

Our kids' futures hinge on getting out the vote

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Know the issues and the candidates before you place your vote on Tuesday.

It's the height of the election season and we're all hearing promising political rhetoric from public office-seekers about children being a priority in our state.

Yet this month's 25th annual Kids Count Report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation told us Michigan continues to move down the national rankings of well-being indicators for kids.

Once again our ranking has slipped, putting us in 32nd place and below the majority of states.

While it may be comforting to hear candidates and elected officials say they care about the future of

Michigan's children, words without action aren't enough.

What we need — and what the public should demand this election season — are policies and investments that decidedly move our children and state forward with clear vision and united resolve. Failing to make progress is not good for our children, youth and families.

This is not acceptable and needs to change now.

It is the best reason to become an active voter this election season.

Our most powerful tool to impact child well-being in Michigan is to vote in the Aug. 5 primary.

The nonpartisan Michigan's Children Sandbox Party has made it a priority this summer to encourage people who care about kids to take a serious look at who's running for office in their communities, to learn where they stand on the issues most important to their children, youth and families, and to make it a point to vote in their primaries. (Our website at michigansandboxparty.org is focused on the election with resources and tools to help voters.)

This year, the state will elect the next governor, all 110 state House members and 38 state senators, as well as members to Congress from across the state and the first new U.S. senator from Michigan in nearly two decades.

We are promoting election advocacy in earnest this summer because we know that redistricting and the manner in which political boundaries have been re-drawn have made nearly all primary races pivotal this year. In many areas the winners in August are likely to become your representative in November.

When lawmakers make children and families a priority, it increases the likelihood for investments in health, social and education supports children need to succeed in school and in life. Particularly for challenged children, these investments are critical for building a brighter future for Michigan as a whole.

While the stakes are high this season, we also know that most registered voters don't come out in August primaries. To that we say, don't let other people decide who will represent you and your families for the next two and four years.

When voter turnout is high, candidates have to appeal to the views of the majority of the citizens they are running to represent. When voter turnout is low and relegated to those only at the far ends of the political spectrum, candidates need only to cater to those on the far right or far left and the opinions of the majority of their perspective constituents are ignored.

This is an extremely important election for children, youth and families in Michigan. If you care about children and want a government that makes them a priority, get out and vote.

Remember, kids can't vote.

That's why you should vote with them in mind. Please vote Aug. 5.

The Michigan's Children Sandbox Party is the state's leading non-partisan grassroots advocacy network for children, youth and families.

As a project of Michigan's Children, a statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children, we advance policies, practices and investments that support health, development and learning from cradle to career.

The Michigan's Children Sandbox Party does not support or endorse candidates from either party.

Matt Gillard is president and CEO of Michigan's Children Sandbox Party.

- **Gov's race shouldn't be this close**



Nolan Finley: The most comfortable bet I would make in this election season is that Gov. Rick Snyder would win re-election, and easily.



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