Children and the 2016 Elections
Findings from Iowa Voter Opinion Survey and Implications for Advocacy

Selzer & Company Poll of 501 Iowa Voters
July 1-7, 2015

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What We’re Doing in Iowa: Seeking to Ensure Child Policy is Part of Election Dialogue

- Children are 24% of the population and 100% of society’s future.
- Voters consistently rate children’s issues at the top of their public policy concerns.
- There is no greater societal responsibility than ensuring all children have the opportunity to grow into healthy and productive citizens.
- The next president needs to lead in addressing the critical needs of children and America’s future.
What Past Experiences Have Shown:
The Need to Eliminate the Current Disconnect

What Voters Care About

What Voters Think Elections Are About

The president has a responsibility to ensure the health, education, safety and security of America’s children.
How We’re Organized in Iowa

Children’s Policy Coalition (CPC):
Over 40 nonpartisan policy and advocacy organizations agreeing to raise child policy issues during elections, with candidates and their members throughout the state, co-staffed by CFPC and ECM.

Child and Family Policy Center (CFPC):
Leading child advocacy organization at the Iowa Capitol, with 25 years experience in connecting research and policy to improve child well-being, with full-time staffing to promote child policy and work with coalition.

Every Child Matters Education Fund (ECM):
Leading national organization working to make children, youth, and families a national political priority, with full-time staffing in Iowa and New Hampshire, as well as in Washington, D.C.
Why We Did a Voter Poll

To raise child policy to greater visibility in the primary electoral season starting in Iowa (and New Hampshire)

Primary Objective: To provide further information to candidates, the media, and voters that will produce that visibility and dialogue (not presenting answers but raising questions)

Secondary Objective: To better understand the differences across parties in how child policy is viewed and the implications for policy solutions
Primary Objective: Questions and Findings

What concerns do Iowa voters have about children, their future, and the threats they face?

How do these concerns rate in terms of other policy issues?

How will voters react to candidates who propose solutions to child policy issues – across age, gender, income, education, and party affiliation?
In thinking about the future, how confident are you that life for our children’s generation will be better than it has been for us?

When it comes to children’s wellbeing – including health, education and nutrition – is it your sense that the President and Congress need to invest more than they do now, less than they do now, or continue to invest at the level they do now?

Voters are concerned about what the future holds for children and want greater federal investments in them.
For each of these issues facing our country, tell me how important it is for the president to address – high priority, medium priority or low priority?

- Creating jobs and improving the economy: 81%
- Improving the health, education, and well-being of children: 77%
- Balancing the federal budget and reducing the deficit: 73%
- Pursuing terrorists in the U.S. and abroad: 72%
- Ensuring economic security for senior citizens: 66%
- Reducing poverty: 65%
- Protecting the environment: 56%
- Improving America’s standing in the world economy: 55%
- Promoting moral values in our country: 55%
- Reducing income inequality: 42%
- Reducing the size and scope of the federal government: 40%

Takeaway→ Voters rate children’s issues as a high priority for the next president.
Which one or two of these are the most important?

- Improving the health, education, and well-being of children: 29%
- Creating jobs and improving the economy: 23%
- Pursuing terrorists in the U.S. and abroad: 20%
- Balancing the federal budget and reducing the deficit: 20%
- Ensuring economic security for senior citizens: 13%
- Promoting moral values in our country: 10%
- Reducing the size and scope of the federal government: 9%
- Protecting the environment: 9%
- Reducing poverty: 9%
- Reducing income inequality: 7%
- Improving America’s standing in the world economy: 3%

Multiple responses accepted, so total may exceed 100%.

Voters rate children’s issues as a higher priority than any other issue.
In general, which party do you think would do a better job of addressing these issues. [Also can be both/neither]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percent of D’s who say D’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing poverty</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the health, education, and well-being of children</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring economic security for senior citizens</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the environment</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing income inequality</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating jobs and improving the economy</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the federal budget and reducing the deficit</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving America’s standing in the world economy</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting moral values in our country</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing terrorists in the U.S. and abroad</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the size and scope of the federal government</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, which party do you think would do a better job of addressing these issues. [Also can be both/neither]

Majorities of both parties think their party would do a better job addressing children’s needs.
In general, which party do you think would do a better job of improving the health, education, and well-being of children. [Also can be both/neither]

- D’s say D’s: 91%
- R’s say R’s: 69%
- I’s say D’s: 51%
- I’s say R’s: 17%
- I’s say equal/neither/NS: 32%

Takeaway→ Independents give edge to Democrats, but many say equal, neither or not sure.
Thinking about different priorities, if you had to choose, do you think when making budget decisions the federal government should focus more on the needs of children or the needs of the elderly? [If no answer, if you had to choose, which way would you lean?]

- **65+**
  - Children: 49%
  - Elderly: 24%
  - Both/Neither: 22%
  - Not Sure: 5%

- **Ind**
  - Children: 51%
  - Elderly: 20%
  - Both/Neither: 25%
  - Not Sure: 6%

- **Dem**
  - Children: 53%
  - Elderly: 19%
  - Both/Neither: 23%
  - Not Sure: 5%

- **Rep**
  - Children: 55%
  - Elderly: 21%
  - Both/Neither: 23%
  - Not Sure: 3%

- **All**
  - Children: 53%
  - Elderly: 19%
  - Both/Neither: 24%
  - Not Sure: 5%

**Takeaway**

Although presidential candidates more often speak to senior issues, voters are more concerned about children – across party affiliation & age.
I’m going to mention some things that presidential candidates might talk about as major elements of their agenda. Please tell me if this would impress you favorably or unfavorably if a candidate made this a major element of their agenda?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Impress favorably</th>
<th>Wouldn’t make a difference</th>
<th>Impress unfavorably</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse prevention</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing child poverty</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care assistance for working families</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanding child health coverage</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterschool programs</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal access to preschool</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free community college tuition</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaway→

Overall, voters want presidential candidates to present platforms on child policies.
I’m going to mention some things that Presidential candidates might talk about as major elements of their agenda. Please tell me if this would impress you favorably or unfavorably if a candidate made this a major element of their agenda? [Favorable percentage only]

- Child abuse prevention: Female 81%, Male 72%
- Reducing child poverty: Female 74%, Male 71%
- Child care assistance for working families: Female 68%, Male 67%
- Afterschool programs: Female 66%, Male 58%
- Expanding child health coverage: Female 69%, Male 57%
- Universal access to preschool: Female 64%, Male 56%
- Free community college tuition: Male 46%, Female 62%

Takeaway—Women voters in particular want to hear where presidential candidates stand on child policies.
Top-line Conclusions from Polling

Voters are concerned about the future of children and feel there are major threats to their wellbeing.

Voters rank these at the top, not the bottom, of their concerns.

Voters, across gender, age, education, income, and party affiliation, want candidates to provide child policy agendas.

Voters will view candidates favorably who present their solutions to improving services and supports for children.
What Child Policy and Advocacy Organizations Can Do with These Findings

Share findings with their own members and constituencies

Use select polling questions and responses as infographics

Draw upon polling in own reports and guest opinions and media presentations

Consider questions when doing own polling

Use in discussions with media, colleagues, lawmakers, and candidates (presidential and otherwise)

Takeaway→ Child advocates can and need to be a powerful force in the 2016 elections.
Objective Two: Questions and Implications to Advocacy in a Partisan World

What are the similarities and differences on the priorities voters place on different issues by party identification?

What are the similarities and differences on what are perceived as threats to children and their well-being?

What are the similarities and differences on some underlying frames about the role of families and the role of government?

How does this relate to reality and are any “purple” solutions possible?
Where D’s and R’s (and I’s) *Agree* in Ranking Policy Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Priority</th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating jobs and improving the economy</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving America’s standing in the world economy</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaway → Jobs and economy rank relatively high but not at levels in previous elections.
## What D’s Emphasize Over R’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving children’s health, education and well-being</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring economic security for seniors</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing poverty</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing income inequality</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the environment</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Takeaway:**

For D’s and I’s, kids trump anything else and have general election implications.
## What R’s Emphasize Over D’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One of Top One or Two Priorities</th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing terrorists at home and abroad</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing the federal budget and reducing the deficit</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting moral values in our country</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing the size and scope of the federal government</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Takeaway→**

R’s have dominant concerns that trump D issues (but kids do better than others)
What D’s, R’s, and I’s See as Greatest Threats

I’m going to mention things that could be considered threats to children’s and opportunity for success. Please tell me if you think this is a major threat, a minor threat, or not a threat. [Major threat shown]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral decay in society</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of proper role models</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of parental engagement</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of higher education</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe neighborhoods</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial discrimination</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate k-12 education</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income inequality</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to quality child care and preschool programs</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaway→

D’s see economics and inequity; R’s see personal and community responsibility.
How D’s, R’s and I’s See How Best to Bring Up Children

Choice of answer from two options

Based on your experience and what you have heard, do you think it is better for a child to be taught obedience or self-reliance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot choose/both (VOL)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaway→
R’s place more value on ‘playing by the rules’ than D’s or I’s.
What This All Means in Terms of Government’s Role (Frame)

Which of the following statements do you agree with more:

A. Government efforts to make health care, education and child care more affordable are integral in helping parents raise their children responsibly.

B. A responsible parent should not look to government for any help in raising their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D’s</th>
<th>R’s</th>
<th>I’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Government</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Parent</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Both/Cannot Choose (VOL)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Not Sure</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaway→ This is about as polarized in partisan thinking as it gets!
What the Research Shows: This is Not Either/Or

Social science research is clear that there are many factors associated with healthy child development, including – family socio-economic status, family stress, parental addiction or depression or isolation or conflict, early and unprepared parenting, and neighborhood safety and support.

Raising children is not rocket science – it is much more complex than propelling an inert piece of metal through empty space.

Government has a role, but only a role, in creating the conditions for children to succeed. Particularly, however, government has a recognized role in providing overall opportunities for success (ensuring a level playing field).

Takeaway→
Ensuring child success involves family and society/economics and values.
What We Know About Poverty and Inequality Among Children – Child Poverty

Poverty Levels in the United States by Age

Takeaway

Poverty is hazardous to child health and is way too high.
What We Know About Poverty and Inequality Among Children -- Inequality

Children 0-5 in United States by Race/Ethnicity and Percent of Poverty

- White, Non-Hispanic:
  - Less Than 100% Poverty: 15.6%
  - 100-199% Poverty: 19.4%
  - 200-299% Poverty: 18.0%
  - 300-399% Poverty: 14.7%
  - 400+% Poverty: 32.3%

- Hispanic:
  - Less Than 100% Poverty: 35.1%
  - 100-199% Poverty: 30.9%
  - 200-299% Poverty: 15.3%
  - 300-399% Poverty: 7.9%
  - 400+% Poverty: 10.8%

- African American:
  - Less Than 100% Poverty: 41.8%
  - 100-199% Poverty: 23.1%
  - 200-299% Poverty: 25.6%
  - 300-399% Poverty: 13.9%
  - 400+% Poverty: 7.8%

- All:
  - Less Than 100% Poverty: 24.4%
  - 100-199% Poverty: 23.1%
  - 200-299% Poverty: 16.5%
  - 300-399% Poverty: 11.9%
  - 400+% Poverty: 24.1%

Takeaway →

Child poverty cannot be addressed without addressing inequity.
What We Know About Family Impact on Children’s Future

P.A.R.E.N.T.S. Science

- **P**rotective Factors (Strengthening Families)
- **A**dverse Childhood Experiences (Center for Disease Control)
- **R**esiliency (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- **E**pigenetics (Genetics)
- **N**eurobiology (Brain Research)
- **T**oxic Stress (Center on the Developing Child)
- **S**ocial Determinants of Health (World Health Organization)

The primary and most foundational contributor to healthy child development is a **safe, stable, and nurturing home environment**.

Takeaway→ Children depend upon responsible parents for their success.
What We Know About the Status of Families Today in Providing Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Homes

This is the first time in our country’s history where children, overall, face the prospect of growing up less healthy, living less long lives, and being less equipped to compete and lead in a world economy.

The reason is that often multiple risk factors (single parenting, poverty, adolescent parenting, parental depression, social isolation, lack of education to provide a decent living, unsafe neighborhoods, drug involvement, family conflict and violence, etc.) are present in families. Their prevalence of vulnerable families is in a proportion equivalent to the rates of school dropout, lack of mastery of basic reading and math skills by fourth grade, and even readiness for kindergarten – e.g. at least one in four vulnerable families and the same proportion of children not succeeding – and the solutions include strengthening families and communities that go beyond public and professional services.

Takeaway→
Too many children are vulnerable because of family stress.
What this Means to for Our Advocacy

We need to recognize the importance of fostering personal responsibility and developing community-based approaches to strengthening families, “manning up,” and giving families the tools to help their children succeed.

We need to recognize there is not a “level playing field” for children or their families and work to provide one that addresses economic and social disadvantage.

We need to focus on FAIRNESS, RESPONSIBILITY, OPPORTUNITY, COMMUNITY AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT and OUR CHILDREN/ THE FUTURE.

Takeaway → Child advocates need to promot emore than an R or D approach to child policy, within a broader American frame.
What this Means to for Advocacy – Both/And Messages and Policy Solutions

Parents are their child’s first teacher, nurse, safety officer, and spiritual guide.

It takes a village (not a multi-disciplinary team of professionals) to raise a child.
   -- Value and strengthen families and community supports

Government has a special responsibility to ensure the health and safety of children, when their parents cannot (income, disability, place) or will not (stress, immaturity, affliction).

America is founded on providing educational opportunities for every child to succeed to the fullest of their abilities.
   -- Address education, health, economic, and special needs.

Takeaway→

Child advocates need to promote these both/and solutions for both policy and political reasons.