

6-3 NOTES

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

The Big Idea

American citizenship involves great privileges and serious responsibilities.

Main Ideas

- Citizenship in the United States is determined in several ways.
- Citizens are expected to fulfill a number of important duties.
- Active citizen involvement in government and the community is encouraged.

Main Idea 1: Citizenship in the United States is determined in several ways

- Anyone born in the United States or U.S. territory is a citizen, as is anyone whose parent is a citizen.
- Foreign-born people whose parents are not citizens can become **naturalized citizens**.
- Legal immigrants may not vote or hold public office; the U.S. government can **deport** immigrants who break the law.
- Legal immigrants may request naturalization after living in the United States for five years.
- Naturalized citizens cannot become president or vice president and can lose their citizenship.

Becoming a Citizen

To become a citizen, one must:

- Be over 18 and support themselves financially or have someone assume financial responsibility for them.
- Be law-abiding and support the U.S. Constitution.
- Demonstrate understanding of written and spoken English.
- Show basic knowledge of U.S. history and government.
- Go before a naturalization court and take an oath of allegiance to the United States.

Main Idea 2: Citizens are expected to fulfill a number of important duties.

- For a representative democracy to work, Americans need to fulfill their civic duties.
- Duties include
 - Participating in elections
 - Obeying laws
 - Paying taxes
 - Defending the nation
 - Men over 18 may be required to serve in the military in the event of a **draft**.
 - Serving on juries

Main Idea 3: Active citizen involvement in government and the community is encouraged.

- Taking part in the elections process by voting may be a citizen's most vital duty.
- Citizens should be informed about issues and candidates before voting.
- Americans may choose to campaign for candidates or issues.
- Many people help campaigns by giving money to **political action committees** (PACs).

Americans can influence government and help the community.

- Work with **interest groups**, groups of people who share a common interest that motivates them to take political action.
- Write letters to government leaders.
- Attend city council meetings.
- Volunteer for community service groups.
 - Neighborhood watch groups can help the police.
 - American Red Cross helps people in times of natural disasters and other emergencies.
 - Girl and Boy Scouts can help the environment and their community.