



Topeka, Kansas – Kids Voting USA today announced the election of Dr. Diana Carlin as Chairman of the Board of Directors. Dr. Carlin is a professor of communication studies and former dean of the Graduate School and International Programs at the University of Kansas, where she has been a faculty member since 1987. Her research is in political communication with an emphasis on political debates, youth involvement in politics, speechwriting and women in politics. Carlin served on the advisory board for the Commission on Presidential Debates from 1987-2000 and created DebateWatch, a voter education program for the Commission, through a grant from the Ford Foundation. Carlin and her research partners recently published a book on the DebateWatch project. Carlin is serving her second term on the Kids Voting USA board. She also has served on the Board of Directors of Kids Voting Kansas since 1993 and served as chair from 1999-2004.

Other members of the Kids Voting USA Board of Directors are: Mary Petty, vice chair, *St. Petersburg Times*; Javier Aldape, secretary-treasurer, the E.W. Scripps Company; Geoff Gonella, past chair, Cornerstone Governmental Affairs; Peter Harkness, *Governing* magazine; Pamela Johnson, Reynolds Journalism Institute, University of Missouri; and Mark Morneau, Gannett Co., Inc.

Carlin replaces Geoff Gonella, President and Founder of Cornerstone Government Affairs in Washington D.C., as chair. Gonella will remain an active director on the Board. Gonella said: “Diana and Rachel Willis, the new executive director, have worked together for many years as part of the Kansas Press Association and the Kansas chapter of Kids Voting USA and have an excellent working relationship. Diana understands our organization as well as anyone, has tremendous institutional knowledge about past, present and future initiatives and understands the needs of not only the affiliate organizations but also the national office.”

Kids Voting USA was founded in 1988 by three Arizona businessmen who learned during a fishing trip to Costa Rica that the country’s voter turnout is typically around 90 percent. This high turnout was attributed to a tradition of children accompanying their parents to the polls. The men were intrigued by the idea, but also recognized a missing link to education. They launched a school-based pilot project in a Phoenix suburb that expanded into a national program in 1992. Kids Voting USA exposes students to democracy and civic responsibility through a combination of classroom activities and an authentic voting experience. Working with teachers and election coordinators throughout the country, KVUSA affiliates are working to create the next generation of informed, involved citizens. Kids Voting Kansas was part of the original pilot group. Today Kids Voting operates affiliates in 25 states. More than 1.8 million students went to the polls in the 2008 election and several million more participated in classroom activities on civic education.

Carlin, expressed enthusiasm about her new role with the Kids Voting USA organization: “It is an honor to serve the organization in this leadership role. Kids Voting has a track record of educating future voters and energizing eligible high school voters. The organization’s new management through the Kansas Press Association offers new opportunities for growth, and I look forward to working with executive director Rachel Willis and the board to expand the program and improve the education programs for the 2010 elections.”

###

Kids Voting USA is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to secure the future of democracy by preparing young people to be educated, engaged voters. Approximately four million K-12 students participate in Kids Voting USA through its 50 affiliates in 25 states. For more information, visit www.kidsvotingusa.org.

Media Contacts:

Rachel Willis, Executive Director, Kids Voting USA
rwillis@kidsvotingusa.org or 785-271-6350