



# CIVIC PARTICIPATION

*A Curriculum for Immigrants and New Citizens*

**STUDENT WORKBOOK**



CATHOLIC LEGAL  
IMMIGRATION  
NETWORK, INC.

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION

## *A Curriculum for Immigrants and New Citizens*

### INTRODUCTION

Civic participation is an exciting characteristic of immigrant integration. Often, this topic is mentioned only briefly in citizenship preparation classes, which tend to focus exclusively on helping naturalization applicants pass the citizenship test. CLINIC offers this curriculum for teachers, community-based organizations, places of worship, libraries, ethnic-based organizations and others that wish to delve more deeply into civic participation: what it means; why it is so important for immigrant communities to have a voice on issues that impact them; and how they can get involved in concrete ways.

This curriculum is a stand-alone document with four modules that can be used all together or separately. Each module is one class session. The modules can be added to a citizenship class session or used for a separate course focusing exclusively on civic participation. The modules work best in a classroom setting, but can also be adapted and used one-on-one with a tutor or for self-study. The four modules could be spread over four weeks or offered as one, four-hour seminar. Community-based organizations, places of worship, libraries, or ethnic-based organizations may offer this curriculum as a seminar or institute on how to be an engaged citizen, concluding with a brainstorming session on action steps.

For each module, there is a teacher handbook and a student workbook with readings, discussion questions, and activities. This curriculum is based on a chapter in CLINIC's handbook, *Citizenship for Us*. CLINIC hopes this curriculum will be a useful tool for educators and others wishing to facilitate civic participation by new Americans. For additional resources on civic participation, see [CLINIC's Center for Immigrant Integration](https://cliniclegal.org/issues/immigrant-integration) (<https://cliniclegal.org/issues/immigrant-integration>).

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# CIVIC PARTICIPATION: MODULE 1

## OVERVIEW OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

**VOCABULARY** (Found in red throughout this workbook)

**Petition (v):** To make a written request to the government.

**Grievances (n):** Complaints.

**Interfere (v):** To try to stop something from happening.

**Jurisdiction (n):** The geographic area that an elected official represents.

### EXERCISE

#### Case Story

There are many African taxi drivers in Washington, D.C. Some are citizens, and some are not. Together, they created a group to speak with the city council on rules affecting taxi drivers. They also discovered ways they could serve their neighbors by using the tools they have – their taxis. During elections, the taxi drivers offer free transportation to the voting polls for African immigrant seniors. One volunteer taxi driver said, “I’m not eligible to be a citizen yet so I cannot vote, but by giving people from the community free rides to make sure they were able to go and vote, I could still participate in democracy. It was simple for me. It’s all about our democratic rights.” Civic participation is easier when there is a goal to accomplish and many people to help.

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How did the taxi drivers serve their community?
2. What did you like about their decision to drive African senior citizens to the polls?
3. Did they need to be citizens in order to help?
4. What could the African taxi drivers do to make a bigger impact in their community?

#### Notes:

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## WHAT IS CIVIC PARTICIPATION?

Civic participation means doing something to help people in your community, as well as yourself. You can work on your own or with a group to do things that help make improvements. Usually, people do this type of work as a volunteer. This means that they are not paid to do the work. Often, the volunteers will provide food, materials or other resources that are needed for a job for free. For example, an organization might ask that people help clean up a public park and fix the broken equipment. The volunteers would bring tools, snacks and other necessary things. Civic participation is an important way for people to make a community a better place to live for everyone.

### Notes:

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## EXERCISE

### *Working in pairs, discuss the following questions:*

1. What does civic participation mean to you? Share 1-2 experiences you had in your native country with civic participation.
2. Do you have experience in the United States with civic participation? If yes, where and how?
3. Do you have any neighbors, co-workers, or friends who are involved in civic participation? How are they involved?
4. What local issues do you care about most? (Or, what issues concern you the most?)

### Notes:

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## WHERE DO YOU GET THE RIGHT TO CIVIC PARTICIPATION?

Your right to participate in the civic life of the United States comes from the Constitution and its first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights reads:

*“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**.”*

### What does this mean?

The First Amendment says the government cannot **interfere** with your right to practice your religion, to free speech, to a free press, to come together peaceably with others, and to petition the government to correct a wrong. This means you can tell people who work for the government your opinions even if you disagree. You can start or join an organization that supports something you believe in, like gun control. You can organize a group of people or an event in a public space.

### What document gives you the right to civic participation?

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### Why should you participate in civic life? Write two reasons:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC LIFE BEFORE BECOMING A U.S. CITIZEN?

To participate in some civic activities, such as voting, you must be a citizen. But there are many ways you can participate and have a voice in the decisions that affect your daily life *before* you become a citizen. You have time, talents, money, ideas, experience and relationships with other people.

You might already volunteer. Do you give your time to a local group, such as a soccer league, a senior citizens association, or a business group? You can also volunteer with organizations or places that serve all Americans, such as libraries, public parks, neighborhood groups and others.

## COMMUNICATING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS AND OTHER DECISION MAKERS

One important way to participate is to use your First Amendment right to freedom of speech by communicating with elected officials and other decision makers. You can do this through letters, e-mails, phone calls or in-person visits. You can do this as an individual or as a group. It may be more comfortable and less scary to speak out as a group.

Elected officials represent all people who live within their **jurisdiction**, not just the those who voted for them. However, your message is more powerful when you can say, "This is what I think... and I vote!"

### Notes:

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### Write two examples of civic participation activities that might interest you:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_



# CIVIC PARTICIPATION: MODULE 2

## ELECTIONS

### VOCABULARY (Found in red throughout this workbook)

**Accountable (a):** Having to answer to or explain one's actions to a person or group of people.

**Nonpartisan (a):** Not connected to, supporting, or opposing a political party.

### WHY SHOULD YOU VOTE?

Elected officials make important decisions that affect your life and issues that are important to you. When you vote, you are telling elected representatives your preference for the kinds of decisions and policies you want to see. By voting, you can hold elected officials **accountable** to your community. This means that you are making sure your representatives do what they promised to do before the election.

Elected officials are more likely to listen to people who are registered to vote and who vote. So, when you speak publicly as a registered voter – and when you vote – your opinion is more likely to be heard!

### Notes:

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## WHY YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO VOTE

All citizens over the age of 18 can vote. Four amendments to the Constitution protect the right to vote. However, in the past, state elected officials created barriers to voting for certain groups, especially African Americans. Some voters were required to pass a test to see how well the person could read and write. Some voters were charged a tax in order to be able to vote. Many citizens, especially African Americans, volunteered their time to protest this unfair treatment. They marched in protest and gathered in public spaces with many other people to demand change. Their efforts helped convince elected officials to pass a law called The Voting Rights Act of 1965. This law made it illegal to prevent people from voting. This law also requires that materials in other languages be provided at certain voting locations.

**Who has the right to vote?**

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**What law requires that this group of people be able to vote?**

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**What is one reason it's important to vote?**

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## IN WHICH ELECTIONS SHOULD YOU VOTE?

In the United States, there are elections for national, state and local positions. Elected officials at these levels make decisions that affect people's lives in many important ways. For this reason, *all elections are important to a democracy.*

At the national level, you can vote for the president and your members of Congress (senators and representatives). At the state and local levels, you can vote for your governor, state legislators, city and county council members, mayor and school board representatives.

National elected officials make decisions such as how much money you pay in federal taxes, how many refugees the United States will accept each year, and how clean our air and water should be.

State and local officials make many of the decisions that affect your local community, such as how much money to give your public schools, how many police officers will protect the public, and whether to build a new public library.

### EXERCISE

**Working in pairs, discuss the following questions:**

What other issues do you think are decided at the federal level? Write one.

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What other issues do you think are decided at the state and local levels? Write one.

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Which two issues are the most important to you right now?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTIONS?

There are a few necessary steps to decide the candidates for an elected position. One of those is holding a *primary* election. In a primary election, voters choose a candidate to represent a political party later in the *general* election. This election could be for *mayor*, *governor*, *senator* or *president*. In the primary elections – also called “the primaries” – voters can only choose from a group of candidates from one political party. The two major political parties are Democratic and Republican. The rules about who can vote in the primary election are different in each state. In some states, you can only vote in the primary election if you have already joined a political party. In other states, you do not have to be a member of any political party. Instead, you can go to the poll on Election Day and decide for which political party you want to vote.

The general election is after the primary election. Anyone who is registered to vote can vote in the general election. In the general election, you may vote for any candidate from any party. However, you can only select one candidate for each political office. For example, in a general election, if there are three candidates for president on the ballot, you can only vote for one person.

**Write one way that a primary election is different from a general election:**

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**Write two ways that you can learn about the candidates and issues in an election:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_



## EXERCISE

Working in a group, review **nonpartisan** information about a candidate in an upcoming election using <https://votesmart.org/> and <http://www.vote411.org/>. Discuss and then present the candidate's positions to the class. Choose one or two people from the group to take notes and present the information to the rest of the class.

**Name of candidate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Office he/she is running for:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is this a national, state, or local election?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Candidate's position on:** (choose three issues from below)

**Climate change:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Immigration:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Taxes:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The economy:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Health care:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Foreign policy:** \_\_\_\_\_

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION: MODULE 3

## PREPARING TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY

**VOCABULARY** (Found in red throughout this workbook)

**Ballot (n):** Usually a piece of pre-printed paper that lists the candidates for different elected offices and the issues you can vote on. You record your choices on the ballot.

**Appointed (a):** Selected by an elected official.

**Accommodation (n):** An adjustment that is made to meet special needs in order to ensure participation in an activity.



## REGISTERING TO VOTE

You must register before you can vote. In most states you must be registered 20-30 days before the next election. To register, you must fill out a voter registration form and either mail it, leave it with a state agency or public office, or deliver it in person to a voter registration office in your local, county, or state government. You can also give the form to the person who registers voters (a voter registrar). In 38 states plus the District of Columbia, you can register online.

### Who Can Register

You must be a U.S. citizen and at least 18 years old on or before the date of the election. You also must be a resident of the state where you will vote. Each state has its own voter registration laws which further identify who can register.

### How Often to Register

You do not need to register for every election. Usually you do not have to register again unless you have moved, noted voted for a long time or changed your name. You can call your state election office or visit its website to learn the rules for your state.

### Voter Registration Card

After you register to vote, you will receive a voter registration card. When you vote, you may be required to show your card and/or another form of identification.

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**  
VOTER CARD

REG. NO. [REDACTED] DATE ISSUED [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
ALEXANDRIA, VA [REDACTED]

VOTING LOCATION  
MT. EAGLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
6116 NORTH KINGS HWY.

LOCALITY FAIRFAX COUNTY  
PRECINCT 408 - MOUNT EAGLE  
DISTRICTS: [REDACTED]  
LOCAL: [REDACTED]

**Voter Registration Office**  
OFFICE OF ELECTIONS  
12000 GOVERNMENT CENTER PKWY, SUITE 323  
FAIRFAX, VA 22035-0081  
703-222-0776

### Notes:

### Discussion Questions

1. What information can be found on this card?
2. What other information do you need in order to vote in an election?

## WHAT HAPPENS ON ELECTION DAY?

After registering to vote, here are some things you can do to prepare for Election Day:

- **Know where you go to vote.** A polling place, also called a polling station, is where you and your neighbors go to vote. Polling places are divided by the precinct where you live. A precinct is a division of a community. Your precinct number is printed on your voter registration card. If you are still not sure where to vote, you can ask your neighbors or call your county election official, often called the county/municipal clerk or supervisor of elections.
- **Know what time the polls open and close.** Each city, county or state determines what time the polls open in the morning and close in the evening.
- **Talk to your employer.** Make sure you speak to your employer in advance if you need to take time off work to vote. Nearly all states have laws requiring employers to allow employees to take time off to vote.
- **Bring a valid ID with you.** In some states, you must present a valid identification card to vote.
- **Learn about the candidates and issues.** It is important to be an informed voter. For more information, see below.
- **Bring information you want to take into the polls.** You can bring a voter's guide with you that lists the candidates' positions on issues to help you remember your choices among candidates.

### List information you need to know in order to vote or prepare for Election Day:

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## BALLOTS

When you go to vote, you will receive a ballot. A **ballot** is a list of the candidates for each office that will be decided in the current election. The ballot will also include the issues that are also being voted on that day. All states elect certain offices such as governor, senator and attorney general. However, some positions, such as judges, are elected in some states and **appointed** in others. In order to vote, you choose the person you want to elect, sometimes by using a pencil to mark the empty box next to the person's name. In many places, you use a computer to make your selection. After you make your choices on the ballot, you then "cast" your ballot. You cast your ballot by either putting the paper ballot into a box at the polling place or by submitting your ballot via the computer.

In some elections, you might also need to vote on an issue, such as raising taxes for a new school building. These are called referendums, propositions or ballot initiatives. In these elections, you are asked to vote "yes" or "no" for the proposed tax or law. In some states, if the majority of people vote "yes," it will become law. In other states, the results of the election serve as a recommendation to the state elected officials.

OFFICIAL GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT		
A	B	C
Warren County	General Election	November 8, 2016
<p><b>Instructions to Voter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To vote: completely darken the oval (●) to the left of your choice.</li> <li>Note the permitted number of choices directly below the title of each candidate office. Do not mark the ballot for more choices than allowed.</li> <li>If you mark the ballot for more choices than permitted, that contest or question will not be counted.</li> <li>To vote for a write-in candidate: completely darken the oval (●) to the left of the blank line and write in the candidate's name. Only votes cast for candidates who filed as write-in candidates can be counted.</li> <li>Do not write in a candidate's name if that person's name already is printed on the ballot for that same contest.</li> <li>If you make a mistake or want to change your vote: return your ballot to an election official and get a new ballot. You may ask for a new ballot up to two times.</li> <li>Please use ballpoint pen.</li> </ul>	<p><b>For President and Vice President (Vote for not more than 1 pair)</b> A vote for any candidates for President and Vice President shall be a vote for the electors of those candidates whose names have been certified to the Secretary of State</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President <b>Hillary Clinton</b> For Vice President <b>Tim Kaine</b> Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President <b>Richard Duncan</b> For Vice President <b>Ricky Johnson</b> Nonparty candidates</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President <b>Gary Johnson</b> For Vice President <b>William Weld</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President <b>Jill Stein</b> For Vice President <b>Ajamu Baraka</b> Green</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President <b>Donald J. Trump</b> For Vice President <b>Michael R. Pence</b> Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> For President</p> <p>Write-in _____ For Vice President</p> <p>Write-in _____</p> <p><b>For U.S. Senator (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Ted Strickland</b></p>	<p><b>For Representative to Congress (1st District) (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Stovo Chabot</b> Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Michele Young</b> Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Write-in _____</p> <p><b>For State Representative (62nd District) (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Scott Lipps</b> Republican</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Samuel P. Ronan</b> Democratic</p> <p><b>For County Commissioner (Full term commencing 1-2-2017) (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Charles W. Sanders</b> Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Dave Young</b> Republican</p> <p><b>For County Commissioner (Full term commencing 1-3-2017) (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Shannon Jones</b> Republican</p> <p><b>For Prosecuting Attorney (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>David P. Fornshell</b> Republican</p> <p><b>For Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>James L. Spaeth</b> Republican</p> <p><b>For Sheriff (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Larry Lee Sims</b> Republican</p> <p><b>For County Recorder (Vote for not more than 1)</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Michael F. Kassalen</b> Democratic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> <b>Linda Oda</b></p>

## Discussion Questions

1. What candidates are running for election on this ballot?
2. Who is running for Congress?
3. What are the directions for voting in this election using this ballot?

## WHAT IF YOU NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE?

Some voters who need help to vote may ask for an **accommodation**. Voters might need an accommodation if they have a physical or mental disability, are unable to read or write, or have limited English. An accommodation is a type of special help or assistance. If you need special assistance, you can ask when you arrive at your polling place. You can contact your state board of elections in advance if you have questions.

### Some examples of voting accommodations are:

- Large print ballots;
- Braille ballots;
- Help in reading or marking your ballot;
- Having the ballot brought to your car;
- Ability to use a wheelchair while voting; and
- Bilingual ballots (ballots printed in multiple languages) or other bilingual language assistance.
- Bilingual language assistance is available where there are a lot of citizens who speak limited English. Ballots are most commonly translated into Spanish and Chinese, but Los Angeles County, for example, prints ballots in nine languages.

### What are two reasons a voter can request a voting accommodation?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### What is one example of a voting accommodation?

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## WHAT IF YOU CANNOT GET TO THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY?

Increasingly, states allow or, as in Oregon, even require voting to be done ahead of time, by mail. In those states, ballots are sent to voters by postal mail. If your state relies primarily on voters physically going to a polling place, you still have options for how to cast your ballot.

- **Absentee Voting.** You can get an absentee ballot if you think you will be out of town from your assigned voting location on voting day. You can also get an absentee ballot if you are ill, elderly, disabled or prevented from going to the polling place due to a religious holiday. Absentee voting is done by mail. You can get an absentee ballot by calling, writing, or going to your county election official, often called the County/Municipal Clerk or Supervisor of Elections. You must apply for the ballot a certain number of days before the election, usually 30 days, and return the ballot by a deadline.
- **Early Voting.** In some places, you can vote before the election, for example if you know you will be busy or out of town on Election Day. You do not need to give an excuse to vote early.
- **Voting Outside of the United States.** When you are leaving the United States for a short period of time, you can get an absentee ballot. If you will be living outside of the United States for a longer period or will be abroad in military service, you can vote using your last address in the country. Contact a county voting office and ask for a Federal Post Card Application. You can also find this form on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at <http://www.fvap.gov>. This is a voter registration and absentee ballot request combined. This will allow you to vote absentee for one year. Each year you must reapply.

## What is one difference between absentee voting and early voting?

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## EXERCISE

Break into small groups of 2-3 students. Use the internet to find the following information about your state's voting rules. (Use this link if needed: <https://www.usa.gov/election-office>.) Share what you learned with the rest of the class.

**What are the general rules for voter registration in my state?**

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**Does my state have online voter registration?**

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**How can I vote with an absentee ballot in my state?**

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**Is early voting offered in my state?**

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**What are the rules about early voting in my state?**

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# CIVIC PARTICIPATION: MODULE 4

## SERVING ON A JURY, SERVING ON GOVERNMENT BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, & RUNNING FOR OFFICE

### **VOCABULARY** (Found in red throughout this workbook)

**Verdict (n):** A formal finding of fact made by a jury on matters or questions submitted to the jury by a judge.

**Peers (n):** Other people like you.

**Nominate (v):** To recommend.

### **WHAT IS A JURY?**

A jury is a small group of people that sits in the courtroom to hear statements made in a legal disagreement. The jury decides together what they think is the truth. Together, the jurors make decisions, also called **verdicts**, based on the evidence that is presented by the people on both sides of the issue. They also use the law to help them decide which side of the argument should win the case.

As a U.S. citizen, you may be called to serve as a juror, or a member of the jury. Jury duty is an important responsibility of citizenship. In the United States, a person accused of a crime generally has a right to a trial by a jury of **peers**. "Peers" means fellow citizens, and it is important for jury members to reflect the community.

Underline in the reading passage above what a jury is and what a jury does. Answer the questions below:

### **What is a jury?**

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### **What does a jury do?**

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### **Did You Know?**

In the United States, a person accused of a crime has the right to have a lawyer during the trial. This right is found in the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution.

## HOW JURORS ARE SELECTED

When it is your turn to serve on a jury, you will receive an official letter in the mail. This letter will tell you when and where to go for jury duty. This letter is called a *summons*. The rules about jury duty are very strict. This letter will have the information you need, and you must follow the directions. For example, you will have to arrive at the courthouse on time to check in. Later, you might watch a video about how the court operates and about the responsibilities of a juror. While you are at the courthouse, you may be called to a courtroom where lawyers choose a jury for a case. You might not be called to the courtroom at all if you were not chosen to serve on the jury.

If you are called to a courtroom, you will be asked a series of questions by the lawyers. The lawyers interview people until they find enough jurors who they think are both qualified and able to serve.

You may not ignore a jury summons letter. There are different penalties for not appearing for jury duty, depending on each court's rules. For example, you may have to pay a fine.

## What is a jury summons?

### Notes:

Washtenaw County Trial Court  
101 E. Huron, P.O. Box 8645  
Ann Arbor, MI 48107  
[www.washtenaw.org/1400](http://www.washtenaw.org/1400)

FIRST-CLASS  
MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
ANN ARBOR, MI  
PERMIT NO. 111

**JURY SUMMONS**  
Failure to appear can result in a fine, incarceration or both

JUROR NAME  
1234 JURY DR  
ANN ARBOR, MI 48104

7524-WMDEG

 **YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED FOR JURY SERVICE**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 04, 2018 8:15 a.m.**  
Washtenaw County Trial Court  
101 E. Huron  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
Jury Assembly Room on the 2nd floor

Service Number: 2577-BTAF3  
Pool #: 5  


**Step 1:** Respond to this notice by completing the Odyssey Jury questionnaire located on our website at [www.washtenaw.org/1400](http://www.washtenaw.org/1400) **within 10 days.**

If you do not have access to the internet, please call 734-222-3354

**Step 2:** ALL JURORS, if you do not hear from us, please check your reporting status at [www.washtenaw.org/1400](http://www.washtenaw.org/1400) or call **734-222-3354** beginning Friday AFTER 5:00 p.m. the weekend before your summons date.

Jurors who appear WITHOUT CHECKING their reporting status will NOT receive payment for attendance.

\*\*Parking instructions and other information can be found on our website\*\*

**PLEASE BRING THIS POSTCARD WHEN YOU APPEAR.**

## EXERCISE

Working in a group, read one of the paragraphs below, discuss it, and answer the questions that follow. Choose one or two people to take notes and present the information to the rest of the class.

### 1. What happens when you are chosen to serve on a jury?

If you are picked to serve on a jury, you will learn a lot about how our justice system works. Once the trial begins, your responsibility will be to listen carefully to all the information about the disagreement. Then, you will come to an agreement with your fellow jurors on the verdict.

### 2. How long is jury duty?

A person who is picked to serve on a jury for a case is expected to serve until the case is completed. It may take a few days, a week or longer. In some states, you serve for one day or one complete trial. If you are not picked as a juror, you may go home, and your jury duty is over. In others, you may need to report to jury duty for a certain number of days even if you are not picked to serve as a juror.

### 3. Getting excused from jury duty

You can be excused from jury duty for a variety of reasons, including:

- You cannot speak or understand English;
- You cannot serve because of a physical or mental disability (you must provide a letter from your doctor); or
- You are age 70 or older and do not want to serve.
- You can also request to postpone or reschedule your jury service for personal or professional reasons. For example, if you will be traveling on the date you are asked to serve, or if your children are sick and you must stay home, you can ask to reschedule your jury service.

### 4. Payment for jurors

You will be paid a small amount for your time and transportation. However, you must pay for your own lunch. You should check with your employer regarding its policy on jury duty. Employers can be fined if they fire someone for taking time off for jury duty, but they are not required to pay wages while an employee is on jury duty.

### 5. Important terms to understand for jury duty

- Plaintiff: The person bringing the case against another person, who is called the defendant.
- Defendant: The person who has been accused of committing a crime or civil offense.
- Punishment: The punishment for a defendant found guilty could be jail time, or a fine. This depends on the crime.
- A Criminal Case: Joe is charged by the state with robbery. Joe is the defendant. The state is the plaintiff. The state is represented by a lawyer called a prosecutor. The jury decides if the person charged by the state with a crime is "guilty" or "not guilty."
- A Civil Case: Joe breaks Tony's window. Joe refuses to pay Tony so that he can replace the window. Tony files a lawsuit against Joe, asking the court to force Joe to pay the cost of the window. Tony is the plaintiff. Joe is the defendant. The jury will decide if Joe was responsible for breaking Tony's window and how much Joe should pay Tony.

### Discussion Questions (from previous page)

1. Name at least two facts about jury duty.
2. Would you like to get picked for jury duty?
3. Do you have any other questions about jury duty?

### Notes:

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## ROLE OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

In the United States, federal, state and local government agencies use boards and commissions to give advice to the government. Community residents serve on these boards and commissions. Boards and commissions provide an important opportunity for participation in democracy. Some examples of local boards and commissions are:

- **The Hennepin County Adult Mental Health Local Advisory Council** in Minnesota advises the county government on mental health issues within the county.
- **The Arlington Commission on Aging** in Virginia advises the county government on the needs of older residents and assists in planning aging services.
- **The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission** in Arizona advises the county government about community concerns and needs related to public parks and recreation facilities in the county.

Boards and commissions influence decisions that affect many different aspects of individual and community life, from services for seniors to public libraries and how public land will be used. It is important that they represent different groups in the community. By serving on a board or commission, you can make sure that the needs and concerns of your community are considered when decisions are made.

Typically, a mayor, city council, or county board chooses community members to serve on boards and commissions. However, in most places you can apply and **nominate** yourself. Many boards and commissions are open to non-citizens, but some may be only open to citizens.

## IMMIGRANTS WHO SERVED ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



Across the United States, many immigrants who hold elected office at local, state, and national levels began their careers by serving on boards and commissions. For example, Walter Tejada, former Chairman of the Arlington County Board in Virginia, is an immigrant from El Salvador who served on citizen advisory groups including the Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission, Affordable Housing Task Force, and Neighborhood Day Organizing Committee.

## Who can serve on a government board or commission?

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## RUNNING FOR OFFICE

The ability to run for elected office is a benefit of being a U.S. citizen. Anyone living in the United States can speak their opinions to elected officials and other decision-makers. Only citizens can serve as elected officials. As an elected official, you can help make decisions, policies and laws that affect the entire community in which you live.

As a naturalized citizen, you have the right and opportunity to run for every political office except for the president of the United States. Across the country, hundreds of naturalized citizens hold elected office, including mayors, city councilmembers, state legislators and members of Congress. Here are just a few examples:



### **Ilhan Omar**

Born in Somalia, is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for Minnesota's 5th Congressional District.



### **Mohamed Khairullah**

Born in Syria, is Mayor of Prospect Park, New Jersey.



### **Adriano Espaillat**

Born in the Dominican Republic, represents New York's 13th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.



### **Mazie Hirono**

Born in Japan, represents Hawaii in the U.S. Senate.



### **Ana Sol Gutierrez**

Born in El Salvador, is a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and represents District 18 in Montgomery County.



### **Pramila Jayapal**

Born in India, represents Washington's 7th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

## Who can run for elected office in the United States?

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## What is the only office that requires a candidate to be born a U.S. citizen?

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