

Citizenship and your rights and responsibilities

With the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 the United States of America was formed. After years of suppression from the British government, Americans were now free to enjoy their own government. However, the freedoms that they would now enjoy would come with some heavy responsibilities to their government. For years these new American citizens fought the British government because of taxation without representation, now they could choose their own representation.

It was decided that citizens of the United States would participate in their own government, so that they would never be subject to the divine rights of Kings again. These citizens wanted the power of the government to remain where it belongs, with the citizens of the United States.

The citizens of the United States would now come together every few years and choose leaders for their government, making the most important right that an American citizen can have be the right to vote. By participating in the voting process Americans can vote in another citizen who best represents their values and beliefs to represent them in Government. It is every citizen's responsibility to research candidates and issues before every election to make an informed decision.

Other ways that citizens participate in government is by serving on a jury, obeying the laws of their community, respecting the rights of others and paying taxes to support their system of government. In return the government protects its citizens and their basic rights.

The Bill of Rights was ratified to the Constitution in 1789 because many citizens were concerned that their freedoms were not suitably protected. So on December 15, 1791, ten amendments were added to the Constitution guaranteeing every citizen certain rights and freedoms. The Bill of Rights protects citizens' freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and many more.