

# 2008 Elections

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## IDEAS FOR ADVOCACY THROUGH THE ELECTION PROCESS

*The following is a compilation of possible election activities in which AAP chapters may participate. AAP members may also participate individually in other campaign-related activities not listed below.*

- Host a candidate forum.
- Invite candidates to your chapter meeting.
- Attend local candidate forums and debates to ask questions about child health issues.
- Establish an “Agenda for Children” and ask candidates to sign a pledge of support.
- Invite candidates to present at grand rounds.
- Invite candidates to spend a day in your office/hospital/clinic.
- Host a reception with your colleagues.
- Interview candidates and report what they say in your chapter newsletter.
- Develop and publicize the results of a candidate questionnaire.
- Host a voter registration drive at your chapter meeting or in your professional setting.
- Develop informational mailings to send to candidates.
- Establish a political action committee (PAC), if allowed by chapter tax status.
- Develop and disseminate a “candidate pledge for children.”
- Canvass voters on behalf of children.
- Incorporate media activities into campaign activities.
- Develop and disseminate the results of a voter attitudes poll.
- Take advantage of legislators’ “free time” to meet with them during recesses and session adjournment.
- Sponsor child-voting activities in schools.
- Organize a “Children’s Inaugural” in the capital after the election.

\* Please consult your chapter legal counsel/accountant before pursuing campaign/election activities. 501(c)(3) chapters must invite all candidates from major political parties to events in order to ensure that they do not appear to endorse one of the candidates. Additional information is available from the Division of State Government Affairs at 800-433-9016 or the Department of Federal Affairs at 800-336-5475.

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### Before the Election, AAP Chapters can...

#### ***Sponsor Candidate Forums***

In recent campaign cycles, a number of AAP chapters have held successful child health forums with state and federal candidates. One way to attract candidates to your forum is to invite a wide range of audience members including chapter members, other children's health advocates, parents, the media, and other interested individuals. This packet contains some possible questions for candidates that you may want to use at your candidate forum. Since "all politics is local," you should include questions specific to your local political environment as well. **501(c)(3) chapters must make sure that they do not appear to favor one candidate for a public office over another.** If they do, they will endanger their tax-exempt status. Therefore, 501(c)(3) chapters must invite candidates from all major parties in order to avoid this appearance.

#### ***Conduct Candidate Surveys***

Your chapter may wish to conduct a survey of the 2008 candidates to learn about their positions on access to care, immunization policy, and other children's health issues. Open-ended questions give candidates the opportunity to present and explain their positions; "yes" and "no" answers will not provide the desired level of detail on specific issues of concern. The questions for candidates included in this packet may be of use to your chapter in this process. Survey responses can also be used to remind candidates of campaign promises once they are in office. **501(C)(3) chapters must make sure that they survey all of the major candidates for a specific office.** It is a good idea to make the results of the survey available to the media. If your chapter does present survey results to the media or to the public prior to the election, make sure that the responses of all candidates are included, and that they are not edited.

#### ***Inform and Educate Candidates***

Data, reports, facts sheets, and related materials are valuable resources for candidates. Providing them to campaigns is a good way to educate candidates and their staffers about children's health issues. Providing information to campaigns also helps to establish pediatricians as a resource for candidates during and after the election. It is a good idea to include a cover letter with any information that you send to the campaign. The letter should encourage the candidate to address the issues that you raised, and it should encourage the campaign staff to call on the chapter as a resource. **Once again, 501(C)(3) chapters should send the information to all candidates for a given office at the same time.**

*For more information on candidate forums, candidate surveys, candidate information materials, or other election-related items, please contact the Academy's Department of Federal Affairs at 800-336-5475 or the Division of State Government Affairs at 800-433-9016.*

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## IDEAS FOR ADVOCACY THROUGH THE ELECTION PROCESS

### After the Election, AAP Chapters can...

#### ***Visit Newly Elected/Re-elected Officials***

Turnover is a natural result of elections, but term limits, redistricting and retirements will cause more turnover than usual at the state and federal level. With so many newcomers to key policy positions, it is important for AAP chapters to establish a relationship with your new public officials shortly after the election.

It is customary for leaders of interest groups to pay a courtesy call to a newly elected or re-elected officeholder. These meetings may occur in the state capital or Washington, D.C., depending on the public official, but the best access to an official may occur in his or her home state or district. These meetings can serve to educate the official about children's health issues and to highlight your legislative goals for the upcoming session. Reports and other data can be presented to the public official as background for his or her work on these issues. Be sure to include your name, address and contact information in the materials. If you or someone else is going to visit a legislator, it is recommended that you send a contact that practices or lives in the lawmaker's district.

Keep in mind that the purpose of such a visit is to get acquainted with the public official and to serve as a resource on children's health issues. You can address specific bills at a later meeting. This visit should help to lay the groundwork for future contacts with the elected official and his or her staff.

The importance of staff cannot be emphasized enough. Building relationships with staff is oftentimes as important as building the relationship with the officeholder. Staff does much of the work, and they are the ones who contact outside groups as they conduct legislative research. Besides writing a follow-up letter to the officeholder to thank him or her for meeting with you, also remember to write follow-up letters to any staffers with whom you met.

#### ***Plan Special Inaugural Activities***

Once the election has taken place, planning for the inauguration begins. A chapter may wish to contact their state's inauguration planning committee and to suggest that a "Children's Inaugural" be held. Events such as this can help to focus the new governor and legislators as they begin their work on the health and well being of children.