The *Think Babies*TM Election Toolkit is designed to help advocates, like you, highlight issues facing infants, toddlers, and their families in the presidential election, and educate the candidates on what babies and families need to thrive.

Presidential elections bring into focus the priorities of voters across the country and help set the agenda for the next Administration, the next Congress, and the next term for state and local policymakers. With the White House, 35 Senators, 435 Representatives in the House, 11 Governors, and thousands of state and local lawmakers up for election in 2020, advocates have countless opportunities to educate candidates and turn them into champions who will make the needs of families their priority. Once elected, these candidates will make critical decisions that impact families and, with the right focus, can help ensure that all babies have what they need for a strong start in life. As people who are passionate about the youngest children and their families, we play a critical role by ensuring that all candidates have the information they need to make these decision, and by elevating the discussion of these issues among all of the candidates, the media and voters. While many issues being discussed during the election cycle impact babies and families, this toolkit will focus on educating candidates on three key areas that are critical to families with infants and toddlers:

* Affordable, quality child care
* Paid family and medical leave
* Access to health coverage

There are many ways you can leverage the tools here to call on 2020 candidates to *Think Babies* and make their potential a priority, including:

* **Email candidates’ campaigns** to provide them with resources as they make decisions about policy priorities.
* **Engage candidates directly** by participating in local and virtual events and asking questions about infant and toddler issues at candidate forums.
* **Post on social media** to ask candidates where they stand on the policies and investments that babies and families need.
* **Submit a letter to the editor** to your state and/or local media outlet, highlighting the policies and investments needed for young children in your community.
* **Spread the word** about the toolkit in your community through newsletters, blogs, social media, or via email and call on your community to amplify infant and toddler issues. Encourage others to join you to *Be* a *Big Voice for Little Kids*™.
* **Vote.**

While the resources in this toolkit are primarily aimed at the presidential race, they can be modified based upon your state and local elections. To learn more about candidates running in state and local elections, visit [NGA.org](http://www.nga.org) and [USA.gov](http://www.usa.gov).

*About Think Babies*

ZERO TO THREE created *Think Babies* to bring attention to what babies and their families need to thrive. *Think Babies* is a call to action for policymakers to prioritize the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families and invest in our future. Learn more at www.thinkbabies.org. Learn more at [www.thinkbabies.org](http://www.thinkbabies.org).

The *Think Babies* Election Toolkit is made possible by the generous support of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Perigee Fund. As a 501(c)(3) charity, ZERO TO THREE does not support or oppose any candidate. Our mission is to educate the public and candidates about the issues that impact babies and toddlers.

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Strategies to Engage and Educate Candidates

**The resources in this toolkit are designed to help you reach out to all presidential candidates to advocate on the issues that matter most to you. Whether it is in-person, at a virtual event, on social media, or through email, your engagement makes a difference. Feel free to adapt these materials to educate candidates in other federal, state, and local elections. Please reach out to educate all candidates for a given office. Your voice matters to the candidates running to represent you.**

In-Person & Virtual Events

“Town hall” meetings or candidate forums with voters are a great venue to share your concerns with candidates. Presidential candidates, as well as your state and local leaders, regularly hold these sessions throughout the campaign cycle and they are often open to the public. They usually include a question-and-answer session – giving you the opportunity to share the Think Babies message and ask the candidates about infant-toddler issues.

* **Find an event**: The Presidential Candidates’ Information section of the toolkit includes links to candidates’ websites where you can find the dates and locations of their town halls, virtual rallies, and other events. Sign up for their listservs or newsletters to get updates and check back to learn when presidential candidates may be hosting public forums. You can also visit [TownHallProject.com](https://townhallproject.com/) to find events for federal candidates on the ballot in 2020.
* **Prepare**: Once you have identified an event, prepare a brief statement or question beforehand. As you prep, be sure to review the Think Babies in the 2020 sample questions and the [Voter Guide to *Think Babies*](https://www.thinkbabies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ThinkBabies_VoterGuide.pdf) for more information on infant and toddler issues. You can also coordinate with other advocates in your community to make a stronger impact. Remember to practice what you want to say and be specific with questions. This toolkit also includes a worksheet to formulate your own questions to get you started. Always remember to pose open-ended questions.
* **Follow up**: Give the [Candidate Guide to *Think Babies*](https://www.thinkbabies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Candidate-Guide-to-Think-Babies.pdf?utm_source=invitation&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=thinkbabies&utm_content=candidateguide) in this toolkit to staff members at in-person events and be sure to follow up with a digital version of the guide after in-person and virtual events. Staff are a critical link in educating candidates and elevating issues. After an event, you can email the candidate and their staff to reinforce your message and thank them for their time. Don’t forget to provide your contact information and remind them about your areas of expertise – they may want to follow up with you down the road!

Social Media

Use social media to share Think Babies messages and buzz about what babies and families need to thrive. Social media is a great way to directly connect with all candidates while also amplifying infant and toddler issues with your networks. This toolkit includes sample social media posts that you can use or adapt, as well as the social media profiles for each candidate. Remember to use the #ThinkBabies hashtag and tag [@ZEROTOTHREE](https://twitter.com/ZEROTOTHREE?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) so we can amplify your posts.

Email

Use email to reach out to the campaigns directly and share information on the needs of babies and families. Use the sample email in the toolkit to get started, make sure to personalize your story and put a face to the challenges families experience as well as the benefits of supportive policies like paid family and medical leave, child care supports, and access to health care. Some campaigns have specific email addresses you can use, others ask you to fill out a form on their website. The Presidential Candidates’ Information section will identify how best to send an email to each candidate.

Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidate Contact Information and Stances on Infant and Toddler Issues

**This section of the toolkit includes the following information for each candidate:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Link to Twitter Profile |
|  | Link to Facebook Profile |
|  | Email address or link to email web form |
|  | Link to Schedule for in-person events |
|  | Link to candidate’s website |

Candidates are listed in alphabetical order by last name.

Former Vice President Joe Biden

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | <https://twitter.com/JoeBiden> |
|  | <https://www.facebook.com/joebiden> |
|  | [info@joebiden.com](mailto:info@joebiden.com) |
|  | <https://www.mobilize.us/joebiden/?source=action-center> |
|  | <https://joebiden.com> |
|  |  |

Senator Kamala Harris

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | https://twitter.com/KamalaHarris |
|  | https://www.facebook.com/KamalaHarris/ |
|  | [info@joebiden.com](mailto:info@joebiden.com) |
|  | <https://www.mobilize.us/joebiden/?source=action-center> |
|  | <https://joebiden.com/> |

Vice President Mike Pence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | https://twitter.com/Mike\_Pence |
|  | https://www.facebook.com/mikepence/ |
|  | <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/contact/> |
|  | <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/events/> |
|  | [http://www.DonaldJTrump.com](http://www.DonaldJTrump.com/?fbclid=IwAR1DmA-F5g3JKUmEnwoqkh-0qm6pyX519M_12UrDww4VtosPmqT7dPQQzAE) |

President Donald Trump

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump> |
|  | <https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/> |
|  | <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/contact/> |
|  | <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/events/> |
|  | <https://www.donaldjtrump.com> |

Sample Email to Candidates and Their Campaigns

As a **[INSERT YOUR PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]** from [**INSERT CITY AND STATE]**, I am writing to you on behalf of babies and parents in **[YOUR STATE].**

The first three years of a baby’s life shape all the rest. During this time, our brains grow faster than any later point in our lives. If elected, you will make decisions that impact the lives of babies across the country, with effects now and in the future.Every parent wants to give their child a strong start in life, but our policies have not kept up with the reality of parenting today and the challenges that families with young children face.

Babies and their families need: affordable, quality child care; comprehensive paid family and medical leave; and access to health coverage. These policies will help ensure that families in my community and across the country are able to provide their children with the opportunities they need to thrive. Comprehensive paid family and medical leave gives families crucial time to foster the early relationships that build strong brain connections and bond with their babies, as well as care for children with serious illnesses. Access to quality child care not only offers families a critical support for employment and education, it supports babies earliest learning laying the groundwork for future success, including strong cognitive skills, higher scores on math and language measures, and the social and emotional skills critical to all learning. Access to affordable health care means infants and toddlers can receive the critical physical and mental health services and treatment they need to build a strong foundation for their futures.

**Paid family and medical leave**: The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), guaranteeing job protection for unpaid leave, was passed nearly thirty years ago, yet millions of American workers are at risk of either losing their jobs or financial hardship if they welcome a child into their family, get sick, or need to care for a loved one. Comprehensive paid family and medical leave will:

* Be inclusive of all working people, no matter where they live or the nature of their job;
* Provide all workers with comprehensive coverage of personal medical and family caregiving needs as reflected in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA);
* Allow sufficient time–at least 12 weeks–away from work to meet their care and health needs;
* Offer adequate wage replacement rates and benefit levels that make taking leave financially possible for everyone; and
* Protect workers from retaliation or adverse employment consequences for requesting or taking leave.

**Quality, affordable child care**: Nearly 8 in 10 voters support increasing funding for quality, affordable early care and learning programs. Working families need quality, affordable child care options now. Strong child care policy solutions will:

* Be properly funded and ensure that every eligible family can enroll their child in a high-quality program;
* Ensure that quality and safety standards are maintained;
* Provide enhanced federal, financial support for services for infants and toddlers to focus on improving quality and access; and
* Guarantee that child care providers can be paid a living wage.

**Access to health coverage**: States that have expanded Medicaid coverage have seen significant increases in the number of babies who receive that important benefit. The largest increases in children with new coverage were those whose parents had recently received coverage as part of their state expanding Medicaid. Together, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) cover more than 1/3 of all children, including more than half of all Black and Latino children. This coverage is critical because:

* Affordable health care means infants and toddlers can receive the critical services and treatment they need to build a strong foundation for their futures.
* Poverty is a strong predictor of developmental delays in children. Low-income and uninsured children are more likely than children from other income groups to have poor health and special health care needs. Yet these children are less likely to receive developmental screening.
* Access to regular health care and mental health treatment, especially for women, has been associated with healthier pregnancies and babies. The health of a child and their caregiver are inextricably linked. Extending Medicaid for pregnant women to 12 months post-partum, raising the eligibility levels, and including doula care would help meet the health needs of families.
* Medicaid expansion provides a strategy for states to provide health coverage and improve access for parents.

These policy solutions address the real needs of working families across our country. Each infant and toddler is born with unlimited potential. Together, they are our society’s next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. We can’t afford to squander the potential of a single child if our nation is to thrive. The future begins now, with babies.

To learn more about what babies and families need to thrive, visit <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0>.

Thank you.

**[NAME]**

Sample Social Media Posts and Graphics

**Share Think Babies messages through these social media posts to create a steady drumbeat and generate buzz about what babies and families need to thrive. Below are sample posts that you can use or adapt. Remember to use the #ThinkBabies hashtag and tag**[**@ZEROTOTHREE**](https://twitter.com/ZEROTOTHREE?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)**so we can amplify your posts.**

*Amplify – Call on your community to Think Babies in 2020*

* Our elected officials make critical decisions that impact families and can help ensure that all babies have what they need for a strong start in life. Help make sure candidates have all the information they need: <https://bit.ly/318ddNF> #ThinkBabies
* The greatest opportunity to influence a child’s success begins early when our brains grow faster than any later point in life. Get the tools and resources you need to urge candidates to #ThinkBabies: <http://bit.ly/2SMibum>
* Whether at a local townhall, during a debate, or on social media, each of us can educate all candidates to turn them into champions for babies. <https://bit.ly/318ddNF> #ThinkBabies
* As baby advocates, we play a critical role by ensuring that all candidates have the information they need to make crucial decisions that will impact families. Join in the momentum: <http://bit.ly/2SMibum> #ThinkBabies

*Educate – Inform candidates on how to Think Babies in the election and beyond*

* Families like mine need #paidleave, #childcare, and #healthcare to build a strong foundation for our babies. It’s time to #ThinkBabies in 2020 and make their potential our priority. [**INSERT CANDIDATES HANDLES**] <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0>
* As a [**INSERT PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE**], I know the importance of investing in the early years. If elected, how would you #ThinkBabies? <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0> [**INSERT CANDIDATES HANDLES**]
* #Election2020 brings into focus voters’ priorities and sets the agenda for the next Administration, Congress, and terms for policymakers across the country. Will babies be at the top of your list? #ThinkBabies <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0> [**INSERT CANDIDATES HANDLES**]
* My baby is my priority, and all babies need to be on candidates’ minds. How will you ensure that babies’ potential is a national priority? #ThinkBabies <https://bit.ly/373Gyg0> [**INSERT CANDIDATE HANDLES**]

[Click here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jmn8gkkmll04q90/AABt7GkQqvjlCGZx51RXbSjLa?dl=0) to download social media graphics.

Sample Letter to the Editor

**For tips on how to write a letter to the editor,** [*click here*](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/480-how-to-write-a-letter-to-the-editor-and-an-opinion-editorial)**.**

The **[INSERT DATE]** article **[“INSERT ARTICLE HEADLINE”]** addressed **[INSERT RELATED TOPIC]**. Of all the issues getting attention during the election cycle, the science tells us what must rise to the top. The greatest opportunity to influence a child’s success begins early when our brains grow faster than any later point in life.

This year, the presidential election will bring into focus the priorities of voters, like myself, and help set the agenda for the next Administration, the next Congress, and the next term for other policymakers on the ballot. These elected officials will make critical decisions that impact families now and, in the future, and can help ensure that all babies have what they need for a strong start in life.

As a **[INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]**, I am calling on 2020 candidates to share their plans to address the big challenges that the littlest among us face, including access to quality, affordable child care; paid leave; and health care. By doing so, they can ensure that all babies have what they need to thrive and set our country on the path to a strong future.

Sincerely,

**[NAME]**

**[TITLE]**

Questions for Candidates

Sample Opening Statement

“My name is **[NAME]** and I am **[INSERT YOUR PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]** in our community. My hope is that when you think about the future of **[STATE**], you think of families with infants and toddlers – because when babies thrive, we all benefit. My question for you is. . .”

Sample Questions

* What is your position on access to quality, affordable child care?
* How would you address ensuring families have time to bond with their babies in the earliest months when so much of their development is at stake?
* How would you address ensuring families have the time they need to take care of a child or other family member in the event of serious illness?
* How would you address ensuring all infants and toddlers have access to the physical and mental health coverage and care they need?

Formulating a Question

Developed by Every Child Matters

**To ask the most powerful question you can, that will elicit an equally powerful response, it is important to create and practice your question before an event. Use this worksheet to create your own message-based question to use at an event.**

1. Start with an introduction.

Give the candidate a simple introduction. This is as easy as stating your name and one other fact, such as why you are attending the event.

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am here for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Give a short story.

Giving a short story helps the candidate connect the question back to real life situations and gives more power to the question. Write a quick two or three sentences to tell a story related to the issue you would like to ask about.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Tie in the issue.

Give a follow up to your story that connects your personal story to a particular policy issue. Again, this doesn’t need to be long, just a quick sentence or two statement.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Hard ask.

This is where you flat out ask the candidate what they would do to help solve your problem. Do not offer them a solution, just ask the most basic question about the issue that you can and let them elaborate on it in their answer.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Put it all together to finalize your opening statement and question.

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Sample Email to Winning Candidates

**After the election, it is important to follow-up with winners as they transition from campaigning to lawmaking. Remind the winning candidate and their incoming staff to Think Babies as they lay out priorities for their term. It is important for advocates to keep the momentum going through continuous education and amplification of issues that matter to you, the constituent, and babies in your community.**

Congratulations on your success in the election.

As a **[INSERT YOUR PROFESSIONAL TITLE, ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERTISE, OR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO ISSUE]** from [**INSERT CITY AND STATE]**, I urge you to prioritize the needs of babies and their families as you prepare for your term.

The science is clear. Our brains grow faster in the first few years than any later point in life. Good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences are critical for building the solid foundation that babies need to thrive. Without these supports, their growing brains don’t develop as they should. This leads to life-long developmental, educational, social, and health challenges.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, public policy did not keep up with the reality of parenting and the challenges that families with young children face. The impacts of the current crisis are hitting families with young children particularly hard, deepening racial and socioeconomic gaps that impact babies even before they are born. And for the nearly 1 in 5 children who are born into poverty, we must do more to ensure our policies build a stronger future for them and our country. The persistent hardships of poverty that pervade many babies’ lives create chronic and unrelenting stress that undermines their development. All children should have the same opportunities to succeed. We should elevate policies that prioritize the needs of infants, toddlers, and their families no matter their zip code, income-level, race/ethnicity, or job description.

**Paid family and medical leave**: The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), guaranteeing job protection for unpaid leave, was passed nearly thirty years ago, yet millions of American workers are at risk of either losing their jobs or financial hardship if they welcome a child into their family, get sick, or need to care for a loved one. Comprehensive paid family and medical leave will:

* Be inclusive of all working people, no matter where they live or the nature of their job;
* Provide all workers with comprehensive coverage of personal medical and family caregiving needs as reflected in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA);
* Allow sufficient time–at least 12 weeks–away from work to meet their care and health needs;
* Offer adequate wage replacement rates and benefit levels that make taking leave financially possible for everyone; and
* Protect workers from retaliation or adverse employment consequences for requesting or taking leave.

**Quality, affordable child care**: Nearly 8 in 10 voters support increasing funding for quality, affordable early care and learning programs. Working families need quality, affordable child care options now. Strong child care policy solutions will:

* Be properly funded and ensure that every eligible family can enroll their child in a high-quality program;
* Ensure that quality and safety standards are maintained;
* Provide enhanced federal, financial support for services for infants and toddlers to focus on improving quality and access; and
* Guarantee that child care providers can be paid a living wage.

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* Affordable health care means infants and toddlers can receive the critical services and treatment they need to build a strong foundation for their futures.
* Poverty is a strong predictor of developmental delays in children. Low-income and uninsured children are more likely than children from other income groups to have poor health and special health care needs. Yet these children are less likely to receive developmental screening.
* Access to regular health care and mental health treatment, especially for women, has been associated with healthier pregnancies and babies. The health of a child and their caregiver are inextricably linked. Extending Medicaid for pregnant women to 12 months post-partum, raising the eligibility levels, and including doula care would help meet the health needs of families.
* Medicaid expansion provides a strategy for states to provide health coverage and improve access for parents.

These policy solutions address the real needs of working families across our country. Each infant and toddler is born with unlimited potential. Together, they are our society’s next generation of parents, workers, and leaders. We can’t afford to squander the potential of a single child if our nation is to thrive. The future begins now, with babies.

Congratulations again on your election. I look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that all babies have what they need for a strong start in life.

**[NAME]**