

## Citizen Obligations, Responsibilities, and Civic Action

Citizens in the United States have many obligations and responsibilities. An obligation is something a person has to do and a responsibility is something a person should do. Some obligations are activities that citizens do every day. For example, obeying or following the law is an obligation. There are federal, state, and local laws and everyone has to follow them. Laws keep order and keep people safe.

One example of an obligation is paying taxes. There are federal, state, and local taxes that everyone must pay. Taxes pay for different services and programs that benefit everyone.

Some obligations don't impact citizens every day, but they are still important and required. The right to a trial by a jury of your peers is guaranteed to every person in the United States, whether the person is or is not a citizen. When a citizen receives a summons, or notice to perform jury duty you must appear at the correct courthouse on the correct day.

Another obligation is registering for selective service. All males between the ages of 18-25 have to register for selective service. Right now, the United States military is made up of volunteers. If there is a crisis and the United States needed to expand the military quickly, they would select men from the selective service list to serve in the military (Congress has not decided whether to change the law to also require women to serve.)

### Define the following terms in your own words:

Obligation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### What are four obligations you read about?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Citizens also have many responsibilities. Even though responsibilities are not required, they are still important. Effective citizens are responsible citizens and fulfill their responsibilities in order to make their community a better place.

Voting is an expectation of every responsible citizen. Government laws, policies, and regulations impact your life, and by voting you get to say what's important to you. Attending civic meetings, such as your city council meetings, is another responsibility. These meetings provide you with an opportunity to listen to and speak with your elected leaders in person. At these meetings, you can have your voice heard about what is important to you as a member of the community.

Another responsibility is one of the freedoms listed in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — the right to petition the government. A common way that citizens petition the government is through collecting signatures in support of a demand that the government take action on an issue. Running for office is another responsibility of effective citizens. In the United States, citizens can run for local, state, or federal office. By running for office, you can help create laws and be a good representative for your community.

Finally, a responsibility of citizens is volunteering for community service. Citizens at any age can identify issues in their community, organize with others in their community, and create solutions to help fix that issue.

**What are five examples of responsible and effective citizenship?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.