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Website reports 'Children First' election responses

Non-profit child-advocacy organization Children First for Oregon released the results of its first candidate questionnaire this month, posing the responses of state legislative candidates to children's issues on their website.

"We want voters to remember children this November," said Marie Hoeven, executive director for Children First for Oregon. "As a state, we need to do a better job of caring for our kids and the first step is to make sure kids are part of the equation when voters elect our state lead-

ers."

The Children First website, www.childrenfirstfororegon.org, reports legislative candidates views on issues related to child well being, including their experiences with children's policy to date.

"This questionnaire provides an opportunity for adults to be well-informed this election and make important choices to help our children," she said.

Oregon has failed in its attention to children and teens in past years, with little improvement last year, making a grade

of "C-" on the 1999 Report Card:

The Status of Children in Oregon, also produced by Children First. For example, the Report Card cites a juvenile substance abuse report in which at least 19 percent of eighth graders reported using illicit drugs, alcohol or cigarettes. National numbers reported in the 2000 Kids Count Data Book, a compilation of state profiles on child well being by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, reveal that Oregon has one of the highest high school dropout rates in the country (ages 16-19). That ranks

Oregon 45 of 51 (51 is the worst) states with a 57 percent dropout rate in 1997.

Oregon also has one of the highest percentages of teens not attending school and not working (ages 16-19). Oregon ranks 40 of 51 with 63 percent of high school dropouts non-working in 1997. Nationwide, Oregon ranks 27th overall in child well being.

"We think the state can and must do better. This candidate survey is another step in our effort to make children a priority among the electorate and state leaders," she said.