



Caucusing for Afterschool

A Brief Guide to Iowa Activities

Summer 2019

Who's Running for President in 2020?

More than 700 people have officially filed to run for president in 2020. Luckily, many are not likely viable, meaning they have little chance of garnering enough votes in the caucuses and primaries to get close to the official ballot in 2020. There are around 20 Democratic candidates that are most likely to be viable in the caucuses and two Republicans, as of the summer of 2019.

For information on each of these candidates running for president in 2020, visit Ballotpedia online at https://ballotpedia.org/List_of_registered_2020_presidential_candidates.

The presidential election isn't until November 2020. Why educate candidates now?

It is important to start early to educate the top candidates for any office so you can shape their agenda going into the campaign season closer to November 2020. The more often a candidate hears about an issue on the campaign trail, the more likely they are to consider it a priority among many other policy issues. That is why having multiple advocates across the state communicating with candidates directly or through media is important to having influence down the road with elected officials.

In Iowa, we get more attention early on in the presidential campaign season because of our First-In-The-Nation Status. This refers to the date of our caucuses, where the pool of candidates is narrowed down to several top choices. Often, this provides the top candidates more media attention, greater fundraising power, and greater name recognition among the voting public. This translates into greater success in other states in their caucuses or primaries. Candidates spend a lot of time in Iowa because we have a lot of influence over this early campaign season horse race.

What should I be doing to educate candidates in Iowa right now?

There are several ways to communicate with candidates: directly at candidate events and through the media.

Candidate Events

Candidate events include events coordinated by individual campaigns, political party events like those hosted by the Iowa Democratic Party or Republican Party of Iowa (there are also other political parties, but these are the major two), as well as events coordinated by organizations or associations such as the NAACP, school districts, and other entities. These events can be small, for instance at a local coffee shop

or someone's home, to large rallies with lots of people in attendance. You are more likely to speak directly to a candidate at a smaller event.

An important opportunity to take advantage of each year is the *Register's* Political Soapbox series at the Iowa State Fair. This daily event at the Fair gives each candidate a chance to speak with Fairgoers at specified times throughout the two weeks of the Fair. This year, the Fair runs from August 8 through 18. The Soapbox is usually located just off the main concourse at the east side of the Varied Industries Building. This is a chance to get close to a candidate and ask them questions.

Keep up on where the candidates will be online at <http://data.desmoinesregister.com/iowa-caucus/candidate-tracker/index.php>. This tool allows you to track candidate events by city or date.

At these events, make sure to find out if there are opportunities to ask questions of the candidates. If you are able to ask a question, do so! Here are a few ideas related to afterschool funding:

- Afterschool programs for school-age children are a big need in Iowa since we have many parents working outside the home. When you are president, how will you make sure that youth are safe and in enriching environments when school is out and parents are working?
- Older youth, not just elementary-age children, benefit from afterschool programs that develop important skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. When you are president, how will you promote the expansion of afterschool programming to arm our young people with the skills necessary to be successful later in life?
- It is estimated that over 130,000 youth in Iowa, from kindergarten through 12th grade, would participate in an afterschool program if it was available to them in their community. When you are president, how will you ensure access to programming across Iowa and our country, especially in hard-to-serve rural communities?
- High quality afterschool programs have been shown to positively impact behavior and academic success. When you are president, how will you expand access to afterschool and summer learning programs so we have better youth outcomes on a bigger scale than today?

Even if you don't get to ask a question, be prepared to approach the candidate directly and ask your question, perhaps as they are walking to their vehicle on the way to the next event. Some candidates may stick around after the event. These are also good times to catch a candidate and educate them on afterschool!

Media

Candidates (often more likely their staff) track on the news from the communities they are visiting so they are prepared to speak to voters. Consider submitting a letter to the editor or op-ed (editorial) to your local paper in advance of a candidate event to educate them on how afterschool is a key part of your community.

If you have a connection to a local afterschool program, have them approach local media about running a feature story about the program in advance of the candidate event or events. A feature story would include images and a story on the program and its positive impacts on the community and youth it serves.

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance is happy to help develop a template letter to the editor, op-ed, or feature story for you to individualize and submit to your local media. Please contact Michelle Rich at mrich@sppg.com or 504-220-9860 if you'd like help with media outreach.

Site Visits

Site visits are one of the most effective advocacy tools in our arsenal. Consider inviting a candidate or elected official, like your state representative and senators, to your program to show them what you do in action. See our corresponding "Site Visit Guide" for detailed instructions on how to host an inspiring site visit.

Get Youth Involved

Also effective in getting a candidate's or elected official's attention is letting youth do the talking. Consider having participating youth take the lead in reaching out to candidates or elected officials by inviting them to the program or developing and releasing a feature story on their program. Even better, have youth submit their own Op Ed to your local paper to make their case for supporting afterschool programs in their community.

Where can I get more information on Caucusing for Afterschool?

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance wants to help get advocates engaged this caucus season. For materials, information, and help conducting outreach, please contact Michelle Rich or Britney Samuelson with the Iowa Afterschool Alliance.

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