Soil and Water Conservation District

These can often be found on town, city, or county websites or social media. You can also call your local government offices to ask where to find these public records.



✓ Step 2- Evaluate Your Candidates

Review Bills Sponsored or Cosponsored

Deciding to sponsor or cosponsor bills signals policy priorities.

U.S. Senate or House of Representatives candidates

On Congress.gov

- Locate the dropdown with “Current Congress” label
- Select “Members”
- Search candidate name
- Select candidate profile
- Click “Cosponsored Legislation”
- Locate “Subject – Policy Area” dropdown on the left of the screen
- Select relevant tags (ex: Health, Environmental Protection, Energy, Public Lands and Natural Resources)

Ask:

- Has the candidate introduced legislation to protect children’s health?
- Have they supported bills weakening environmental standards?
- Do they support funding for regulatory enforcement?



✓ Step 2- Evaluate Your Candidates

Review Public Statements and Policy Platforms

Campaign websites and official statements are a good way to see where your candidates stand on important issues.

Use these sources to research public statements and policy platforms:

- [Project Vote Smart](#)
- [Ballotpedia's Candidate Connection Survey](#).
- Trusted News Sources
- Candidate's official website
- Candidate's social media platforms

You can also search the web with queries like "[Candidate's name] climate change."

What to look for:

- Press releases
- Public speeches
- Policy platforms
- Candidate debates
- Interviews



Be sure to distinguish between general rhetoric and specific policy commitments.





✓ Step 2- Evaluate Your Candidates

Review Campaign Funding and Industry Ties

Campaign funding can provide insight into relationships with industry or advocacy groups.

Research using:

- OpenSecrets (Federal and state candidates)
- Federal Election Commission Campaign Finance Data (Federal and state candidates)
- Candidate's official website

Review

- Top industry donors
- Contributions from fossil fuel, chemical, or pesticide industries
- Contributions from public health or environmental groups

Ask: *Does campaign funding align with voting behavior?*

As you gather information

Prioritize:

- Official voting records
- Original legislative text
- Verified public statements
- Transparent financial data
- Comparisons of statements with voting records and sponsorship history

Be cautious of:

- Isolated quotes without context
- Third-party opinion blogs and op-eds
- Social media claims without citation
- Statements that conflict with voting history
- Funding sources heavily favoring regulated industries



Step 3

CREATE YOUR SAMPLE BALLOT

You've collected and synthesized a lot of information!

Use an online sample ballot tool, the template on page 18, or scrap paper to write a sample ballot you can take with you when you vote.

Voters are allowed to take sample ballot guides and campaign material with them into a voting booth.

Online sample Ballot Tools:

- [Ballotpedia's Sample Ballot Lookup](#)
- [Vote.org "What's On Your Ballot"](#)
- [Google Doc version of page 18](#)





ISSUE BY ISSUE RESEARCH GUIDE

Democracy & Governance

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported protections that expand access to voting, such as early voting or mail voting options?
- Have they supported requirements for transparency in government decision-making and regulatory processes?
- Has the candidate supported maintaining checks and balances that limit consolidation of executive power?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] voting rights”
- “[Candidate Name] election transparency”
- “[Candidate Name] executive power”

Children’s Health & Equity

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported policies that expand access to health coverage for children, such as Medicaid and CHIP funding?
- Has the candidate supported investments in affordable housing, child care, and schools in under-resourced communities?
- Have they supported funding for safe parks, walkable infrastructure, or access to green and blue spaces?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] Medicaid children”
- “[Candidate Name] affordable housing policy”
- “[Candidate Name] built environment”
- “[Candidate Name] parks funding infrastructure”





Issue by Issue Research Guide

Climate Action

Research Questions:

- Does the candidate acknowledge climate change as a public health threat?
- Has the candidate supported policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from major sources such as power plants or vehicles?
- Has the candidate supported investments in community climate resilience, such as extreme heat preparedness or disaster mitigation?
- Has the candidate supported expanding renewable energy or reducing reliance on fossil fuels?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] climate policy emissions”
- “[Candidate Name] renewable energy plan”
- “[Candidate Name] climate resilience funding”

EcoAmerica provides a user-friendly resource for evaluating candidates on climate-related issues. Find it [here](#).

Clean Air

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported strengthening limits on air pollution ?
- Has the candidate supported EPA’s authority to regulate emissions of air pollutants?
- Has the candidate supported expanding air quality monitoring in communities near major pollution sources?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] air pollution policy”
- “[Candidate Name] EPA air standards”
- “[Candidate Name] air monitoring communities”

Issue by Issue Research Guide

Clean Water

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported lead pipe replacement programs for community water systems?
- Have they supported setting health-protective limits for contaminants—such as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)—in drinking water?
- Have they backed expanding EPA oversight of U.S. water bodies?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] lead pipes water”
- “[Candidate Name] PFAS drinking water”
- “[Candidate Name] wetlands protection”

Toxic-Free Environments & Products

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported EPA expanded authority to evaluate the safety of new chemicals and new chemical uses?
- Has the candidate supported funding and capacity for the EPA to evaluate chemical safety under clear, enforceable deadlines?
- Has the candidate supported bans or restrictions on harmful pesticides?
- Has the candidate supported reducing production or use of plastics and petrochemicals?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] chemical safety EPA”
- “[Candidate Name] pesticide regulation”
- “[Candidate Name] lead exposure policy”
- “[Candidate Name] plastics policy”





Issue by Issue Research Guide

Safer Industry Practices

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported maintaining environmental review processes before major industrial projects are approved?
- Has the candidate supported enforcement of pollution controls for industrial facilities?
- Has the candidate supported cleanup of contaminated or hazardous waste sites?
- Has the candidate supported zoning policies that reduce exposure risks for schools and housing near industrial sites?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] environmental permitting”
- “[Candidate Name] hazardous waste cleanup”
- “[Candidate Name] industrial pollution enforcement”

Science & Scientific Integrity

Research Questions:

- Has the candidate supported funding for public health and environmental research?
- Has the candidate made efforts to protect scientific findings from political interference?
- Has the candidate opposed the politicization of science agencies?
- Has the candidate supported strengthening science education programs?
- Has the candidate supported making government scientific data publicly accessible?

Example Search Queries:

- “[Candidate Name] CDC/NIH funding”
- “[Candidate Name] scientific integrity”
- “[Candidate Name] public health research”



REFERENCES & LINKS

- [Ballotpedia](https://ballotpedia.org): Nonpartisan encyclopedia of candidates, elections, and policy positions (ballotpedia.org)
- [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov): Official database of federal legislation, voting records, and bill sponsorship (congress.gov)
- [ecoAmerica Climate Assessment Tool](https://ecoamerica.org/resources): Tool for evaluating candidates' climate-related positions and commitments (ecoamerica.org/resources)
- [Federal Election Commission](https://www.fec.gov/data): Independent government agency that shares how candidates and committees raise and spend money in federal elections. (fec.gov/data)
- [GovTrack](https://govtrack.us): User-friendly tracker of congressional activity, voting records, and bill summaries (govtrack.us)
- [Vote Smart](https://justfacts.votesmart.org): Nonpartisan database of candidate biographies, issue positions, and voting records; free account required (justfacts.votesmart.org)
- [OpenSecrets](https://www.opensecrets.org): Tracks campaign finance data, including donors, industries, and political spending (opensecrets.org)
- [League of Conservation Voters](https://www.lcv.org): Environmental scorecards showing how members of Congress vote on key environmental issues (lcv.org)
- [Vote411 by League of Women Voters](https://www.vote411.org): Nonpartisan voter guide with candidate comparisons, ballot information, and election details tailored to your location (vote411.org)
- [Vote.gov](https://www.vote.gov): official voting information from the U.S. government to the American public (vote.gov)



Candidate Evaluation Sheet

Candidate Name: _____

Running For: _____

Notes	Score
CEH Consideration: Democracy	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Children's Health & Equity	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Climate Action	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Clean Air	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Clean Water	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Toxics-Free Environments and Products	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Safer Industry Practices	
	☆☆☆☆☆
CEH Consideration: Science	
	☆☆☆☆☆



Sample Ballot & Checklist

Election Information

Election Date: _____

Primary?

State/ County / District: _____

Polling Location: _____

Voting Method: Early Voting Mail in Ballot Election Day Voting

Confirmed voter registration:

Confirmed necessary ID, paperwork, and items to bring:

Selected Candidate Information

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Step 3- Sample Ballot & Checklist

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

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Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____

Office: _____

Selected Candidate: _____

Notes: _____



Vote for CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Find more information and resources, including the 2026 Voter Guide for Children's Environmental Health 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

