

HANDBOOK ON CITIZENSHIP

CHAPTER 5

Being a Responsible Citizen Means Voting

As you read your local newspaper, notice all the articles about the national, state and local government. Read the editorial columns and the Letters to the Editor. It is clear people care about government, and that is good. However, it is crucial that reading about government and voicing an opinion about it ultimately lead to voting, because the best way to be a responsible citizen is to VOTE.

Voting is our strongest voice on the town council and the school board. Voting is how we let Congress and the Missouri General Assembly know if we agree with the laws they are passing. Voting is how we make sure the people have more power than the government. Voting is the most effective check people have on government.

The right to vote has been a hard fought battle for some groups. Until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many African-Americans were denied the right to vote because of unfair local rules, like poll taxes and literacy tests. Women did not get the right to vote until the early 20th century. Until these groups got the right to vote, they were unable to elect people who represented their views.

The reason these groups fought for the right to vote is why we should vote in any election: **The power to rule belongs to those who vote.**

Smoking ban: Wafting westward?

Discussion pro and con heats up in St. Charles County after St. Louis County voters approve measure.

Who do we elect?

- Federal and state lawmakers.
- County and city officials.
- School board members.

How an election can affect your life:

- What courses and tests are required for high school graduation?
- What happens if your pet gets caught running around loose?
- How much of my paycheck goes to pay taxes?

BALLOT

Classroom Activities:

All Grade Levels:

1. What steps do you have to take when you are age 18 to be able to vote?
2. Find out who is in charge of elections in your county. Ask that person to speak to your class about what kinds of elections take place in your county, when elections are held and volunteer opportunities at election time.

Missouri Standards Alignment:

Grades K-8: SS3, SS6; 1.2, 1.4, 3.1, 4.2; 1-A, 1-B, 1-C.
Grades 9-12: SS3, SS6; 4.2; 1-A, 1-B, 1-C.