

**WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE CITIZEN  
IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?**

*by*

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## WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE CITIZEN IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?

In thinking about our topic today, "What Are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?" I could not help recalling the lament of Benjamin Rush. In a letter to a friend, written in 1788, he expressed sentiments that you or I, or any conscientious citizen might hold today in the year 1999.

Benjamin Rush was a physician by profession who became a political leader out of a sense of civic duty. If he had had his "druthers," Rush would have devoted all his time to science. But the times were such that he felt obligated to enter political life. His contributions included:

- Signing the Declaration of Independence—a virtual death warrant for the 55 men who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the cause of freedom.
- Serving as Surgeon General in the Continental Army.
- Founding the first American Antislavery Society.
- Playing a prominent role in the Pennsylvania Convention to ratify the Constitution.

In a letter to his friend, Jeremy Belknap, Rush wrote:

I pant for the time when the establishment of the new government, and the safety to individuals which shall arise from it, shall excuse men who like myself wish only to be passengers, from performing the duty of sailors on board the political ship in which our all is embarked. And I have yielded to a deep sense of the extreme danger to my country, in quitting the cabin for a station at the pump. As soon as the storm is over, and our bark safely moored, the first wish of my heart will be to devote the whole of my time to the peaceable pursuits of science and to the pleasures of social and domestic life.

Rush's language is that of the 18th century, but his longing to devote his "whole time" to his profession and to "the pleasures of social and domestic life," are sentiments akin to those of many Americans on this the eve of the 21st century.

Although our record of civic service could not even come close to matching that of Rush, far too many of us wish to be excused from performing the duty of "sailors" on board "the political ship." Yet we know, as Rush did, that there never was—and there never will be—a time when "our bark is safely moored" and no more challenges face us as a people. Living together as Americans poses problems; living with the other peoples of the world poses still more problems—and we have to face them. We, too, must take our places as "sailors at the pump," if we are to maintain and improve our constitutional democracy. There are, however, some perplexities—something maybe even slightly schizophrenic in our American attitudes toward government and about our roles as citizens.

On the one hand, we recognize that the freedom we cherish cannot be secure unless we take part in public life and in our own self-governance. On the other hand, we resist doing so, preferring instead to pursue our own interests and our private lives. Those contradictory tendencies have, in fact, been characteristics of us as a people throughout our history. From our founding we have been drawn both to classical republicanism and to the natural rights philosophy which undergirds liberalism. Classical republicanism emphasizes civic virtue, moral education, and putting the common good before personal desires. Liberalism asserts the primacy of the individual. Liberalism is not a single or a simple theoretical position, but its central tenets can be summarized for our purposes in these four propositions:

1. The individual, his freedom and his rights are the supreme value.
2. Liberalism draws on the natural rights philosophy. Natural rights—including the classic rights to life, liberty, and property—exist independently of government. As human beings, we are born with natural rights or as one modern philosopher has it, they "began before the game started."
3. The purpose of government, which men themselves create, is to secure those rights. If it fails to do so, the people have the right (some would say the duty) to alter or abolish the government.
4. Individuals are free to pursue their own interests and to determine their own conception of the good.

It is said that the United States is the most classically liberal polity in the developed world. Given Americans longstanding belief in these tenets of liberalism, their strong distrust of the state and their insistence that the powers of government should be strictly limited should come as no surprise. Today, as Mary Ann Glendon has observed, "it is almost obligatory for American politicians of both the right and left to profess mistrust of government."

An important debate currently is underway in our country which bears resemblance to the debate which engaged Americans at the time of our founding: whether the rights of the individual or the promotion of the common good should be the major purpose of government. There are those whose liberal convictions are deep and strong. They insist that the individual and his rights are the supreme value or as Ronald Dworkin says "Rights are trumps." Any

encroachment on an individual's freedom is to be resisted. And because they are seen as violative of liberal principles, social and group rights are unacceptable.

Arrayed against the liberal camp are the communitarians who take a nearly opposite view. They contend that liberalism is too rights-centered, but just as liberalism does not exclude obligations, communitarianism does not jettison rights. Even so, communitarians hold that the good society is built through mutual support and group action, not atomistic choice and individual liberty.

Some critics compare communitarianism to benevolent feudal relationships where rights exist, but where obligations to the whole are foremost. Today's prominent communitarians—Etzioni, Galston, Sandel, Bellah, Putnam, and Glendon—leave no doubt that the weight of communitarian theory rests on the obligations of citizens rather than on their rights.

To get a flavor of their thought listen to Amitai Etzioni, founder of The Communitarian Network.

"We should for a transition period of, say, the next decade put a tight lid on the manufacturing of new rights. The incessant issuance of new rights, like the wholesale printing of currency, causes a massive inflation of rights that devalue their moral claims." (Etzioni, 1993, The Spirit of Community.)

Mary Ann Glendon's language in her influential book Rights Talk is more measured than Etzioni's. Even so, she argues that

"Our simplistic rights talk has been carried into spheres of American society where a sense of personal responsibility and of civic obligation traditionally have been nourished.... A near-aphasia concerning responsibilities makes it seem legitimate to accept the benefits of living in a democratic social welfare republic without assuming the corresponding personal and civic obligations....

Rights talk encourages our all-too-human tendency to place the self at the center of our moral universe." (Glendon, 1997, Rights Talk.)

The communitarian philosophy holds that the community rather than the individual is the supreme value. Indeed communitarians invoke the word "community" almost as a mantra, although they never precisely define "community."

Our purpose here today as educators is not to choose sides in the debate between liberalism and communitarianism. Rather it is to be aware that this intense argument about the preeminence of rights or of responsibilities is taking place not only in academia. It also is occurring in the media, among friends and family, and in our legislatures. The outcome of this debate has consequences that need to be considered. Thomas Janoski in his new and thought-provoking book Citizenship and Civil Society raises this cautionary flag:

"Obligations have been ignored because they had become a taboo topic after the totalitarian regimes of the first half of the century. Yet after lying fallow in the post-World War II period, obligations are receiving renewed attention. Much more is being written and spoken about obligations to care for one's self and family, to develop one's education including self-discipline, and to protect the nation peacefully or even militarily. These obligations must be closely watched and prevented from going too far in a coercive direction, for while rights cannot exist without obligations, obligations can exist without rights.... Many citizens do not realize this." (Janoski, 1998, Citizenship and Civil Society.) (Emphasis added.)

A major goal—if not the major goal—of education is to prepare young people to assume their roles as citizens of a constitutional democracy. Given the inadequacies of civic education, which we do not have time to discuss in this presentation, we have not yet achieved that goal—at least not for all our children. However, there are some impediments which we as educators can remove. I'd like to highlight some of them.

One reason young people do not fully understand their roles as citizens is that neither rights nor obligations have been approached in an organized or conceptual fashion.

Rights too often have been considered singly or as "stand alone" rights, sometimes even by the courts. To do so can degenerate into little more than a cataloguing operation, given the extensive number of rights Americans enjoy. For example, there are 26 different rights enumerated in just the first eight amendments to our United States Constitution. Further, rights are often approached with an exaggerated absoluteness which bears little relation to reality. There is a striking discrepancy between the tendency to state rights in a stark, unlimited fashion and the restrictions that have been placed on one person's rights when they conflict with those of another person.

Finally, there is a tendency to ignore the relationship of rights to responsibilities. For example, a recent poll showed that more than 90% of Americans believe the right to trial by jury is a paramount right; but only 14% said they would be willing to serve as a juror.

A word of caution is in order here. Not every right has a corresponding responsibility. Nor is the exercise of a right contingent on the fulfillment of responsibilities. Rights are rights. They are not rewards or privileges bestowed on citizens for good behavior. And that makes it all the more important that we help our students understand why their willingness to assume responsibilities is critical to the maintenance and improvement of our free society.

Teaching about the responsibilities of citizens also can be faulted for a variety of reasons.

- Responsibilities too often are presented in a negative light—as sanctions or punishments at worst, and as onerous burdens at best.

- When responsibilities are taught the focus is on personal responsibilities. This is particularly true of the current preoccupation with what is called "character education." Civic responsibilities, with the possible exceptions of voting and community service, are neglected.
- When rights are the subject, teachers enliven learning with case studies, role-plays, debates, mock trials, and legislative hearings. They invite members of the bench, bar, and legislature to their classrooms to interact with students. They also make an effort to connect the study of rights to their students' everyday lives and experiences. Not so with the teaching of responsibilities. Teachers often resort to exhortation and little more—hardly a pedagogy to capture the imagination or excite the interest of young people.

In conclusion, I'd like to draw your attention to two recent efforts to conceptualize and to organize the teaching of rights and responsibilities. One effort is the National Standards for Civics and Government which sets forth a framework in which rights are considered in three categories: personal, political, and economic. Students are asked to explain the meaning of those rights, distinguish one category from another and identify their major documentary sources. To meet the Standards, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how those rights are secured by such means as the rule of law, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and a vigilant citizenry. Students are asked to debate the proper scope and limits of rights and then to evaluate, take, and defend positions on contemporary issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.



The National Standards categorizes responsibilities as those which are personal and those which are civic. Students are asked to differentiate between the two sets of responsibilities, explain tensions that may arise between them, and reflect on the importance of both personal and civic responsibilities to themselves and to society. They are asked to evaluate whether and when their obligations as citizens require that their personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good. They also are asked to evaluate whether and when moral obligations or constitutional principles require one to refuse to assume certain civic responsibilities.

A second effort to organize and conceptualize rights and responsibilities was underway at the same time the National Standards were being developed. It's regrettable that the two efforts could not have been coordinated. There are, however, striking similarities between them. The results of the second effort are to be found in Thomas Janoski's recent book Citizenship and Civil Society (Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 30 and 55). Janoski has done a commendable job of synthesizing and then extending the thinking of scholars in the field of political theory. His book is challenging but rewarding. I've taken two tables from his work and put them in juxtaposition for you. Janoski's typology speaks of legal, political, social, and participation rights and legal, political, social, and participation obligations. Used in conjunction with the National Standards for Civic and Government Janoski's typology offers a viable means of organizing the teaching of rights and responsibilities in conjunction with one another.

I've enjoyed this opportunity to be a part of your Institute these last three days. I am impressed with your knowledge and your dedication. You truly have assumed "your station at the pump." Godspeed!

**V. WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE CITIZEN IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY?****A. What is citizenship?****Content summary and rationale**

Citizenship in American constitutional democracy differs from membership in an authoritarian or totalitarian regime. In American democracy each citizen is a full and equal member of a self-governing community endowed with fundamental rights and entrusted with responsibilities.

Both the government and the citizens are responsible for the protection of the rights of individuals and for the promotion of the common good. It is a fundamental responsibility of the citizen to see that government serves the purposes for which it was created.

In order to fulfill this role, individuals need to understand what citizenship means in American constitutional democracy.

**Content standards**

- 1. The meaning of citizenship in the United States.** *Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the idea that citizenship
  - is legally recognized membership in a self-governing community
  - confers full membership in a self-governing community; no degrees of citizenship or legally recognized states of inferior citizenship are tolerated
  - confers equal rights under the law
  - is not dependent on inherited, involuntary groupings such as race, ethnicity, or ancestral religion
  - confers certain rights and privileges, e.g., the right to vote, to hold public office, to serve on juries
- explain that Americans are citizens of both their state and the United States

- 2. Becoming a citizen.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the criteria used for naturalization.*

- explain the distinction between citizens and noncitizens (aliens) and the process by which aliens may become citizens
- compare naturalization in the United States with that of other nations
- evaluate the criteria used for admission to citizenship in the United States:
  - residence in the United States for five years

*In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful.*

John Marshall Harlan (1896)

*[T]he only title in our democracy superior to that of President [is] the title of citizen.*

Louis Brandeis (c.1937)



- ability to read, write, and speak English
- proof of good moral character
- knowledge of the history of the United States
- knowledge of and support for the values and principles of American constitutional government

*There is no security for the personal or political rights of any man in a community where any man is deprived of his personal or political rights.*

Benjamin Harrison (1892)

*The house of everyone is to him as his castle and fortress, as well for his defense against injury and violence as for his repose.*

Sir Edward Coke (c.1620)

## B. What are the rights of citizens?

### Content summary and rationale

In a political system in which one of the primary purposes of government is the protection of individual rights, it is important for citizens to understand what these rights are and their relationship to each other and to other values and interests of their society.

The concept of rights is complex and cannot be treated thoroughly in this set of standards. These standards, however, will provide a basis for the analysis of public issues involving rights. To do so, it is useful to distinguish among three categories of rights that are of particular significance in the American political system. These are personal, political, and economic rights.

Few rights, if any, are considered absolute. Rights may reinforce or conflict with each other or with other values and interests and require reasonable limitations. Therefore, it is important for citizens to develop a framework that clarifies their ideas about rights and the relationships among rights and other values and interests. This framework provides a basis for making reasoned decisions about the proper scope and limits of rights.

### Content standards

1. **Personal rights.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding personal rights.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning of personal rights as distinguished from political rights, e.g., the right to privacy or the right to freedom of conscience as distinguished from the political right to peaceably assemble and petition for a redress of grievances
- identify major documentary statements of personal rights, e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the United States Constitution including the Bill of Rights, state constitutions and bills of rights
- explain the importance to the individual and to society of such personal rights as
  - freedom of thought and conscience
  - privacy and personal autonomy
  - freedom of expression and association
  - freedom of movement and residence
  - right to due process of law and equal protection of the law



- explain how personal rights are secured in American constitutional democracy by such means as the rule of law, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, a vigilant citizenry
- evaluate contemporary issues that involve the question of personal rights, e.g., restricted membership in organizations, school prayer, sexual harassment, refusal of medical care

**2. Political rights.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding political rights.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning of political rights as distinguished from personal rights, e.g., the right of free speech for political discussion as distinct from the right of free speech for expression of one's personal tastes and interests, or the right to register to vote as distinct from the right to live where one chooses
- identify the major documentary statements of political rights—the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the United States Constitution including the Bill of Rights, state constitutions and bills of rights, civil rights legislation, court decisions
- explain the importance to the individual and society of such political rights as
  - freedom of speech, press, assembly, petition
  - right to vote and run for public office
- explain how political rights are secured by constitutional government and by such means as the rule of law, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and a vigilant citizenry
- evaluate contemporary issues that involve political rights, e.g., proportional voting, "hate speech," access to classified information, changing the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts

**3. Economic rights.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding economic rights.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning of economic rights as distinguished from personal and political rights, e.g., the right to use money to buy personal property as distinct from the right to donate money for political campaigns
- identify major documentary statements of economic rights—the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution including the Bill of Rights, state constitutions and bills of rights, legislation, court decisions, and the common law
- explain the importance to the individual and society of such economic rights as the right to
  - acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property
  - choose one's work, change employment
  - join labor unions and professional associations

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

First Amendment (1791)

*I believe each individual is naturally entitled to do as he pleases with himself and the fruit of his labor, so far as it in no wise interferes with any other man's rights.*

Abraham Lincoln (1858)



- establish and operate a business
- copyright and patent
- enter into lawful contracts
- explain how economic rights are secured by constitutional government and by such means as the rule of law, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and a vigilant citizenry
- evaluate the view that economic responsibilities follow from economic rights
- evaluate contemporary issues that involve economic rights, e.g., minimum wages, consumer product safety, taxation, affirmative action, eminent domain, zoning, copyright, patents

*We must preserve the right of free speech and the right of free assembly. But the right of free speech does not carry with it—as has been said—the right to holler fire in a crowded theatre. We must preserve the right to free assembly. But free assembly does not carry with it the right to block public thoroughfares to traffic. We do have a right to protest. And a right to march under conditions that do not infringe the Constitutional rights of our neighbors.*

Lyndon B. Johnson (1965)

**4. Relationships among personal, political, and economic rights.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the relationships among personal, political, and economic rights.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the relationship between the economic right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property to political rights
- explain the relationship of economic rights such as the right to choose one's work, to change employment, and to join a labor union and other lawful associations to political rights
- explain and give examples of situations in which personal, political, or economic rights are in conflict
- evaluate the argument that poverty, unemployment, and urban decay serve to limit both political and economic rights
- evaluate the argument that personal, political, and economic rights reinforce each other

**5. Scope and limits of rights.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the proper scope and limits of rights.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain what is meant by the "scope and limits" of a right, e.g., the scope of one's right to free speech in the United States is extensive and protects almost all forms of political expression; however, the right to free speech can be limited if and when speech seriously harms or endangers others
- evaluate the argument that all rights have limits
- explain considerations and criteria commonly used in determining what limits should be placed on specific rights, e.g.,
  - clear and present danger
  - compelling government interest
  - national security
  - chilling effect on the exercise of rights
  - libel or slander



- public safety
- equal opportunity
- evaluate positions on contemporary conflicts between rights, e.g., the right to a fair trial and the right to a free press, the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression, one person's right to free speech versus another's right to be heard
- evaluate positions on a contemporary conflict between rights and other social values and interests, e.g., the right of the public to know what their government is doing versus the need for national security, the right to property versus the protection of the environment

### C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?

#### Content summary and rationale

The purposes of American constitutional democracy are furthered by citizens who continuously reexamine the basic principles of the Constitution and monitor the performance of political leaders and government agencies to insure their fidelity to constitutional values and principles. In addition, they must examine their own behavior and fidelity to these values and principles.

Citizens also need to examine situations in which their responsibilities may require that their personal desires or interests be subordinated to the common good. To make these judgments requires an understanding of the difference between personal and civic responsibilities as well as the mutual reinforcement of these responsibilities.

#### Content standards

1. **Personal responsibilities.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the personal responsibilities of citizens in American constitutional democracy.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the distinction between personal and civic responsibilities, as well as the tensions that may arise between them
- evaluate the importance for the individual and society of
  - taking care of one's self
  - supporting one's family and caring for, nurturing, and educating one's children
  - accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions
  - adhering to moral principles
  - considering the rights and interests of others
  - behaving in a civil manner

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*

Edmund Burke (c.1780)

*In Germany the Nazis came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.*

Attributed to Martin Niemöller (1892-1984)

*No government action, no economic doctrine, no economic plan or project can replace that God-imposed responsibility of the individual man and woman to their neighbors.*

Herbert Hoover (1931)



*...I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it....*

Judge Learned Hand (1941)

*If there is anything which it is the duty of the whole people to never entrust to any hands but their own, that thing is the preservation and perpetuity of their own liberties and institutions.*

Abraham Lincoln (1854)

2. **Civic responsibilities.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding civic responsibilities of citizens in American constitutional democracy.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- evaluate the importance of each citizen reflecting on, criticizing, and reaffirming basic constitutional principles
- evaluate the importance for the individual and society of
  - obeying the law
  - being informed and attentive to public issues
  - monitoring the adherence of political leaders and governmental agencies to constitutional principles and taking appropriate action if that adherence is lacking
  - assuming leadership when appropriate
  - paying taxes
  - registering to vote and voting knowledgeably on candidates and issues
  - serving as a juror
  - serving in the armed forces
  - performing public service
- evaluate whether and when their obligations as citizens require that their personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good
- evaluate whether and when moral obligations or constitutional principles require one to refuse to assume certain civic responsibilities

- D. **What civic dispositions or traits of private and public character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?**

#### **Content summary and rationale**

American constitutional democracy requires the responsible self-governance of each individual; one cannot exist without the other. Traits of private character such as moral responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for individual worth and human dignity are essential to its well-being.

American constitutional democracy cannot accomplish its purposes, however, unless its citizens are inclined to participate thoughtfully in public affairs. Traits of public character such as public spiritedness, civility, respect for law, critical mindedness, and a willingness to negotiate and compromise are indispensable for its vitality.

These traits of private and public character also contribute to the political efficacy of the individual, the healthy functioning of the political system, and the individual's sense of dignity and worth.





**Content standards**

- 1. Dispositions that lead the citizen to be an independent member of society.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that lead individuals to become independent members of society.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning and importance of self-discipline and self-governance—adhering voluntarily to self-imposed standards of behavior rather than requiring the imposition of external controls
- explain the meaning and importance of individual responsibility—fulfilling the moral and legal obligations of membership in society

- 2. Dispositions that foster respect for individual worth and human dignity.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that foster respect for individual worth and human dignity.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning and importance of respect for the rights and choices of individuals—even beyond the legally enforceable rights guaranteed by the Constitution—such as holding and advocating differing ideas and joining associations to advance their views
- explain the meaning and importance of compassion—concern for the well-being of others

- 3. Dispositions that incline the citizen to public affairs.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that incline citizens to public affairs.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the meaning of civic mindedness—what the Founders called civic virtue—or attentiveness to and concern for public affairs
- explain the meaning of patriotism—loyalty to the values and principles underlying American constitutional democracy as distinguished from jingoism and chauvinism

- 4. Dispositions that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance to American constitutional democracy of dispositions that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- evaluate the usefulness of the following traits in facilitating thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs

*Active citizens...are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the policies that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayers and occasional soldiers, but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to heart. The good citizen is a patriot.*

Judith Shklar (1991)

*Civility costs nothing and buys everything.*

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu  
(1756)

*The life of the nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful, and virtuous.*

Frederick Douglass (1885)



*Some people look upon any setback as the end. They're always looking for the benediction rather than the invocation....But you can't quit. That isn't the way our country was built.*

Hubert H. Humphrey  
(c.1968)

*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.*

John Donne (1631)

*Whether in private or in public, the good citizen does something to support democratic habits and the constitutional order.*

Judith Shklar (1991)

- **civility**—treating other persons respectfully, regardless of whether or not one agrees with their viewpoints; being willing to listen to other points of view; avoiding hostile, abusive, emotional, and illogical argument
- **respect for the rights of other individuals**—having respect for others' right to an equal voice in government, to be equal in the eyes of the law, to hold and advocate diverse ideas, and to join in associations to advance their views
- **respect for law**—willingness to abide by laws, even though one may not be in complete agreement with every law; willingness to work through peaceful, legal means to change laws which one thinks to be unwise or unjust
- **honesty**—willingness to seek and express the truth
- **open mindedness**—considering others' points of view
- **critical mindedness**—having the inclination to question the validity of various positions, including one's own
- **negotiation and compromise**—making an effort to come to agreement with those with whom one may differ, when it is reasonable and morally justifiable to do so
- **persistence**—being willing to attempt again and again to accomplish worthwhile goals
- **civic mindedness**—paying attention to and having concern for public affairs
- **compassion**—having concern for the well-being of others, especially for the less fortunate
- **patriotism**—being loyal to the values and principles underlying American constitutional democracy, as distinguished from jingoism and chauvinism
- **courage**—the strength to stand up for one's convictions, when conscience demands
- **tolerance of ambiguity**—the ability to accept uncertainties that arise, e.g., from insufficient knowledge or understanding of complex issues or from tension among fundamental values and principles

### E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

The well-being of American constitutional democracy depends upon the informed and effective participation of citizens concerned with the preservation of individual rights and the promotion of the common good. The strength and significance of Americans' participatory habits were remarked upon in the nineteenth century by Alexis de Tocqueville, who was struck by the degree of their social participation. Americans have retained this characteristic of engaging in cooperative action for common purposes. Participation in political life, contrasted with the wider realm of organized social participation, has ebbed in recent decades, however. Indifference to or alienation from politics may characterize a significant segment of the population. Citizens should realize that their intelligence and energy are needed in political forums, that democracy wanes when citizens shun politics.



There are two general ways to approach problems that confront society. One is through social action; the other is through political action. For example, in dealing with crime, a course of social action might include forming a neighborhood watch. A course of political action might include meeting with officials, demanding that police provide adequate protection, and agreeing to pay the necessary taxes for them to do so. In dealing with hunger, social action might include working in a soup kitchen organized by a charitable organization; political action might include devising a government program to feed the hungry and acting to insure its adoption and public funding.

Social and political action are not mutually exclusive; they may overlap. In given circumstances, however, one approach may be more appropriate. Both political and social action are essential for the health of American constitutional democracy.

If citizens want their voices to be heard, they must become active participants in the political process. Although elections, campaigns, and voting are at the center of democratic institutions, citizens should be aware that beyond electoral politics there is a wide range of participatory opportunities available to them. These possibilities include attending political meetings, contacting public officials, joining advocacy groups and political parties, and taking part in demonstrations.

Political leadership and careers in public service are vitally important in a democratic society. Citizens need to understand the contributions of those in public service as well as the practical and ethical dilemmas political leaders face.

To answer the question "Why should I participate in the political system?" the citizen needs to examine and evaluate the relationships between the attainment of individual and public goals on one hand and participation in the life of the political community on the other.

If American constitutional democracy is to endure, its citizens must recognize that it is not "a machine that would go of itself." They also must be aware of the difficulty of establishing free institutions, as evidenced by the experience of the Founders as well as events in the contemporary world. American constitutional democracy requires the continuing and dedicated participation of an attentive, knowledgeable, and reflective citizenry.

### Content standards

1. **The relationship between politics and the attainment of individual and public goals.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take and defend positions on the relationship between politics and the attainment of individual and public goals.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the relationship of individual participation in the political process to the realization of the fundamental values of American constitutional democracy
- explain the relationship between participation in the political process and the attainment of individual and collective goals

*Inside the polling booth every American man and woman stands as the equal of every other American man and woman. There they have no superiors. There they have no masters save their own minds and consciences.*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt  
(1936)

*As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the lawgivers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end.*

Adlai Stevenson (c.1956)

*Where everyman is...participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year but every day...he will let the heart be torn out of his body sooner than his power be wrested from him by a Caesar or a Bonaparte.*

Thomas Jefferson (1816)



*Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.*

John F. Kennedy (1963)

*Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right...and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean of the characters and conduct of their rulers.*

John Adams (1765)

- 2. The difference between political and social participation.** *Students should be able to explain the difference between political and social participation.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain what distinguishes participation in government and political life from nonpolitical participation in civil society and private life, e.g., participating in a campaign to change laws regulating nursing homes as opposed to volunteering to work in a nursing home
- evaluate the importance of both political and social participation to American constitutional democracy

- 3. Forms of political participation.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the means that citizens should use to monitor and influence the formation and implementation of public policy.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- describe the many ways citizens can participate in the political process at local, state, and national levels
- describe historical and current examples of citizen movements seeking to expand liberty, to insure the equal rights of all citizens, and/or to realize other values fundamental to American constitutional democracy, such as the suffrage and civil rights movements
- explain what civil disobedience is, how it differs from other forms of protest, what its consequences might be, and evaluate the circumstances under which it might be justified
- evaluate the importance of voting as a form of political participation
- evaluate the usefulness of other forms of political participation in influencing public policy, e.g., attending political and governmental meetings, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, contacting public officials, working in campaigns, contributing money to political parties or causes, writing letters, boycotting, community organizing, petitioning, picketing, expressing opinions on talk shows, running for political office

- 4. Political leadership and careers in public service.** *Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions about the functions of leadership in a American constitutional democracy.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain the functions of political leadership and why leadership is a vital necessity in American constitutional democracy
- describe various ways one can exercise leadership in public affairs
- describe opportunities for citizens to engage in careers in public service
- describe the personal qualities necessary for political leadership
- explain and evaluate ethical dilemmas that might confront political leaders



**5. Knowledge and participation.** *Students should be able to explain the importance of knowledge to competent and responsible participation in American democracy.*

To achieve this standard, students should be able to

- explain why becoming knowledgeable about public affairs and the values and principles of American constitutional democracy and communicating that knowledge to others is an important form of participation
- explain how awareness of the nature of American constitutional democracy may give citizens the ability to reaffirm or change fundamental constitutional values
- evaluate the claim that constitutional democracy requires the participation of an attentive, knowledgeable, and competent citizenry

*In a time of turbulence and change, it is more true than ever that knowledge is power.*

John F. Kennedy (1962)

*No free government, nor the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people, but by...a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.*

George Mason (1776)



Table 2.2. *Four types of citizenship rights*

Legal rights	Political rights	Social rights	Participation rights
<p><i>A. Procedural rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to courts and counsel</li> <li>2. Right to contract</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Equal treatment under the law</li> <li>4. Right of aliens to immigrate and citizens to emigrate</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Expressive rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Freedom of speech</li> <li>2. Freedom of religion</li> <li>3. Choice of friends, companions and associates</li> <li>4. Right to privacy</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Bodily Control rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Freedom from assault and unsafe environment</li> <li>2. Medical and sexual control over body</li> </ol> <p><i>D. Property and Service rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hold and dispose of property and services</li> <li>2. Choice of residence</li> <li>3. Choice of occupation</li> </ol> <p><i>E. Organizational rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employee organizing</li> <li>2. Corporate organizing</li> <li>3. Political party organizing</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Personal rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enfranchisement of the poor, gender groups, ethnic/racial groups, age categories and immigrants</li> <li>2. Rights to run and hold office</li> <li>3. Rights to form and join a political party</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Organizational rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political lobbying</li> <li>2. Political fund raising</li> <li>3. Legislative and administrative consultation</li> <li>4. Political bargaining</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Naturalization rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right to naturalize upon residency</li> <li>2. Right to information on naturalization process</li> <li>3. Refugee rights</li> </ol> <p><i>D. Oppositional rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minority rights to equal and fair treatment</li> <li>2. Political information and inquiry rights</li> <li>3. Social movement and protest rights</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Enabling and Preventive rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health services</li> <li>2. Family allowances</li> <li>3. Personal and family counseling</li> <li>4. Physical rehabilitation</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Opportunity rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-primary education</li> <li>2. Primary and secondary education</li> <li>3. Higher education</li> <li>4. Vocational education</li> <li>5. Educational assistance for special groups</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Distributive rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Old age pensions</li> <li>2. Public assistance</li> <li>3. Unemployment compensation</li> </ol> <p><i>D. Compensatory rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work injury insurance</li> <li>2. War injury pension</li> <li>3. War equalization</li> <li>4. Rights infringement compensation</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Labor Market Intervention rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Labor market information programs</li> <li>2. Job placement programs</li> <li>3. Job creation services</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Firm and Bureaucracy rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job security rights</li> <li>2. Workers councils or grievance procedure rights</li> <li>3. Client participation in bureaucracy or self-administration</li> <li>4. Affirmative action and comparable worth</li> <li>5. Collective bargaining rights</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Capital Control rights</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Codetermination rights</li> <li>2. Wage earner and union investment funds</li> <li>3. Capital escape laws</li> <li>4. Anti-trust laws</li> <li>5. Regional investment and equalization programs</li> </ol>

Table 3.1. *Four types of citizenship obligations*

Legal obligations	Political obligations	Social obligations	Participation obligations
<p><i>A. Interpersonal obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respect other's rights to liberty, free speech, religion and property</li> <li>2. Respect laws of contract, association, and equal treatment</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Organizational duties</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organizational duty to promote the general welfare</li> <li>2. Respect individual rights</li> <li>3. Respect laws duly made by government</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Enforcement and implementation obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide resources for the legal system</li> <li>2. Assist in assuring the domestic tranquility (militas)</li> <li>3. Respect and cooperate with police in assuring legal rights</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Interpersonal obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vote and participate in politics</li> <li>2. Be informed and exercise the franchise wisely</li> <li>3. Respect democracy and not make unreasonable demands</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Organizational duties</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooperate with other groups in the operation of politics</li> <li>2. Follow political laws and regulations</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Enforcement and implementation obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide resources to protect and operate democratic system</li> <li>2. Protect nation from threats by active service in the military (draft)</li> <li>3. Protest and overthrow governments that violate rights</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Enabling and preventive duties</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pursue prudent health care</li> <li>2. Raise a loving family</li> <li>3. Maintain a safe and clean environment</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Opportunity obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pursue education to best of one's ability</li> <li>2. Pursue career to the benefit to society</li> <li>3. Tolerate social diversity</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Sustainance/economic obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recipients of unemployment or public assistance should look for work</li> <li>2. Respect other's social rights and the need for transfer payments</li> </ol> <p><i>D. Enforcement and implementation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide resources for social rights</li> <li>2. Help less fortunate by voluntary government and association service</li> </ol>	<p><i>A. Labor market obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Duty of those receiving services to actively pursue work</li> <li>2. Duty of employers to cooperate with government and unions to provide programs</li> </ol> <p><i>B. Firm/bureaucracy obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure equity and productivity in the organization</li> <li>2. Safeguard firm competitive information</li> <li>3. Respect all groups in participatory process</li> </ol> <p><i>C. Capital participation obligations</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect and promote the economy</li> <li>2. Provide for capital funds through savings</li> </ol> <p><i>D. Enforcement and Implementation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide resources for programs</li> <li>2. Invest in national industries</li> </ol>

Source: Thomas Janoski *Citizenship and Civil Society* Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 30 & 55