

A Citizen's Responsibilities - What Can You Do For Your Country?

Rebecca Conrad - 5th grade - Prompt 1

In his 1961 Inaugural Address, President John F. Kennedy said, "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." Being a United States citizen is good, but it also involves certain responsibilities. I think the most important ones are voting wisely, paying taxes and obeying laws.

Voting is a main feature of citizenship in the U.S.A. In fact, Webster's dictionary defines a citizen as "a person in the United States entitled to vote and hold office." Voting wisely is an important civic duty because you help elect the next president, as well as state and local office holders. You also help decide on changes to laws and taxes. This is a big responsibility, so people should choose wisely and make sure they are informed and educated about the issues and leaders. Mark Twain said, "Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, but your government only when it deserves it." By voting, we tell our government what we support.

Paying taxes is important in America, for it lets the government pay for soldiers to protect us and keep us safe. Government also pays for schools, libraries, post offices, hospitals, among other public works, for the public's general good and welfare. The main purpose of our republic is to protect and benefit the people of the republic, especially future generations. By paying taxes, we help our government achieve its goals.

Obeying laws is important to help keep the country safe and healthy; it also earns our citizens and our country a good reputation. Speed limits prevent car crashes. Laws against hugging bears mean less funerals. Rules telling us not to explode fish keep fish and people safe. Laws are meant to protect us. Our government depends on people having self-control. It also depends on us being willing to follow the rules, look beyond our immediate desires and needs, and patiently follow appropriate processes if laws need changing. Without self-discipline, American civil liberty cannot safely endure.

I am glad to be an American citizen. We have many privileges that other countries do not have. Along with privileges, we also have responsibilities. These include voting wisely, paying taxes and obeying laws. I am glad I am a United States citizen.

Heinrich, Richard, et al. "That's a crime? 13 funny state laws in the US that might surprise you." *One Legal*, 17 May 2023, <https://www.onelegal.com/blog/funny-us-laws-that-might-surprise-you/>. Accessed 11 January 2024.