

## Topic 4

# The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

*Topic 4 explores the rights and responsibilities of citizens and noncitizens in U.S. democracy. It consists of 13 modules ranging from how to become a citizen to the different ways that each of us can actively participate in political and civic life through voting, public service, political protest, and membership in public and private interest groups.*



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## Snapshot of Topic 4

### Supporting Question

What is the role of the individual in maintaining a healthy democracy?

## Standards [8.T1.1-13]

1. [Becoming a Citizen](#)
2. [Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens and Non-Citizens](#)
3. [Civic, Political and Private Life](#)
4. [Fundamental Principles and Values of American Political and Civic Life](#)
5. [Voting and Citizen Participation](#)
6. [Election Information](#)
7. [Leadership and the Qualities of Good Leaders](#)
8. [Cooperation between Individuals and Leaders](#)
9. [Public Service as a Career](#)
10. [Liberty in Conflict with Equality or Authority](#)
11. [Political Courage and Those Who Affirmed or Denied Democratic Ideals](#)
12. [The Role of Political Protest](#)
13. [Public and Private Interest Groups](#)

### Topic 4: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

“A citizen is a participatory member of a political community. Citizenship is gained by meeting the legal requirements of a national, state, or local government” (quoted from [Center for the Study of Citizenship](#), Wayne State University, 2021).

In the United States, citizens and non-citizens have **rights and responsibilities** in their civic, political, and private lives; that is, they enjoy the freedoms of a democratic society while having responsibilities they are expected to perform including obeying laws, working with elected leaders, engaging in peaceful protest, and affirming the fundamental principles of American political and civic life. Voting is highly valued responsibility for U.S. citizens; noncitizens can vote only in some local elections in 3 states and the District of Columbia ([Laws Permitting Noncitizens to Vote in the United States](#)).

U.S. history has numerous examples of individuals who showed political courage and leadership in support of democratic values and freedoms, but it also includes multiple times when individuals and groups failed to live up to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (see [Topic 4.11 in this book](#)). In modern society, public and private interest groups, political action committees, and labor unions more than individual citizens play powerful roles in lobbying for social and economic change.

In the video below, Supreme Court Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Neil Gorsuch discuss the importance of citizenship and voting (Note: The YouTube version of the video does not provide closed captions. For the original video with closed captions, go to the [CBS News page](#)).



[Watch on YouTube](#)

Becoming a Citizen
Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens and Non-Citizens
Civic, Political, and Private Life
Fundamental Principles and Values of American Political and Civic Life
Voting and Citizen Participation in the Political Process
Election Information
Leadership and the Qualities of Political Leaders
Cooperation Between Individuals and Elected Leaders
Public Service as a Career
Liberty in Conflict with Equality or Authority
Political Courage and Those Who Affirmed or Denied Democratic Ideals
The Role of Political Protest
Public and Private Interest Groups, PACs, and Labor Unions



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