



VOTE KIDS NEBRASKA

2018 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Developed by



About Vote Kids Nebraska

Children bring us together. Regardless of political affiliation, we all have high aspirations for future generations. Every one of us hopes that our children will grow into productive adults equipped to lead the nation. Whether we live in a liberal or conservative leaning district, we want to leave our children a future that energizes their potential.

Nebraska politicians should be held accountable in no small part for how well they advance these aspirations. However, many of us are not entirely clear on the state government's current role in growing opportunity of the next generation— let alone where candidates stand on the issues.

Child policy issues often receive little discussion within campaigns and elections— by voters, candidates, or the media. This is not because candidates and the public do not care about the issues. They do. But child policy issues often do not lend themselves to simple sound bites. They are not considered “hot button” issues that shape many campaigns. The result is that the pressing needs of Nebraska's children have not been the subject of the type of political discourse required to reach consensus and make meaningful changes.

The Vote Kids Nebraska project was developed to elevate that discourse. It is based on the belief that raising child policy to greater prominence in elections is a way to re-orient our political process towards common concerns and practical solutions.

There is no such thing as “benign neglect” of children and their future. This project offers a starting point for bringing children's issues to the forefront of discussions during the 2018 elections. Through Vote Kids Nebraska, you will find survey results from our Nebraska legislative and gubernatorial candidates. These surveys aim to help cut through the confusion and allow voters to learn more about politicians, their priorities, and the policy decisions they make on behalf of children.

About Voices for Children in Nebraska

Voices for Children in Nebraska is the independent voice building pathways to opportunity for all children and families through research, policy and community engagement.

Voices for Children in Nebraska is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization. We do not endorse or oppose candidates. We understand that candidates should be judged on a variety of qualifications beyond the questions in this guide but use this questionnaire to educate the public about candidates' positions regarding children's issues.

Voices for Children in Nebraska

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Gubernatorial Candidates

Governor Pete Ricketts declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities as Governor (not limited to children's issues)?

State Senator Bob Krist

1. As Governor, I intend to make property tax reform a top priority, and the best way to provide real property tax reform is to properly fund public education at the state level.
2. I want to make sure health care is a priority. I support Initiative 427 for Medicaid Expansion and will work to implement it as Governor. I will restore funding for developmental disabilities from the cuts implemented by this Governor. And I will not join in any lawsuit that seeks to remove protections for preexisting conditions.
3. Our corrections system is in crisis. It is dangerously overcrowded, and corrections employees are overworked, underpaid, and facing record turnover. There have been more incidents of violence, deaths, and riotous activities in the past four years than in the last thirty years. I will declare an emergency and work swiftly to address this problem.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

State Senator Bob Krist

Yes, I believe we need to increase eligibility levels. Recently, the Legislature froze child care subsidy rates, and I worked with other senators to stop those cuts from going further. But we must do more to help working families. We cannot allow the high cost of child care to prevent people from being able to work and raise a family at the same time.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

State Senator Bob Krist

I have been a champion for juvenile justice reform throughout my ten years in the Nebraska Legislature. We need to provide more alternatives to jail and detention for youth, both to decrease recidivism and ease the burden on our already crowded adult prisons down the line.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

State Senator Bob Krist

The state needs to remove barriers to opportunity. There is no one easy solution because there is not one simple cause to poverty, which can be generational, systemic, or a product of circumstance. Government cannot do everything, but it can do some things. One example is the Medicaid expansion ballot initiative which will provide health care for those up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level. Health care is one of the biggest expenses for any family so alleviating that cost can provide some measure of relief.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an

increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

State Senator Bob Krist

Nebraska can find many ways to address the barriers to opportunity for children of color. From mentorship programs, recruiting diverse teachers, and investing in ESL classes, to name a few, the key will be a commitment at the state level to follow through and not just pay lip service to removing barriers. All children deserve a quality education and high quality of life in our state, regardless of their race or background.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the executive branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

State Senator Bob Krist

The executive branch should be taking its responsibility for child welfare seriously. Unfortunately, in recent years it has not. Not simply in regards to funding but in oversight and accountability as well. The harrowing reports of abuse and neglect and even death in the child welfare system are a stain on Nebraska. As Governor, I will give my HHS director the authority and resources he or she needs to reform the child welfare division.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

State Senator Bob Krist

I supported Sen. Vargas' bill to regulate the payday lending industry last session. While I am hopeful that the new law will crack down on some of the most predatory practices of the industry, it is likely that more must be done to curb the abuses. I am willing to work with the Legislature to find solutions on this issue.

Legislative Candidates – District 02

Senator Robert Clements declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Susan Lorence

- 1) Equitable tax changes – lowering the tax burden on middle class families and addressing high agricultural property taxes.
- 2) Increasing state support for public education – providing support for early childhood education through higher education and alleviating some of the burden on local communities, especially in rural NE.
- 3) Ensuring access to health care, especially in rural communities and other underserved populations.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Susan Lorence

I would not want to increase the eligibility levels for child care assistance for working families. An increase may cause some families to move from a high quality child care provider to a lower quality child care. It might cause parents to not pursue job training or additional schooling due to the increased cost of child care. We want to continue to support these families in their employment efforts. In addition, lower income families have income levels that may deviate more - possibly due to fluctuating overtime or seasonal work, etc. The goal is to reduce poverty and to support more families moving to the middle class.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Susan Lorence

We should insure there is additional support to keep at risk juveniles in school, possibly considering providing screening, tutoring and/or support through a connection with non-profits focusing on at-risk youth. We should consider "best practices" and current research with the intent to insure minors have the best shot at staying out of the adult court system.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Susan Lorence

At this time, I don't have enough knowledge on this issue but some areas I would consider are supporting small business/startups which are job creators and which provide job opportunities for a local economy to thrive, raising the minimum wage so parents have a fair income to support a family, and insuring access to affordable healthcare so parents and children have preventive medical care thus bettering the chances of parents to provide an income for their family and for children to remain in school.

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Susan Lorence

I will work to find the detailed analysis and data to support what state government should consider to rectify disadvantages in the areas of access to education, health care and employment.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Susan Lorence

Our legislative branch needs to be proactive on the auditor's findings and recommendations to establish appropriate policy and implement procedures to insure we receive the federal matching funds that are due our state.

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Susan Lorence

Pay day lending tends to target workers/consumers that are vulnerable, especially lower income families that tend to live more from pay check to pay check with no rainy- day cushion. The Legislature should continue to consider and should implement regulations that do not allow consumers to be taken advantage of by unfair lending practices or false advertising that may lead into "debt traps".

Legislative Candidates – District 04

Senator Robert Hilkemann declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Shannon Coryell

Healthcare, education and criminal justice reform

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Shannon Coryell

Yes. Everything costs more these days so families that may not have struggled before are struggling now.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Shannon Coryell

More diversion programs along with counseling. I am opposed to mandatory minimums and solitary confinement for children.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Shannon Coryell

Raising minimum wage, access to healthcare, access to affordable and quality childcare and better school funding.

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Shannon Coryell

Improve the schools in lower income neighborhoods, create jobs and programs to promote continued education.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Shannon Coryell

Change that. Utilize all resources so that every child in Nebraska has access to a quality education.

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affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Shannon Coryell

Enforce regulations on predatory lending

Legislative Candidates – District 06

Senator Theresa Thibodeau declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Machaela Cavanaugh

1. Paid Family Leave
2. Increased state investment in public education
3. Increasing access to high quality health care for all Nebraskans

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Machaela Cavanaugh

Yes. Increasing eligibility levels will keep more parents in the workforce and help families access quality childcare for their children. This also provides an increase in financial solvency for families, which research shows improves the emotional state of parents and children.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Machaela Cavanaugh

I would propose policies that increase community-based resources. Helping families deal with issues before kids are system-involved, provide a path to divert kids from court involvement, and avoid out of home placement.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Machaela Cavanaugh

The state can work to address children living in poverty through increased minimum wages, paid family leave, and decreasing the cost of health care for families.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Machaela Cavanaugh

Increasing access to childcare, education, healthcare and jobs for children and families of color is essential for working towards closing the opportunity gap. A concerted effort to expand public transportation in urban areas and affordable housing across Nebraska are areas I would like to work on for all populations, but especially for those falling in the opportunity gap.

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Machaela Cavanaugh

I would look to the HHS committee to explore the possibility of having a dedicated state employee focused on apply for state federal funds. Nebraska received 48 million fewer dollars for TANF in 2014 than Iowa. Funds that directly impact the financial well-being of low-income families should be actively sought.

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Machaela Cavanaugh

Payday lending is a predatory practice and I would support any legislation that would curtail APR.

Legislative Candidates – District 08

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Megan Hunt

Support for small businesses, improving outcomes for public school kids, and increasing access to affordable healthcare.

Mina Davis

I want to ensure economic equity for all, I want to work to increase the opportunity in which others are able to be gainfully employed along with incentivize new and innovative industries and last I want to be able to address the great amounts of segregation that is still lingering from redlining policies in the 1970s.

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Megan Hunt

Early childhood education and high-quality early childhood care is integral to building a foundation for a successful future for all children. Keeping our promises to fund these programs and finding ways to increase the value of these programs without diminishing the value to taxpayers is important to me. I understand how important it is to empower parents with affordable childcare so they can provide for their kids, helping to break the cycle of poverty that harms our economy and, in the long run, diminishes the quality of life for all Nebraskans. I absolutely support increasing eligibility levels for working families so that working families in Nebraska have the support they need to be successful.

Mina Davis

We need to increase the eligibility levels since the costs of living have risen and the wages have remained stagnant.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Megan Hunt

In the Legislature, I will fight to make sure that kids have the right to an attorney. I was a big supporter of LB894 in 2016, and I believe that strict adherence to and implementation of that law is critical as we move forward with support for youth. We also need to continue to address school truancy and provide real solutions that address the reality of the school-to-prison pipeline. We need to provide better mental health treatment and support services for kids who have been affected by poverty, trauma, neglect, and who struggle with learning disabilities. I also believe we need to ensure that kids who are in juvenile detention centers are receiving high quality educational opportunities so they aren't behind their peers when they return to school and are able to transition as easily as possible.

I also ask myself, how do I as a white woman, who has never experienced the system, begin to know what the needs are of those who are system involved if we aren't listening and developing programming with families and youth at the table?

We need families to have access and participation in the system, because we can't address how the system affects youth without addressing how the system affects families and communities as a whole. The prison

industrial complex interacts with these families as early as preschool, and this causes systemic problems that hold back entire communities. People who have been formerly incarcerated and people who are system-involved have told me about changes that would mean the most to them, including community healing initiatives like healing circles, family transportation to and from meetings, and reunification programming for youth after they are released. The hard answer is that we need to work with families to get this answer. We can't keep prescribing solutions to our challenges with the justice system without including the voices of those affected, of those who have been involved in the system.

Mina Davis

I would like more to be put into rehabilitative/preventative programs that provide a support system that seeks to remove one or more factors that can cause one to enter the prison system again. By providing stability and ways to have a support system beyond the facility, I believe we can help others on the right path (along the lines of YES - Youth Emergency Services).

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Megan Hunt

There are a number of policy changes we can make to alleviate poverty, especially for children, that range in impact from short-term to long-term. Changes we could make that would help immediately include increasing and expanding income eligibility for SNAP benefits, expanding Medicaid and expanding eligibility of enrollment for children which would decrease out of pocket costs for parents. I also support policies with a longer-term impact which include increased technical training and affordable education opportunities for parents, child care subsidies, family medical leave, and automatic cost of living adjustments to income tax brackets.

Mina Davis

We need to ensure their parents have access to the services necessary that makes sure there is enough food at home, there is enough income being earned and that they are getting the resources needed to have a productive day at school. By having a support system for the parents, the children can do well even if not all the pieces are together.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Megan Hunt

I want Nebraska to address racism and prejudice in our schools and criminal justice system through faculty training programs and systems for accountability from administrators. All Nebraska children need equitable access to a high quality public education that prepares them to thrive. Schools and communities need to address the whole child, which includes the physical, developmental, behavioral, and mental health of children. Besides support and accountability in our schools and in our justice system, I am inclined to listen to the people and communities most affected by inequality to learn how the Legislature can work better for them. A few of the biggest priorities that have been shared with me, priorities that I also share, include the following:

1. Keeping our promise as a state to fund early childhood education and early childhood care, and finding ways to increase the value of these programs without increasing taxes on the people these programs serve
2. Keeping public dollars in the public education system where it is most needed to improve schools that serve all children, regardless of who they are, what neighborhood they come from, and what their parents' income is
3. Taking the first steps to begin reconciling our failed war on drugs and its negative effects on communities of color by legalizing medical and recreational marijuana, and by allowing people with marijuana convictions to

clear or modify their records

4. Supporting our newest neighbors in the immigrant and refugee community

Mina Davis

The first thing we must do is keep on talking about the problem. Not enough policy makers I have seen are making meaningful strides towards solving this issue. We need to continue to question what the root causes of this inequity is and work towards creating a long term solution that seeks to create more opportunities for these children.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Megan Hunt

If our state is not taking full advantage of federal matching funds, then that's also a failure of the Legislature to demand transparency and accountability. I look forward to joining a team in the Legislature to help strengthen oversight and make sure that agencies responsible for child welfare are keeping up with their commitments to Nebraska's youth. I support holding people responsible for accounting and funding errors so we can stabilize the funding and services for children. I will support the work of other legislators who are working to do that.

Mina Davis

We need to ask why this is continually happening. What measures are preventing the state from utilizing this funding to the fullest must be questioned. Whether its through a study or other legislative means, we must use everything we have available especially as we are experiencing a budget shortfall.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Megan Hunt

Working class and low-income families are most affected by predatory lenders, which is why I have supported Senator Tony Vargas's work to hold payday lenders accountable in Nebraska. We need to make sure people are able to get small loans while protecting consumers and regulating lenders. We should also look to create a payday lending database to enforce loan limits across lenders, increase community financial literacy programming, and work with banks to increase availability of small loans from reliable lenders.

Mina Davis

We need to continue to fight payday lenders that are predatory and seek to create microlending opportunities, work on financial literacy programs and also lower the interest rates in Nebraska.

Legislative Candidates – District 10

Matt Deaver declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Wendy DeBoer

- 1) Making sure we have high quality public education available to all students throughout our state.
- 2) Lower property taxes by increasing state aid to education and balancing education's revenue streams in Nebraska.
- 3) Bringing jobs to Nebraska with wages you can support a family on.

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Wendy DeBoer

Yes, I support programs that allow Nebraskan families to work. Nebraskans work hard and assisting them with childcare allows them to contribute to our economy and provide for their families.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Wendy DeBoer

I would support policies that rehabilitate kids and keep them safely at home. In order to propose specific legislation, I would want to consult with those are experts in the field of juvenile justice.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Wendy DeBoer

In order to address the issue of children living in poverty, we need to address poverty in general. The Legislature can help bring better paying jobs to Nebraska and increase programs for on-the-job training and adult education.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Wendy DeBoer

I believe education is one way we can address this issue. I will work to ensure that ALL children in Nebraska have access to the education they need to succeed in life.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Wendy DeBoer

Because Nebraskans' federal taxes are already paying for these services, the Nebraska Legislature should work to bring that money back to our economy and take care of our kids.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Wendy DeBoer

The Legislature needs to work to determine a reasonable loan rate that balances the needs of the industry and stops the cycle of consumers borrowing money without being able to pay back their loans.

Legislative Candidates – District 12

Senator Merv Riepe and Steve Lathrop both declined to participate.

Legislative Candidates – District 14

John Arch declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Jeff Parris

1. Public Education - we need to ensure that we increase the state level funding of our public education. We need to insure that all school districts have the same equipment and facilities and that these are not limited in poorer districts.
2. Mental health - We need to insure that we greatly increase the funding for mental healthcare. Funding for mental healthcare had been decimated in Nebraska and I believe it relates to so many other issues facing our state. The corrections system should not be used as the facility to treat and store those with mental health issues, especially when we are doing nothing for those in the corrections system when it relates to mental health. This relates to my push for affordable healthcare for all, but affordable healthcare needs to include affordable mental healthcare.
3. Equal rights for all. There are many different people that do not have the same rights and protections as others in our communities in Nebraska. This relates to our Nebraskans who identify as LGBTQIA+ and many of our Nebraskans from minority communities. There are many programs in this state that are helping our non-minority communities more than our minority communities and I want each and every person to have the same rights and opportunities to succeed in Nebraska.

If we do better on these three issues, I believe we will have a more prosperous Nebraska and more of our younger adults will stay in Nebraska and contribute to our economy.

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Jeff Parris

Yes, I strongly believe we should increase the eligibility levels for working families for the child care assistance programs. I also strongly believe this program should benefit those parents that would like to attend formal post-secondary education or training programs so they can eventually increase the livelihood of their family. Any program that can help people afford child care so they can work and support their family or attend training / formal education so they can get a better job to support their family will eventually create a more prosperous Nebraska with a strongly economy. It is the long economic outlook instead of the short year or two year only look. Sometimes greater investment in a program hurts in the short term but over the long term costs the state less money.

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Jeff Parris

As stated earlier, I believe strong investment in mental healthcare programs in communities would help keep many of our youth out of the juvenile justice system. I also believe investment in community recreation centers with paid positions for more mentors for children would help more children have programs that would help increase the opportunities for children to succeed in their early years. Also, more investment in community outreach programs for our police and sheriff departments. Community based outreach would have our police and our

local communities working together to build trust and build better communities and I believe this would keep more children on a successful path. These programs will help keep children from getting in trouble with the law, but once a child or minor is in trouble with the law, we need incentive programs that could get these minors into community based rehabilitation. Hours spent cleaning parks, painting buildings, helping elderly with their homes are programs that could be supervised rehabilitation programs that would keep minors out of facilities and would improve communities at the same time.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Jeff Parris

We need investment into the communities where the majority of these children are living in poverty. We need affordable healthcare programs that include mental healthcare. We need increases in the minimum wages so disadvantaged families will make a better rate for the hours they are working. We need strong investment in our public education that needs to include community college and training programs that will make it possible for disadvantaged families have a chance to improve their economic status instead of only having the possibility of working minimum wage jobs for the rest of their lives. We need technical training skills programs in community centers that would teach youth a trade that they could then apply to get into one of the skilled labor apprenticeship programs of a labor union. We need to give as many opportunities as possible for those in disadvantaged areas the possibilities to claw their way out of poverty. if we increase funding in these programs, we will eventually have a more prosperous Nebraska that will not need as many "welfare" type programs, but that doesn't mean we ever get rid of them.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Jeff Parris

The best way to insure that each and every child has the same opportunities is to invest in communities that have the fewest advantages and opportunities at the current moment. I fully believe that our vast diversity is what makes our country great, but we need to start showing that we value people of color in this country, because in many areas we are not showing it. Not every child has the same opportunities because we place too heavy of a burden on the local community to fund our education programs. All districts need the same access to the same equipment and facilities and have access to the most highly qualified educators. Nebraska is 49th when it comes to state level funding of education and this needs to change. We need greater investment in education and we need greater investment in communities that have been ignored for far too long.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Jeff Parris

I can not understand for a moment why our state keeps turning away money from the federal government. Programs like medicaid expansion are programs that Nebraskans pay money into through taxes. Right now, our taxes are going to other states. That does not make any sense to me at all. If there are federal funds that could be brought into Nebraska, then Nebraska needs to do everything it can to get this money coming into our state. If they state needs to change a practice to accept this money, then change the practice and this should happen each and every time. The legislature needs to fight our executive branch each and every time this branch fails to bring in federal funding that would help people in our state. If our legislators do not feel that way, then they are going to come with me to the most disadvantaged areas of our state and they are going to look people in the

eye and tell them why they do not care about them. Each and every person in our state needs the same opportunities to prosper and this will create an atmosphere in Nebraska that will see our state prosper.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Jeff Parris

Predatory payday loan centers need to be strongly regulated. Predatory interest rates need to be outlawed. I do not want to close all centers, but any center that charges a percentage rate in the "predatory" range, needs to be fined. These centers attack our disadvantaged areas and create a cycle of continual use. All loan rates should have a cap of a "reasonable" rate for the center to make money. This step alone in Nebraska and our country would be a step in the right direction to finally help our disadvantaged areas. I am willing to present legislation on this topic my first day in the Legislature. (I know we don't do that). But the cycle of abuse by these centers needs to be stopped and I am sick of their lobby having more control over legislation than programs put into place that would help our communities.

Legislative Candidates – District 16

Ben Hansen declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Chuck Hassebrook

1. School Funding and Property Taxes
2. Early Childhood Education
3. Rural development through small business and value added agriculture.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Chuck Hassebrook

I support increasing the eligibility level. Nebraska has many working poor who cannot afford quality child care or any child care in some circumstances. Those who do qualify now must avoid opportunities to modestly increase their earnings because they would lose more in child care benefits than they gain in income.

We need a long term strategy to ensure all families have access to high quality, affordable child care. In addition to raising eligibility limits, that could involve assistance to day care providers to elevate educational content and refundable tax credits for low-moderate income workers who do not qualify for the child care subsidy program. Perhaps such a policy could include a senior volunteer program where senior volunteers assist day care providers in holding, encouraging and reading to kids.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Chuck Hassebrook

I support the above mentioned reforms, especially keeping youths who do not pose a risk out of prison and investing in community based resources to work with families to get kids on the right track. The best approach in the long term is to invest in early childhood education, including high quality day care, to help young people get started right. Those who start school behind and thus fail academically are at highest risk for getting in trouble with the law as they enter their preteen and teen years.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Chuck Hassebrook

Expand Medicaid, periodically raise the minimum wage, improve access to technical and career education to enable low income parents to increase earnings and provide microenterprise development services to low-moderate income families.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Chuck Hassebrook

Children of color often reside in communities with high concentrations of poverty. In such settings, mentoring can be especially helpful by providing positive role models. We should also make a particular effort to extend low income assistance programs to such communities.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Chuck Hassebrook

The Legislature needs to hold oversight hearings on child welfare and then draw public attention to short comings. If the Executive Branch continues to fail to draw down matching funds, I would support reform legislation to correct that failure. I would use the Inspector General of Child Welfare recommendations as my guide. The legislature should also ensure that periodic audits are performed to bring any deficiencies to light.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Chuck Hassebrook

The state should put tighter restrictions on the interest rates charged on payday loans as was considered in the last legislature.

Legislative Candidates – District 18

Senator Brett Lindstrom declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Scott Winkler

Property tax reform; Education (K-12 and higher ed); Health care

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Scott Winkler

Yes - Nebraska has one of the lowest eligibility levels in the country. I believe we rank about 42nd and only includes incomes at 120% of poverty level. I would support an increase in eligibility levels so more families could access this crucial subsidy.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Scott Winkler

Recent reforms are a step in the right direction. I think it is important to invest in the economic futures of our youth to provide them a clear path to success. Such investments might include improved outcomes for reading and math and expanded vocational training - and early exposure to vocational opportunities. Youth who feel equipped for a prosperous future are less likely to become involved in crime.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Scott Winkler

Any number of children living in poverty in this state is too high. It should be our goal to reduce this number as quickly as possible. One-time or recurring unconditional cash transfers have proven to be significantly more successful than conditional cash transfers and provide greater independence for families. Affordable and accessible health care, good job opportunities, regulation of payday loans and efficient use of federal funds can all contribute to decreasing the number of children living in poverty.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Scott Winkler

I think we can invest in evidence-based interventions such as early childhood education, school nutrition and before and after-school programming. We should ensure that school districts with high numbers of children of color have adequate resources to serve those children. We can support teachers of color to enter and stay in the profession as they represent needed role models.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Scott Winkler

There is no reason to say no to available federal funds that can assist our children and families. Adequate oversight must exist at the state level to make sure we properly receive those funds. The Legislature can direct DHHS to claim all eligible activities under Title IV-E reimbursements, rather than general state funds. The expansion of Medicaid would also increase the available resources to support child welfare.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Scott Winkler

I think the state should address regulation of this industry. It often preys upon our society's most vulnerable citizens. Possible state actions could include requirements for lenders to demonstrate a client's ability to repay loans (banks and credit unions already do so), cap the number of back-to-back loans they can offer a client who can't afford immediate payback and review and perhaps reduce annual percentage loan rates.

Legislative Candidates – District 20

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children’s issues)?

Senator John McCollister

- a. The shrinking middle class is a major problem. The problem can be somewhat mitigated by proven ways to help the working poor. Research suggests that expanding Medicaid, increasing the income eligibility for SNAP benefits and helping working mothers with childcare are proven options to alleviate the harmful effects of declining real incomes and poverty. Expanding the earned income tax credit should be another consideration.
- b. Criminal justice is priority for me. Sentencing reform to put non-violent offenders in less expensive settings other than prison is absolutely necessary. This approach has worked in other states (even Texas) and actually saves money.
- c. Renewable energy is also important to me. Global warming is real; we must reduce carbon emissions and CO2 build-up or live to regret it. My legislative history is testament to my concern.

Jackie Collett

1. To provide equitable, quality education to every child in Nebraska.
2. To provide quality, affordable healthcare to all Nebraskans.
3. To modernize our tax structure with an immediate focus on alleviating our over-reliance on property taxes to fund education.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Senator John McCollister

I absolutely agree. Income limits should be increased so more parents can obtain childcare benefits. The “cliff effect”, like climate change, is real. If more childcare benefits are provided, more mothers and fathers will have the opportunity to work. Unlike the time of my childhood, it often takes dual incomes to provide for family security.

Jackie Collett

Yes, I do believe we need to increase the eligibility level for working families. Real wages for working Nebraskans remain flat while childcare costs continue to soar. Low income parents and families depend on child care to provide the opportunity to work and learn new skills to lift themselves out of poverty. We should be doing everything we can to help these parents and children.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don’t pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Senator John McCollister

Research shows that existence of strong pre-K education programs, utilization of SNAP benefits and effective vocational programs in middle school and high school could be the next positive steps that should be offered in the juvenile justice system. With unemployment at historic lows, jobs go begging for qualified workers.

Jackie Collett

While I feel these reforms are good, they are all reactive measures. This doesn’t make them wrong. It just makes them less effective than a preventative approach. There is plenty of evidence that shows a strong correlation

between criminal activity and a lack of early-childhood education and exposure to lead. I would focus efforts on providing tuition-free universal pre-K and ensuring children aren't exposed to lead-based paint and tainted water. These efforts will provide more equal opportunity for every Nebraska child.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Senator John McCollister

As mentioned before, expanding Medicaid and increasing family income limits for SNAP benefits will reduce the percentage of children living in poverty. Other ideas include widening the current use of vocational guidance by the state in conjunction with SNAP, a program which has proven to provide positive outcomes to the working poor.

Jackie Collett

I support a statewide jobs program to ensure a job with a living wage to every Nebraskan who wants one. The state should provide training and jobs to fill potholes and other infrastructure needs and provide child and eldercare. Providing a living wage for these jobs will also cause private sector wage increases to retain their employees. Why work part time at Walmart for \$9.00 per hour when you can work full time and earn benefits working for the government? This jobs program would dramatically reduce poverty and provide stability for Nebraska children.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Senator John McCollister

It's a given that persons of color have greater rates of poverty, hence it's not surprising that fewer positive outcomes result from this cohort. Long-standing housing and employment discrimination practices have had a direct impact. Along with the suggestions already mentioned, stronger enforcement of discrimination laws should be considered. Additionally, innovative early childhood programs that support parent education and identify needs early show promise.

Jackie Collett

As stated earlier, I would focus efforts on providing tuition-free universal pre-K and ensuring children aren't exposed to lead-based paint and tainted water. These efforts will provide more equal opportunity for every Nebraska child. Coupled with a statewide jobs program and quality, nutritional food in all schools, these efforts will reduce some of the inequality our minority children of color experience every day.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Senator John McCollister

It's unconscionable that the state fails to fully utilize federal funds to mitigate poverty in Nebraska. When the executive branch fails in its duty to citizens who have paid taxes, it is incumbent upon the legislative branch to step into the fray. Whether it's ACCESS NE or the terrible prison situation, the legislature needs to correct the failings of the executive branch of government. Creation of another Inspector General under the Legislature's Ombudsman office to make certain that all federal poverty programs are utilized would be a good thing.

Jackie Collett

I feel transparency and accountability are the keys to producing results in any organization. DHHS should

provide reporting to the legislature outlining all eligible funding and its corresponding allocation. The department and its individuals must be accountable to maximize matching funds in both procurement and allocation.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Senator John McCollister

As Voices knows well, a bill was passed last year which began the process of payday loan reform. It is possible that Federal laws could soon supersede state laws regarding payday lenders and I'm aware that some major banks will soon offer products that will provide competition to payday lenders.

Jackie Collett

The legislature should ensure payday lenders are subject to usury laws. Further, they should be held to the maximum interest rate allowable by the state of Nebraska (16%) , not based on the state where they have chosen to incorporate.

Legislative Candidates – District 22

Mike Moser and Doug Oertwich both declined to participate.

Legislative Candidates – District 24

Senator Mark Kolterman declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Stephanie Nantkes

Education staying in the top 10 nationally

Funding for education

Rural health care/well care for children/women/mental health

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Stephanie Nantkes

Add up the total amount of your care expenses that qualify for the credit. The maximum amount of care expenses you're allowed to claim is \$3,000 for one person, or \$6,000 for one or more people.(taken from TurboTax) . If we look at the cost for working families, a family with a child in care at \$5 per hour with 50 weeks, spends \$10,000. (what is the income to qualify child care subsidy?)

I would come to the table with wanting to find ways to improve these amounts for families. Also, wanting to work with what and how the levels are set.

Page 42 of your Nebraska Report: gives amounts for families and childcare

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Stephanie Nantkes

I would state children needing help with things like mental health, being left alone, not fitting in, behind in school, the list goes on for youth dealing with juvenile justice system. The unicameral has passed a law for mental health providers to be placed at schools, this is a start to help and aid juveniles. I believe more needs to be done in this area.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Stephanie Nantkes

Several factors play into the Nebraska children living in poverty; parent education, marital status, parents employed, mobility, and age. I think the state should offer more ways to obtain GED, and training for parents. Schools need to have before and after school programs to aid students in school work and food. Many times the parents in these homes are working two low paying jobs and aren't in the home to aid with school work.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Stephanie Nantkes

Several factors would help in this area: educating parents at the home school, as is done for parents of ELL students. Example, the school I taught in had classes for parents learning english. Parents spent most of the time in classes then would join their child in class to see what was being taught.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Stephanie Nantkes

DHHS is being monitored by many groups. It could be the same reason people don't want Medicaid Expansion. After the initial buy in, the state then picks up the tab. I believe and am fighting for the Medicaid Expansion for several reasons. I think it is irresponsible for government to withhold services. We should expand with the time to add it to the state budget. Maybe we should look at the tax formula for all Nebraskans

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Stephanie Nantkes

The most vulnerable people are who use this type of money letting, since they only need to show a work stub and bank account. I do think the state should be involved with the payday loan market, it is hurting our low income families who have no place else to go for help.

Legislative Candidates – District 26

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Senator Matt Hansen

Supporting all of our students, Protecting out working families, and Investing in our neighborhoods and communities.

Bob Van Valkenburg

1. Reduction of Property Taxes and Lowering the cost of getting a college education.
2. Assurance that no child, elderly or handicapped person will ever go to bet hungry or in need of medical care.
3. Represent all Nebraskans and their families effectively with dignity and civility regardless of political party affiliation

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Senator Matt Hansen

Yes, I think we should look at increasing the eligibility levels for childcare, as well as other ideas to address the high cost of childcare. For many working families, the high costs of childcare is heavily burdensome, and often forces parents to work less hours or leave the workforce, resulting in long term challenges to the family.

Bob Van Valkenburg

As a father, grandfather and retired businessman, I will review all available information giving consideration to the source, accuracy and completeness. The focus will be on the safety and quality of life for every child. There is such an almost incredible level of fraud, waste and abuse of money distribution in "programs" intended to solve problems for children and families, that abusers will be flushed out and prosecuted. I will not just be a voice for the children....but a very LOUD voice for them.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Senator Matt Hansen

I think we need to make sure that children who encounter the juvenile justice system are well represented and protected. Last year I proposed a bill that would have required both the parent and child be advised of their rights before the child was questioned in custody, and think similar measures that would help families to decide what is best for them and their children are important.

Bob Van Valkenburg

It is far better and less expensive to take steps, effective steps, to deal with youth problems - emotional, legal and adequate nurturing - before acts of civil disobedience occur. I will consults with qualified experts in all areas to study and deal with the needs of families and youth before I will take action. While I do not approach the duties of a state senator with all of the answers, I most certainly am prepared to "hit the ground running" with a bunch of questions.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Senator Matt Hansen

I think Nebraska needs to focus on making sure that parents can find the types of jobs that need to support their family. In the Legislature, we constantly hear business leaders talk about positions they have difficulty filling because there are not enough people with the right qualifications or certifications. Focusing on helping people, both younger students and adults, find ways to get the education and skills they need for these careers will ultimately help parents help their children.

Bob Van Valkenburg

First, I do not necessarily believe the information presented is accurate. Building families and holding parents responsible for the care of their children is the best starting place. Throwing money at problems without first clearly identifying the problems is absolutely irresponsible. I have been involved in building cases for trial lawyers for over four decades, thus, I have a proven track record of defining problems and devising solutions within the boundaries of law. Some running for office just talk about solutions, I have made them happen!

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Senator Matt Hansen

The state needs to continue to be proactive in investing in education, including early childhood education. Making sure that the same quality of educational opportunities are available to all of our communities will be an important steps to increasing opportunities and outcomes for all of our children.

Bob Van Valkenburg

Growing up I learned a little song the words of which included "Red or Yellow, Black or White they're all precious in His sight" The "kids" will have an advocate in the legislature is I am elected. I focus on solving REAL problems, rather than IMAGINARY problems whose real purpose is to gather private and public money for the agendas of adults with self-serving motives. I will return honesty to every program I become familiar with!

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Senator Matt Hansen

The Legislature needs to continue to exercise its oversight role to ensure that the executive branch agencies are both fulfilling their mission, and doing so effectively and efficiently. For example, in the past focused legislative oversight on programs like ACCESSNebraska has helped to improve outcomes; as other programs encounter similar problems, similar oversight may be needed.

Bob Van Valkenburg

The level of incompetence in the Department of Health and Human Services in Nebraska for years has been disgraceful. Rather than putting political hack in positions of responsibility, I will work relentlessly to motivate the governor and others responsible for staffing to place highly qualified persons in leadership positions!

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Senator Matt Hansen

Nebraska needs to continue the progress we started on with LB 194 this year, and focus on providing reasonable consumer protections for our citizens.

Bob Van Valkenburg

The "Payday loan" industry is legalized thievery and should be outlawed. Short term loans should only be used for emergencies and unanticipated needs. Adults must learn to live within their means and apply their available money to needs rather than luxuries. Designer jeans and cell phones are not necessities of life, but food, clothing and shelter are.

If your organization needs a lunch, dinner or event speaker, call and see if my schedule will allow me to participate. While my speaking engagement fees are perhaps above your budget, I WILL DONATE MY TIME FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE KIDS.

Legislative Candidates – District 28

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

Access to Counsel for Juveniles, Prison Reform, Equality for ALL Under the Law

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

We definitely need to increase the eligibility levels for working families to reflect current standards of poverty and that level should also be subject to a cost of living adjustment. When workforce development is the number one issue of the State Chamber, it is essential to support and encourage family members to stay in the workforce without being faced with an insurmountable barrier to employment due to the high cost of childcare.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

I am proud to have sponsored or co-sponsored most of these reforms of the juvenile justice system. I will continue to fight for our state's children and assure that children have full and appropriate access to the courts, including early legal representation, use of best practices in breaking the school to prison pipeline and fighting to assure that sufficient money is available across the state for diversion programs.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

We can raise the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by passing a bill which I have sponsored each year that I have been in the Legislature. The EITC will allow working families to raise themselves out of poverty and achieve economic security and independence. This Credit has been shown nationally to have the greatest success of any program in raising income levels above poverty standards which directly affects the children in those working families.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

We can raise the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by passing a bill which I have sponsored each year that I have been in the Legislature. The EITC will allow working families to raise themselves out of poverty and achieve economic security and independence. This Credit has been shown nationally to have the greatest success of any program in raising income levels above poverty standards which directly affects the children in those working families.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

The Legislature must adopt legislation which requires all agencies to demonstrate use of best efforts to identify and access all available federal matching funds to which our state is entitled, especially for child welfare.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Senator Patty Pansing Brooks

The Legislature needs to study current best practices in payday lending to restrict usurious and debilitating lending rates that serve to insure that those in poverty stay there. I have supported and co-sponsored legislation that seeks to reform exorbitant interest rates and terms in payday lending.

Legislative Candidates – District 30

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Myron Dorn

1. Property taxes, top issue on voters comments, even people in cities are aware
2. Education - the future of our state is our children
3. Infrastructure - roads are one of our main economic drivers.

Don Schuller

1. Strengthen public education - Education is the single most important investment our state can make, and we need to prioritize it in the state budget.
2. Economic growth - Supporting small businesses and attracting good-paying jobs so that our working families can thrive.
3. Property tax relief - If there's one thing that all Nebraskans can agree on, it's that our property taxes are placing an unfair burden on working families. The Legislature needs to take an active role in finding reasonable, bipartisan solutions to lower property taxes and developing new sources of revenue, while continuing to maintain the vital services that we all rely on, such as education.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Myron Dorn

Yes. Our state is having a workforce shortage. This would be one way to help that situation

Don Schuller

Yes - we need to make sure that all families who need the assistance have access to it. We need to make sure that all Nebraska children, regardless of family income have access to high quality child care.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Myron Dorn

I would support programs to keep minor offense's out of jail I would support programs that would save cost.

Don Schuller

I support the above reforms. More broadly, I think one of the best ways we can address this issue is to further invest in our public education system. We need to make sure that ALL Nebraska children attend well-funded, high-quality schools equipped with well-trained mental health and behavioral specialists. I believe that doing so will give minors the support they need and prevent them from getting into trouble with the law in the first place.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Myron Dorn

Government needs to have programs that can help decrease poverty, especially children. Need to give guidance or assistance to help people get out of poverty for the well-being of their children.

Don Schuller

No Nebraska child should grow up in poverty. There are a number of things the state government should do to address this. I think one of the most important things to consider is the Nebraska Intergenerational Poverty Task Force's recommendations for "two-generation" approaches, which emphasize dual support for both vulnerable children and their struggling families. As detailed in other responses, I support strengthening our public education system, increasing investment in and expanding high-quality early childhood care and education, and expanding medicaid, all of which is intended to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of where they live or their parent's financial situation. For their families, I support a broad range of measures including investing in job training programs and education, increasing the minimum wage, employing earned income tax credits, and ensuring access to affordable housing, all of which will provide working families the tools and opportunities they need to provide for their families and lift themselves out of poverty. I believe that all of these measure combined would significantly help to break the cycle of poverty, and will do everything I can in the Legislature to support them.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Myron Dorn

Dedicate more of the states resources to those areas in the greatest needs.

Don Schuller

The opportunity for success begins with a high quality education. Unfortunately, Nebraska currently ranks among the lowest in the country in state aid for education. Because of this, our school system is over reliant on local property taxes, leading to drastic differences in funding. In turn, both the quality of education and educational outcomes children experience are largely dependent on their family's income. That's just not right - the state needs to step up and pay it's fair share to ensure that Nebraska public schools are more equitable.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Myron Dorn

No excuse. Make sure all agency's are communicating. This is costing the state money. HHS needs to explain.

Don Schuller

If there are matching funds available, we should be prioritizing child welfare. Not only is it financially responsible, it's just a good policy. The report released in August and others are very concerning. We should be doing everything we can to stop child abuse and neglect from happening, and we should be helping families provide for themselves so they can give their kids better lives. Most importantly, if the state does step in, we need to give them best chance to succeed and ensure that they are in a safe space. Last year, the Legislature appropriately raised child welfare spending, but we must look at if that money was being efficiently used and whether or not that amount is sufficient.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Myron Dorn

Survey surrounding states and check on nationally what their interest rates are for payday loans. We should the enact regulations to adjust if necessary

Don Schuller

The payday loan market should be regulated. Unfortunately, the current system allows for low- income families to be targeted and subjected to predatory practices, placing many families in a crippling cycle of poverty and debt. That's just not right, and I believe the state has an obligation to address this and protect these low income working families.

Legislative Candidates – District 32

Senator Laura Ebke and Tom Brandt both declined to participate.

Legislative Candidates – District 34

Senator Curt Friesen declined to participate.

Legislative Candidates – District 36

Senator Matt Williams declined to participate.

Legislative Candidates – District 38

Dave Murman declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

Property tax relief, education funding, access to health care

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

Yes, or we need some kind of sliding scale that gives folks the help needed to keep employment, develop a work history, go to school and stay in the work force.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

I can tell you that in the 38th district we need better access to mental and behavioral health. I hear this in particular from school personnel who are working with kids with problems. As one who has practiced in juvenile court for years I can attest to the need for accessible resources, including lawyer who can represent youth.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

Assist families with daycare, access to health care, education, provide incentives for jobs, job training and better paying jobs.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face poor outcomes by almost every measure. Given that people of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can we do to improve access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

This is a tough one as I am aware of some of the studies that show that just the stress of living as a person of color can add to the problem. I am ready to listen and learn and support programs and efforts that have an evidence based proof of worthiness. Help me out here with ideas please.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

We need to continue to put pressure on the Department and the Governor. The Governor could put more

pressure on the Department. We need to keep auditing. I don't understand why this happens but look forward to learning more and following this ongoing saga.

Lower income families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Marsha E. Fangmeyer

It seems to me we ought to regulate this industry. We should pass law to limit the interest rates. General note: I don't profess to have all the answers, but my career has been all about families and children. I have worked for legal aid and I currently serve on the Board of Nebraska Legal Aid. I have been poor. I know what it is like -- people say that but it is true in my case. I remember times when we had very little food in the house. I really do. Education got me out of poverty. Good jobs got my siblings out of poverty. I look forward to working with you.

Legislative Candidates – District 40

Keith Kube declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Timothy Gragert

Education (k-12), Natural Resources (specifically water) and Lower Property Taxes.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Timothy Gragert

We need to look at this program with all the other programs and make sure it is as effective and efficient as it can be.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Timothy Gragert

Policies that relate to the prevention of kids ending up here. Kids graduating high school and mentor programs for kids and parents.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Timothy Gragert

Create more and better jobs for people to work. Help people find jobs.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Timothy Gragert

Help educate all children and work with parents in taking responsibility in seeing that their children are disciplined and live by strong values. Have self pride and want to be the best they can be.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Timothy Gragert

We need to make sure all programs are being operated in the most effective and efficient manner. Individuals being held accountable in their daily operations of that particular program.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Timothy Gragert

Individuals need to take responsibility for their actions. I don't see this issue as one the Legislature needs to be involved in.

Legislative Candidates – District 42

Senator Mike Groene declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Judy Pederson

1. Equal education for all K-12 students
2. Access to affordable healthcare in rural Nebraska
3. Tax reform

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Judy Pederson

I would need to research this further. I would rather look at how we can increase opportunities for better jobs and higher pay.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Judy Pederson

I would need more information on this.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Judy Pederson

Bring in more job opportunities for better pay.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Judy Pederson

I would need to research this further.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Judy Pederson

I would need to research this further.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In

recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Judy Pederson

I would want to look at the past proposed legislation. I am not in favor of these types of businesses but would need to understand the opportunities to regulate and why those have not moved forward previously.

Legislative Candidates – District 44

Dan Hughes declined to participate.

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Stephanie Malcolm

1. Working together in the legislature to expedite the problem-solving process while utilizing technology and analytics to do so.
2. Increasing revenues for our state while thinking out of the box, i.e., legalize gambling, promoting the hemp industry for our farmers and within our economy, legalizing marijuana. We need to prioritize replenishing our reserves.
3. Building on our current education system and positive public school culture to continue to increase our focus on the well-being of our youth and teachers while insuring our schools use evidence-based, best practices to improve performance.

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Stephanie Malcolm

It is my thinking that having children in environments where they are nurtured and gain secure attachment early is extremely important. In a perfect world, families would be supported while staying home with their children for the first three years. However, quality daycare is important. Increasing eligibility levels may be one solution, but there can be multiple solutions to this issue. I would look into this as a legislator.

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Stephanie Malcolm

I would support reforms and initiatives that utilize research-based and tested approaches to assist youth in the juvenile justice system. Supporting our youth and helping them find success should be a priority. This is a front-end investment in our state, which is less costly than dealing with adults in the criminal justice system.

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Stephanie Malcolm

Nationwide, poverty is an issue. It is an issue that plays a huge role in the success of our residents in the future. We should continue to prioritize it. Education in all stages of life can increase opportunity and lessen burdens in adulthood. Our state can continue to search for evidence-based solutions, seek out advice from other states, and prioritize education initiatives to create life-long learners.

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face barriers in access to opportunity by almost every measure. Given that children of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can or should the government do to improve equitable access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Stephanie Malcolm

I am unsure how to improve access at this time.

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Stephanie Malcolm

We should utilize the data from other states that do draw down more funds. Early investment in the well-being of our youth has huge pay outs in the future. We should do whatever it takes to improve in this area to save money in the long run.

Lower income working families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

Stephanie Malcolm

We can ensure that Nebraskans have access to an effective education in regards to finances, discourage companies from charging these interest rates, and continue to support local banking institutions while inviting them to offer solutions.

Legislative Candidates – District 46

What are your top three priorities for your career as a legislator (not limited to children's issues)?

Senator Adam Morfeld

1. Affordable Healthcare (Medicaid Expansion)
2. LGBT Nondiscrimination Laws
3. More affordable higher education and workforce programs

Quality and affordable child care keeps children safe so parents can work. The child care subsidy program helps low-income working families afford the high cost of child care, which was \$9,157 per year for center-based care for an infant in 2017. Nebraska currently has one of the lowest eligibility levels for child care assistance in the nation. Do you think we need to increase eligibility levels for working families? Why or why not?

Senator Adam Morfeld

I want to maximize eligibility and make more funds available

Nebraska has recently undertaken numerous reforms to our juvenile justice system, including raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction, increasing requirements for commitment to our two youth prisons, keeping youth out of juvenile jail who don't pose a risk to the community or a risk of flight, and state investment in community-based resources to keep kids safely in their homes and communities. What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to minors in trouble with the law?

Senator Adam Morfeld

[Did not respond]

In 2016, 14.2% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Senator Adam Morfeld

Increase minimum wage/incentivize living wage jobs
Paid family leave

Overall, Nebraska ranks highly in the nation for child well-being, but data shows that positive outcomes are not distributed equitably among all Nebraska children. Children of color overwhelmingly face poor outcomes by almost every measure. Given that people of color are expected to represent an increasingly larger share of the state's population in the coming years, what can we do to improve access to opportunity for all Nebraska kids?

Senator Adam Morfeld

[Did not respond]

Recent assessments of federal funding and an auditor's report released in August this year show our Department of Health and Human Services frequently fails to draw down federal matching funding for child welfare that our state is entitled to. What do you think the legislative branch can or should do to maximize the resources reaching our state's most vulnerable children?

Senator Adam Morfeld

Regulate DHHS to maximize applications to federal programs and spend down their funds. Provide more oversight.

Lower income families often struggle with access to credit. Nebraska law currently allows one of the highest interest rates in the nation for short-term payday loans (over 400% Annual Percentage Rate). In recent years, the Legislature has considered regulating the payday loan market to ensure that loans are affordable

for consumers and don't result in longer term debt. What, if anything, do you think the state should do on this issue?

We should have passed the white copy bill of Senator Vargas. The current industry is criminal.

Legislative Candidates – District 48

Senator John Stinner declined to participate.

YES on Ballot Initiative 427

Children do better when their parents are healthy and financially able to care for their needs. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports Initiative 427, which would expand Medicaid eligibility to adults earning less than 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Those in the coverage “gap” include parents of children who earn too much to be eligible for Medicaid, but too little to be eligible for health care subsidies on the Marketplace.

When parents have access to affordable health care, their children reap benefits in the “spillover effect.” Research shows that Medicaid expansion for parents has resulted in

- **Uninsured children getting coverage.** It is estimated that Medicaid expansion in 33 other jurisdictions has resulted in an additional 710,000 low-income children gaining coverage through public insurance programs that they were eligible for, but previously unenrolled in.
- **Healthier children.** Research shows that parental coverage has a positive effect on children accessing preventive care. As parents gain access to their own health coverage, the likelihood of their child receiving regular well-child visits increases by 29 percentage points.
- **Enhanced parental capacity.** Access to affordable medical care reduces psychological and financial distress for parents. Reduced stress and increased stability for families ensures that parents are better able to care for their children. Research also shows that Medicaid expansion also has an effect on household finances and reduced debt burdens, allowing parents to invest in their children.
- **Better outcomes in rural communities.** Research shows that rural communities have the most to gain from Medicaid expansion. The largest positive gains seen in rates of uninsured children as a result of Medicaid expansion were observed in small towns and rural areas.

A “YES” vote on Initiative 427 is a vote for healthier kids and communities in Nebraska. For more information about the measure, visit <https://insurethegoodlife.com/>.