



VOTE KIDS NEBRASKA
2020 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. This year, Voices for Children has worked with youth across the state to produce an entirely youth-led guide. It is based on the belief that raising youth issues to greater prominence in elections is a way to re-orient our political process towards common concerns and practical solutions.

This project offers a starting point for bringing children's issues to the forefront of discussions during the 2020 elections. Through Vote Kids Nebraska, you will find survey results from our Nebraska legislative 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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Legislative Candidates – District 01

No response received from Senator Julie Slama.

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

Janet Palmtag

Property tax relief, rural broadband, rural healthcare

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Janet Palmtag

Support reliable rapid testing, promote disconnection of politics and healthcare, rely on professionals in the healthcare industry for information, support rent and food assistance and child care for Nebraskans facing COVID-19 challenges, and provide small business assistance for stability.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Janet Palmtag

I am very worried about the increasing poverty, especially in rural Nebraska. We need to promote adequate wages and jobs that provide health care benefits to strengthen our families and increase outcomes for our kids. Supporting SNAP for solid nutrition helps kids achieve higher successes in school, leading to better chances of success in life.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Janet Palmtag

We must listen, learn, and act to protect and improve the lives of all affected. We need to take a hard look at the disproportionate impact of COVID in meatpacking plants and the deep concerns affecting people of color incarceration rates. We need to embrace critical thinking skills and change the way people think. Policymakers must be committed to finding ways to halt the perpetuation of inequality.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Janet Palmtag

We need responsible and sustainable environmental policies. Agriculture is very vulnerable to changing weather patterns and we must protect our largest economic driver. Protection for our soil and development of resilient crops are all tasks we should be engaged in now. Increased use of solar and wind for energy are practical and should continue to be supported. Lawmakers need to be educated and promote education for citizens.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Janet Palmtag

Early childhood education begins at conception. Supporting mothers during pregnancy will support the healthy mental and physical development of children before they are born giving them a strong start in life. In rural Nebraska, many hospitals are not equipped to deliver babies, placing a huge burden on working or moms or moms in poverty. Medicaid expansion will hopefully help by covering moms and babies along with children up to age 19.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Janet Palmtag

Nebraska is obligated to provide public education to all children. Our state has very diverse rural and urban differences. Finding a fair formula to provide quality education for all children is required. We need teachers to be paid fairly, encourage recruiting diversity, and provide engaging programming to help teachers succeed. Collaboration with all stakeholders including lawmakers, teachers, school boards, administrators, the board of education members, and students are required to find meaningful and enduring solutions.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Janet Palmtag

YRTC's have been mismanaged, and our children have not been rehabilitated in them. The legislature has made some progress in creating oversight, and next year will be able to assess the situation more clearly. YRTC's should be operated much differently than high-security prisons. Our children's trauma while in the YRTC's might be making their lives more volatile and our communities more dangerous. Education should continue to keep our youth on track for success. This must be dealt with urgently.

Legislative Candidates – District 03

No response received from Rick Holdcroft.

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

Senator Carol Blood

1. Strong Schools 2. Minimizing middle class tax burdens 3. Protecting Nebraska's most vulnerable.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Senator Carol Blood

1. Expand testing capacity and make it accessible to "all" Nebraskans, including those with disabilities. 2. Strengthen Nebraska's Public Health Surveillance so we can better track the spread of the virus & any early onset of outbreaks. 3. Scale our capacity for contact tracing, isolation and quarantine 3. Ensure that Nebraska's healthcare system is responsive to potential surges 4. Protect Nebraska's essential workers and our at-risk populations such as our Seniors and those with disabilities 5. Revisit our communication and public engagement plan-tweak as needed 6. Continue to build public-private partnerships 7. Reassess all plans as needed as they are living-breathing documents.

In 2018, 12.9% of Nebraska children were living in poverty. What do you think the state government can or should do to decrease the number of children living in poverty?

Senator Carol Blood

Providing tools for their parents to become better educated/better trained for jobs that pay higher wages w/benefits is a good place to start. Making sure the children receive good education at our public schools and provide opportunities for them to better themselves with job training partnerships, early college opportunities, etc. will allow them to break the cycle of poverty.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Senator Carol Blood

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. I will continue to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups as I've done over the last 4 years through legislation sponsorship & co-sponsorship and my votes

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global

environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Senator Carol Blood

Low income and minority communities tend to be touched the most when it comes to environmental justice issues. I think it is very important that we protect local land use decisions that allow the public to participate in the process as we do in Nebraska with our public hearings. Our role at the state level is to make sure we are offering environmental protection and economic development to our residents and constituents.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Senator Carol Blood

The same as I've done the last 4 years. Support and sponsor bills that protect and keep our moms and babies healthy. Protect funding, remove hurdles and make sure programming is sustainable.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Senator Carol Blood

Research shows that there is a very strong link between racial school segregation and academic achievement gaps. This means we must be mindful when it comes to racially integrating schools allowing everyone the same opportunities regardless of race, poverty or socioeconomic status. How we recruit future teachers from this same pipeline is paramount and needs to be an active strategy, supported by legislation whenever possible. When we lift up young Nebraskans, we lift up Nebraska and its future.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Senator Carol Blood

Continue to fund Pre-K and K-12 education making sure that all children have the ability to pull themselves away from the cycle of poverty. Making sure mental health services are accessible and affordable to all who need help. Remember that these are children and not adults who brains are very different and rehabilitation must address that they are impulsive but able to change.

Legislative Candidates – District 05

No response received from Gilbert Ayala.

No response received from Senator Mike McDonnell.

Legislative Candidates – District 07

No response received from Senator Tony Vargas.

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

Jorge Sotolongo

1. Provide jobs and economic opportunities for all Nebraskans and turn our State into a top competitor in the region. Attracting talent and nurturing existing talent is a top priority for me. We are losing too much valuable young talent, particularly among minority communities. That is unacceptable.
2. I want to act as a bridge for our Latino community, not only in LD7 but also across the State. Having been born in Puerto Rico but raised in Omaha, I am uniquely positioned to help represent the needs of the Latino community, communicate through our common Spanish language and culture. Nurturing this community is crucial to the success of our State and Nation, as a whole. I will ensure they have access to the best lives available in Nebraska.
3. Protect the family unit, at all costs, however it is comprised. For our children to have the best shot at a fruitful life, they need to feel safe and supported in their home. Affordable housing, access to healthcare, public safety, nutrition, childcare, education - it needs to be a holistic approach. I will do everything in my power to support any action that provides safe and supportive homes to the children in District 7 and Nebraska, as a whole.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Jorge Sotolongo

Balancing public health and the economic recovery will require a transparent and measured approach to how we distribute relief funds. There needs to be a system that prioritizes vulnerable populations and essential workers, while also supporting small businesses and our local economy. Proper use of PPE will allow businesses to remain open and workers to keep their jobs. Some industries and sectors of the economy will need a tailored approach to relief and protection. Meatpacking facilities, for example, need more frequent PPE changes, rapid test kits, and hazard pay for their employees. If the risk of their job increases, so should their pay.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Jorge Sotolongo

Education for these children and good paying jobs for their parents can help move them up the economic ladder. This is why we need to be more competitive in bringing jobs to Nebraska. Trade education will be crucial in creating a more skilled workforce in our State, for example. Poverty is

multifaceted and complex, so I would be eager to jump into the research and discuss innovative solutions and bold action that may not have been tried before, in our State.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Jorge Sotolongo

As a Latino in Nebraska, I understand representation is important, which is why I intend on providing strong Latino leadership in the Legislature. This is not just for Latinos in Nebraska, but for all others, so that they can see and hear what Latinos in Nebraska are accomplishing every day. I will fight to remove barriers for minorities and disadvantaged communities to achieve financial independence and economic prosperity. For example, I will support initiatives that help minority-owned contractors apply for and win bids on development projects in Omaha and throughout our State. This allows thousands of minority-owned small businesses to develop skills and grow their businesses. Implicit bias training can only get you so far - we have to start putting minorities on a path to success and leadership if we want to see change.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Jorge Sotolongo

Nebraska should be investing in research and development aimed at creating better, more innovative energy solutions for its residents. We need to attack this issue through efficiency and innovation, not idealism. I would aim to gather all of the most accomplished players in Nebraska's energy sector, public and private, along with academic researchers, in order to come up with a Nebraska-specific climate plan.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Jorge Sotolongo

I will support initiatives to increase resources and education for pregnant mothers, especially in minority communities where language barriers, lacking public transportation, or other barriers prevent these mothers from understanding their options. Earlier this year, a South Omaha mother left her newborn child on the front step of a stranger's home. She was scared, could not speak English, and had no clue where to go. If there had been a Spanish-speaking pregnancy center nearby, which we lack in South Omaha, this might not have happened. I vow to fight for Nebraska's mothers and their babies, born and unborn.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Jorge Sotolongo

Public schools are essential to District 7, and I plan to be present and ready to work for the administrators, teachers, and students, alike. My focus would be on data and performance indicators, to ensure our students are hitting the appropriate milestones. In addition, I would focus on reading comprehension and early childhood education, to make sure we are on the cutting edge of early education. As we face a skilled workforce crisis in the future, we must also address how we are helping to drive students into trades, as well.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Jorge Sotolongo

I would need to educate myself on the best practices and policies that have improved juvenile rehabilitation efforts. I would explore how job skills and training might help these individuals learn accountability and grant them the ability to earn a living. Again, my approach would be through innovation and research to make sure we are evolving in our rehabilitative practices.

Legislative Candidates – District 09

No response received from John Cavanaugh.

No response received from Marque Snow.

Legislative Candidates – District 11

No response received from Fred Conley.

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

Terrell McKinney

Economic Equity & Opportunity, Criminal Justice reform, & Education

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Terrell McKinney

I will work to find solutions to assist community health centers. I will also look for ways to create incentives for small businesses and entrepreneurs to make sure that they can be sustainable going forward. I will also push for more assistance from the state to assist our communities.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Terrell McKinney

Our state government needs to address this issue, which starts with economic equity and opportunity, fully funding state programs, and assisting families.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Terrell McKinney

I will address this issue by being unapologetic about speaking up and holding others accountable, I will push for more racial justice legislation to address things like redlining and gentrification.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Terrell McKinney

Nebraska should be listening to climate/environmental experts. Climate change is an existential threat that disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, Indigenous and poor white people, as well as women of color. North Omaha is a prime example of this – the North O coal-fired power plant is responsible for increased health impacts when compared to the rest of Omaha and the entire state. By making our communities more climate resilient, we increase numerous opportunities for residents. North Omaha has all the potential in the world to be a hub of community solar, retrofitted buildings and urban agriculture that can create jobs and increase the aesthetics of the community. And we also have to make sure that the existing residents are protected from gentrification and associated displacement.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Terrell McKinney

I will do whatever I can to make sure that mothers and babies are provided equitable care no matter what. I will introduce legislation to support mothers and also fight off any bad legislation that would restrict care to mothers and families.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Terrell McKinney

Our campaign is currently working on an education plan that we will release next week, within there will be plans to raise grading standards across the state, adding cultural, financial, civic engagement curriculum. As well as support work to create a pipeline of teachers from communities like North Omaha.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Terrell McKinney

We support policies that will increase funding quality programming and preventative care, parent support, and grassroot programming as well. Also expanding access to mental health/trauma based counseling for just the juveniles but the whole family. We also have more in our criminal justice plan that you see on our website.

Legislative Candidates – District 15

No response received from David Rogers.

No response received from Senator Lynne Walz.

Legislative Candidates – District 17

No response received from Senator Joni Albrecht.

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

Sheryl Lindau

1. Extend broadband services to underserved rural areas.
2. Protect access to healthcare services.
3. Rural economic development with a focus on supporting and expanding small business opportunities.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Sheryl Lindau

We need to enact family medical leave legislation to enable workers to take care of their family members during periods of medical crisis.

Provide our small businesses the economic support they need to keep operating during the COVID-19 crisis. Implement a positive and coordinated message to the public on the safety measures necessary to protect public health and enable businesses to remain open and viable. In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Sheryl Lindau

Enact a state level Child Tax Credit to supplement the federal CTC. Ensure adequate funding of programs that support families in poverty such as Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Sheryl Lindau

We need to reallocate not defund police departments and reeducate ourselves on the accurate history of race in this country. Develop programs that address the underlying problems of racial violence and unrest rather than focusing on the violence itself. We must understand the trauma that comes from being ignored and marginalized.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Sheryl Lindau

Reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by supporting the expansion of wind and solar energy. Protect Nebraska's water resources from nitrogen contamination. Support the work of NDEQ and protect the Environmental Trust Fund. Support the promising research at the NE Innovation Campus.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Sheryl Lindau

Women must have access to high quality affordable healthcare and nutritious food during pregnancy and beyond. Expansion of Medicaid services, WIC, and SNAP benefits are important programs to ensure that low income women have healthy pregnancies and following delivery have supportive services to keep their infants and small children healthy.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Sheryl Lindau

I would reject scholarship tax credits that divert public dollars from public schools. The state should commit to a level of funding public schools that is more in line with what states similar to Nebraska provide and raise teacher salaries. We should offer economic incentives such as scholarships and/or student loan forgiveness to encourage students to join the teaching profession and serve in high need school districts.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Sheryl Lindau

Require state money only be used to fund evidence based practices. Ensure that agencies working with youth in the juvenile justice system receive adequate education and training on youth with mental health issues and how they should be treated. Seek family involvement in the treatment of youth to improve their long term success. Provide for aftercare treatment for youth with mental and substance abuse problems.

Legislative Candidates – District 21

No response received from Senator Mike Hilgers.

No response received from Brodey Weber.

Legislative Candidates – District 23

No response received from Senator Bruce Bostelman.

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

Helen Raikes

1. Tax reform; 2. Children and Schools; 3. Thriving Communities (including childcare, healthcare, housing, broadband, small business and environmental quality)

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Helen Raikes

We are fortunate to have UNMC guiding public health policies. We must listen to science. Providing the guidance, testing and science at a state level while allowing and respecting local control of masking policies etc., enables better health procedures and balance of

education/economic needs with changing public health concerns. Good testing (in a COVID-19 world) and good data on economics should both be available and policies and procedures should be nimble and responsive.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Helen Raikes

All my life I have worked on programs to provide opportunities for children living in poverty. We have expanded our Sixpence and NE early childhood programs and have worked to empower Head Start as well as to support afterschool programs. We need to address this at multiple levels: providing living wage opportunities for parents; good childcare so they can work with ease; worker protections and health care so they stay healthy and can work. At the next level we need to address things that go with poverty that create challenges for children particularly--parent mental health, housing, food insecurity, to name a few. And at the final level, we need to provide good educational opportunities and support for children living in poverty so the problems of poverty are not exacerbated during early critical times of development--education programs, health services, food.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Helen Raikes

We need a formal race, etc. disparity lens brought to ALL our NE policies. I would start with our criminal justice, education and housing policies.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Helen Raikes

I would like to see us take leadership by having a climate plan. We have a great treasure in our share of the Ogallala Aquifer. We need greater quality testing of our waters. Impoverished people are more likely to be negatively affected by climate change and environmental deficiencies (e.g., lead, pollutants in the water). One goal would be to reduce those disparities. Another disparity is that children, due to their growth, are more vulnerable to environmental pollutants than adults, so a second goal would be to focus on environmental concerns that particularly affect children (e.g., water pollutants). A third is to have proactive studies and policies to monitor climate change and protect the resources we do have.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Helen Raikes

Most likely I will support every bill that addresses these. This is my area of passion. Health coverage for pregnancy, data to monitor exactly where we stand on key outcomes (coverage, birth outcomes, infant mortality, immunization rates) and follow up proposals will be my emphasis.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Helen Raikes

This is one of my top priorities. Schools need to be assured of a consistent funding stream. Many policies and funds help to close the achievement gap (something I have worked on for my entire career) including early childhood programs, Title 1 services, summer opportunities. Also, supporting development of the labor force with thriving community services (e.g., childcare) to attract young teachers to our rural and urban areas, and efforts to enroll minority students into teacher preparation programs would be emphasized. Reducing barriers and providing alternative on-ramps for obtaining certifications would be helpful for enlarging diversity as well.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Helen Raikes

We need to adapt a rehabilitation vs. punitive lens for juvenile justice to begin with. Alternative programs for first and juvenile offenders that offer support (e.g., drug court) have shown success. While my emphases in the past have been on early childhood and K-12 education, I will vow to dig more deeply into the Nebraska juvenile justice system.

Legislative Candidates – District 25

No response received from Senator Suzanne Geist.

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

Stephany Pleasant

My whole campaign is about breaking down the barriers that keep families from thriving. That means I want to ensure that all families can access the healthcare that they need and is best for them, all Nebraskans can access a quality public education, and that all workers in Nebraska are protected so that they can work hard and provide for themselves and their families.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Stephany Pleasant

In the short-term, something like a statewide mask mandate would allow for us to keep businesses open, kids in school, and people at work. It would also assist in limiting the spread of Covid-19 so that we can keep people healthy and hospitals at a manageable capacity. In the long-term we need to protect families from economic crises. This means ensuring that job safety protections are in place for parents, eviction protections are in place, benefits are expanded to provide essentials like food and utilities.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Stephany Pleasant

I think the state should continue exploring eliminating school lunch debt. Senator Cavanaugh's proposed legislation to provide all students free breakfast and lunch would have a great impact on many children and their families. I believe in raising the tipped minimum wage, allowing for parents/guardians that work in the food service industry to be able to better provide for their families. Work to expand SNAP eligibility and provide more parents/guardians with paid sick leave and paid parental leave. Children thrive when they live in stable conditions, so to protect them and lift them out of poverty, we need to protect their families from hardships.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Stephany Pleasant

I believe that "8 Can't Wait" is a great starting point in addressing biases in our justice system. This would include banning chokeholds and strangleholds, requiring de-escalation, requiring a warning before shooting, banning shooting at moving vehicles, requiring a duty to intervene, using the force continuum, and requiring more comprehensive reporting after all uses of force. I also believe in eliminating qualified immunity and liability insurance for police like what lawyers and doctors are required to carry. This, of course is only the beginning, and I will continue to listen to marginalized communities about the needs they have and introduce legislation to address those needs.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Stephany Pleasant

Nebraska has a major opportunity in becoming a leader in environmental innovation. Doing so, would help to bring more businesses into the state which, in turn, will grow our economy by providing more jobs for Nebraskans. As a Senator, I would help to pass Senator Pansing-Brooks bill to create an environmental action plan for Nebraska, if re-filed, and then use it to incentive businesses to implement it.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Stephany Pleasant

I am a supporter of paid parental leave. This issue is important because we know that when parents are able to take time away from work without fear of losing their jobs, they have healthier pregnancies, are healthier themselves, and raise healthier children. I also believe in providing parents/guardians with paid sick leave to care for themselves and their children. Expanding access to quality child care is also an important step in supporting healthy moms and raising healthy babies. I believe that no parent should ever have to choose between caring for their child and paying their bills.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Stephany Pleasant

Nebraska should be very proud of its public education systems from Kindergarten to post-graduate schools. Education was the major factor for why I returned to Nebraska after high school and why my brothers moved up here to raise their sons. We know the value of the public school systems in this state and are saddened by the disregard for it by some Senators. As a Senator, public education protection from tax cuts and appropriations changes will be a high priority. Doing so will provide Nebraska families with quality education that will help them to attain educational milestones throughout future generations.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Stephany Pleasant

We must take a three-fold approach to best reform policies to help youth in the juvenile justice system. First, we must provide their families with basic necessities and the schools with the tools and training to educate students safely. This includes expanding access to food, housing, and healthcare as well as providing schools with more teachers and social workers. Second, we must make it a priority while they are in Juvenile justice centers, that they are getting care that will not traumatize them and worsen their situation. Finally, when they leave the justice system we must

push through any policies that would streamline aftercare of the child and their families with the re-enrollment of children in the school.

Legislative Candidates – District 27

No response received from Brenda Bickford.

No response received from Senator Anna Wishart.

Legislative Candidates – District 29

No response received from Eliot Bostar.

No response received from Jacob Campbell.

Legislative Candidates – District 31

No response received from Rich Pahls.

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

Tim Royers

School funding reform, retention of young Nebraskans, strengthening benefits (insurance, paid leave, etc.)

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Tim Royers

We need to make sure that recovery efforts prioritize assisting Nebraskans in finding strong jobs, and in supporting businesses to make it more manageable to offer their employees healthcare, paid leave, and other critical pieces that are essential to health, but can come at a significant expense to employers.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Tim Royers

Ensure that sufficient supports are in place in K-12 schools to address basic needs like food security, and continue to expand recent post-secondary efforts to provide educational opportunities at no cost to families living in poverty.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Tim Royers

My main priority is to help create spaces so that black, indigenous, and people of color have the proper platform to advocate for their communities and inform us as policy makers on what we need to do to address issues of racial injustice. To that end, bills like the hair discrimination bill that was vetoed last year are examples of small but meaningful pieces we can advocate to help address bias and injustice

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Tim Royers

The first step is to join localities like the City of Omaha in actually developing a plan to address how we will respond to climate change.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Tim Royers

Push to expand access to paid sick leave, paid maternity/paternity leave, and additional support to help manage the cost of childcare.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Tim Royers

As a public school teacher, and President of the 3rd largest teacher's union in the state, supporting our public schools is my top priority. Reforming how we fund schools to make it more equitable, and to include variables that prioritize best practices and district efforts to more purposefully recruit a diverse teaching force are priorities for me.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Tim Royers

We need to expand funding for support services that are in place in schools and in the wider community that help youth before they get into the juvenile justice system. The more we fund preventative/supportive measures, the better off we will be.

Legislative Candidates – District 33

No response received from Senator Steve Halloran.

Legislative Candidates – District 35

No response received from Senator Dan Quick.

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

Ray Aguilar

Property tax relief, economic recovery, juvenile justice issues.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Ray Aguilar

Expand roles of health dept. so pandemics don't happen.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Ray Aguilar

Job training for parents of these children.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Ray Aguilar

I don't know if you can legislate peoples bias.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Ray Aguilar

Nebraska must do its part and set example for others

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Ray Aguilar

Make sure prenatal care is available

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and

ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Ray Aguilar

Children must all return to the classroom and classrooms must be safe.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Ray Aguilar

Upgrade facilities.

Legislative Candidates – District 37

No response received from Senator John Lowe

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

Mercadies Damratowski

Health care reform(focus on mental health), workers rights, Tax reform

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Mercadies Damratowski

End income inequality, focus on workers rights and safety conditions, and work on expanding free market choices for healthcare and work on better options for Nebraskans who don't want the state to be a middle man.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Mercadies Damratowski

Changing the foster care system and supporting impoverished families so that they can have community based resources directly. We are perpetuating the problem by removing kids from emotionally stable places. we need to provide direct help to families where they need it instead of complicating the situation with more government bodies. We also need to help low income families with better wages and a more equitable tax system. let families keep the money they earn so we can grow a better future.

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Mercadies Damratowski

We need to have better communication about our beliefs and more mental health support in addressing the issues that we don't agree on. We have a racial and ethics diversity education program set up in our education system already, so we need to find the programs that have been proven to work and that are still in use, and support them on a larger scale.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Mercadies Damratowski

I think we need to make sure our natural resources are protected, if we have learned anything it's that we HAVE to be better keepers of our planet. We as farmers here have always been concerned with how we are farming and if it's sustainable. we need to focus more on the long goals and less on how much money we can make right now. We also need to bring back old farming practices that saw us through the last depression. Hemp would be a great way to do that, and in doing so, that cover crop would help restore balance to our ecosystem.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Mercadies Damratowski

By keeping the government out of our decision making and wombs.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Mercadies Damratowski

Internet learning has opened up a large opportunity to consolidated classes so that children have a more consistent learning environment, so that each child would have the same opportunity to access good teachers, while cutting costs by reducing the number of physical schools and overhead costs- that would free up funds to support better learning tools and would make it easier to reform the tax code relating to education, while solving the covid infection crisis. we could also use funds to directly pay families so they can support their children academically and not need to work so much, since families know how best to teach their children. by changing the whole system we shift the focus back on the core family unit.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Mercadies Damratowski

Stop criminalizing children's mental health and start focusing on the core issues of their behaviors and move to create a joint DHHS corrections unit to handle at risk teens, and change the way they are channeling their energies to reforms them to be productive members of society without the multi generational curse they have inherited due to the system failing them and their elders.

Legislative Candidates – District 39

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

Allison Heimes

Support public schools, provide parental leave policies for working parents, and increase mental health services

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

Update Nebraska's tax policy so we are competitive with other states and ensure Nebraska continues to grow and prosper. Ensuring every child has an opportunity to receive an excellent education.

What actions would you take to balance public health and economic recovery in Nebraska, both in light of COVID-19 and for the long term?

Allison Heimes

Push for CARES Act money to be applied to small businesses and the unemployed, allocating state funds to the unemployed and emergency medical relief and create a comprehensive pandemic plan that would incorporate emergency medical relief for the uninsured. Institute statewide policies for mask wearing and disbursement of protective gear for schools and essential workers

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

We need to continue to follow community guidelines to keep each other safe and avoid future shutdowns. We are very fortunate in Nebraska that all children have access to adequate healthcare. Nebraska's CHIP program covers a large number of Nebraska children who are not covered by private insurance.

In 2018, 12.9% 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?

Allison Heimes

Encourage banks to loosen loan processes for small businesses so parents can jumpstart careers, provide Necessary relief for parents who need childcare so they can enter the workforce, implement substance abuse and mental health treatment options for parents who struggle so that

they can re-enter the workforce. Make healthcare affordable. A lot of people purposefully take low paying jobs to avoid losing Medicaid.

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

Continue to support policies that promote job creation and improve our educational outcomes

How will you address racial injustice in Nebraska? What, if any, initiatives would you propose to address bias based on race, gender identification, sexual orientation, religion, or disability?

Allison Heimes

Bring people of color, LGBTQ individuals, and people of various religions to the table and work directly with them to make change. Solutions will require broader collaboration. I think the anti discrimination hair bill should be passed and similar bills like it to protect people.

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

I support educational choice for children from lower-income families who are frequently children of color who, due to their parents socio-economic status, cannot move to a different school district or afford private tuition if they need a different school option.

Our changing environment has the potential to impact the health, safety, and security of all Nebraskans. What should be Nebraska's role in addressing national and global environmental concerns? What are some of your environmental justice goals and how do you intend to implement them if elected to the legislature?

Allison Heimes

This will also take a collaborative effort in bringing together farmers and manufacturers to discuss ways we can implement change for the environment without hurting these industries and laying off tons of Nebraskans. We should Explore alt sources of energy. We should create disaster relief plans that address migration patterns after natural disasters. We should give a damn.

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

Climate change is a real concern, however, I think the issue is better addressed at the national and international level. The issue is far too complex for different states to address it on their own.

What will you do to support healthy moms, healthy pregnancies, and healthy babies?

Allison Heimes

Make healthcare affordable. Make sure doctors are paid and reasonably compensated by Medicaid. Make sure access to healthcare is equal for rural and urban nebraskans.

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

I support the programs already in place. I believe almost 50% of children born in Nebraska last year were covered by CHIP. We need to continue to provide these services to those who are not covered under private plans.

During the 2017-2018 school year, over 300,000 Nebraska children were enrolled in public school. How will you work to support public schools, close academic achievement gaps and ensure all students have access to experienced teachers, a diverse teacher pipeline, and the high-quality programming they need to succeed?

Allison Heimes

This is a little more nuanced than a couple paragraphs. Each district and school have different needs. Urban schools are very different from urban schools but generally let's start with just funding them properly and fully. No more allocating money arbitrarily ignoring the TEEOSA formula. Let's give teachers a raise! A real one! Let's start there.

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

Most of the larger school districts in the urban areas receive strong support from the state. But unfortunately, many smaller rural schools receive too little support from the state. I support ensuring that every child receives support from the state for their education.

What policies would you propose or support in order to best rehabilitate and respond to youth involved with the Nebraska juvenile justice system?

Allison Heimes

Kids need mentors. Kids need education and kids need to know they have a future. Let's connect them to mentors, get them into trade school or 4 year universities, let's show them where life can't take them. Give them access to mental health counselors as well to address why!

Senator Lou Ann Linehan

We need to focus on ensuring children in K-3rd grade are proficient in reading by the end of third grade. Too many children reach middle school unable to succeed because they are unprepared and consequently start skipping school and getting into trouble.

Legislative Candidates – District 41

No response received from Senator Tom Briese

Legislative Candidates – District 43

No response received from Senator Tom Brewer.

No response received from Tanya Storer.

Legislative Candidates – District 45

No response received from Susan Hester.

No response received from Rita Sanders.

Legislative Candidates – District 47

No response received from Senator Steve Erdman.

Legislative Candidates – District 49

No response received from Jen Day.

No response received from Senator Andrew La Grone.

Vote FOR Ballot Initiative 428

Every Nebraska child deserves to meet their full potential in life. When families can invest in their children's future, we all do better. Voices for Children in Nebraska is a coalition member of Nebraskans for Responsible Lending and supports Initiative 428, which would cap payday loan interest rates at 36%.

Currently in Nebraska, payday lenders charge borrowers more than 400% APR. Payday loans are designed to trap borrowers in an endless cycle of debt, leaving borrowers in a worse position than when they originally took the loan out. Unaffordable loan terms mean that low-income borrowers are forced to re-borrow multiple times over to pay off their original loan. The average Nebraska borrower had to take out 10 loans last year before escaping the debt trap.

Payday lenders have direct access to borrowers' bank accounts, meaning that lenders are repaid before families have a chance to pay their bills for the month. Borrowers are not only at risk of not being able to afford food for their families or a roof over their heads—they are at risk of excessive overdraft fees, losing their bank accounts, and even bankruptcy.

Now, more than ever, we must end the payday lending debt trap and protect Nebraskans from harmful and unsafe loans. A vote FOR Initiative 428 is a vote to stop the debt trap in Nebraska! For more information, visit: <https://www.votefor428.org/>

Vote FOR Amendment 1

While slavery has been prohibited under the Nebraska Constitution since 1875, Nebraska is one of 12 states that continues to provide for an exception for slavery as a punishment for those convicted of crimes. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports Amendment 1, which would eliminate slavery, without exception, from the Nebraska Constitution.

A vote FOR Amendment 1 is a vote for a more just Nebraska. For more information, visit: <https://www.endslaveryne.org/>