

**Taylor Kohn, South Carolina Association of Independent Homeschools,  
Columbia, South Carolina**

### **The Responsibilities of Citizenship and their Role in Reinforcing the Rule of Law**

Theodore Roosevelt said that "The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight." Truer words have never been spoken. To be a citizen in a free country is an incredible blessing, and it is only right that we treat it as such. Even though individual citizens might disagree on the politics of a nation, we know that the responsibilities granted to us as citizens tie us together and allow us to cooperate on an individual level to benefit society as a whole.

A citizen is one who, by birth, nationality of a parent, or naturalization is granted the rights and responsibilities of being a member of a national community. As citizens, we have a few obligations that we must meet to the best of our abilities. These include obeying the laws of the land, paying taxes, and serving on a jury. Obeying local, state, and federal laws, and facing the consequences when they are broken, allows society to function more smoothly and in a way that benefits all. Paying our fair share of taxes funds social programs, schools, infrastructure and national defense. This strengthens our communities and allows for more widespread prosperity and security. Jury service and active participation in the judicial process helps ensure accountability to each other, while a trial by jury is designed to try to apply the law evenly across gender, race, religion, and financial background.

In addition to the aforementioned obligations, we also have multiple civil responsibilities and duties that must be upheld for the preservation of democracy as we know it. Most importantly, citizens must vote. Citizen participation in elections is vital to our government, allowing us to exercise our right to freely choose our leaders. Voting is a right and a privilege, but it is, most importantly, a commitment that must be fulfilled to ensure that democracy is

maintained for future generations. It is a moral obligation that we must uphold; it is how we, as citizens, can be active in the civic process.

Education is critical to having informed citizens who are able to invest back into their communities. Citizens must remain informed of local, state, judicial, national, and international issues in order for us to better our communities. When we know what is occurring in our state, nation, and in the world, as well as knowing who our politicians are and what they stand for, we can better elect those who represent our ideals. The better that we understand the issues affecting our immediate and extended communities, the better we can serve our community and our country. Just as it is impossible to fix a problem if you do not know that it exists, it is equally difficult to provide support for beneficial solutions if you are not educated as to the options.

These responsibilities also tie into community involvement, another vitally important civic action available to citizens. Community involvement is maintaining the safety and security of our communities and meeting the needs of the people living in those communities. Empowering our communities, whether through activism, charities, or community development projects, establishes a way for help and change to come directly from the people who benefit from it the most. It empowers more people to be more proactive in their lives and communities, leading to safer communities.

When people are involved in caring for their community and have personal relationships with others in the community, it reinforces their responsibility to treat others as they would like to be treated and help others. Citizens are more likely to support the rule of law when educated as to its existence and personally involved to ensure its success. Community involvement is not only beneficial for the community members in the present, but it is highly constructive in regards to modeling responsible behavior and good character to the younger generation. It is

exceptionally important for citizens to encourage, and model, good citizenship. This is one of our most important responsibilities as citizens and community members. It is inconceivable to have a properly functioning democratic system without committed and responsible citizens.

Our job is to be citizens of integrity, who hold up the backbone of our democracy. We need to fulfill our moral obligations as citizens, as well as fulfill those we are legally bound to by law. Our role in society is among the most important, and we must take it seriously. We are responsible for the care and preservation of our society, and as citizens, we have an ethical responsibility to do so. This can include putting selfish goals aside and working towards goals that would improve the community at large. It means doing the right things even when it is hard. Investing in others, and helping people to achieve more, benefits all by leading to the improvement of citizen led communities.