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In the United States, citizens have a role to carry out both civic duties and responsibilities. While duties such as following the law, paying taxes, and serving on a jury (1) are important, civic responsibilities are what allow democracy to remain intact. Civic responsibilities include voting, staying politically informed, and being active in one's community. All actions that, while not legally required, are essential to an optimal political and democratic environment. One of the key aspects in upholding democracy is the rule of law, a principle stating the importance of accountability under the law for all individuals, no matter how their position or status (2). The civic responsibilities of U.S. citizens reinforce and support the rule of law by ensuring that elected officials are truly representative of the people and that citizens have the knowledge to call out people who are infringing upon the rule of law and its values.

The first way in which civic responsibilities bolsters the rule of law is through the election of officials, such that they represent and are held accountable by the people and uphold the rule of law. This is primarily ensured through voting, which is the most impactful of the civic responsibilities. Despite not being legally required, it is drastically important for all citizens to share their voice and vote, and to do so in every election. While certain elections such as the presidential one every 4 years often receive greater media coverage and popularity, it is just as important, if not more, to vote in other elections, such as those for local and state officials. These individuals create public policy that is likely more directly impactful to citizens than that made federally, but they still receive much lesser voter turnout. Even if someone believes they are in a non-competitive state and that a certain party will easily run away with an election, it is still important to cast a vote to ensure that the true will of the people is heard, rather than the will of the louder minority. Voting maintains the rule of law because it ensures that people in office are

held accountable (2). If someone faces no potential repercussions for their actions, then they will act freely and solely attempt to further their agenda. However, by facing elections, they must ensure that they are doing what is best for the people, and in a manner that is within the law, or else they will be voted out from office and lose their power. Additionally, voting allows officials to be chosen for their merit in maintaining the rule of law, as actions such as legislation and appointees, both key facets of the rule of law, are directly impacted by elected officials. Overall, the civic responsibility of voting drastically affects the reinforcement of the rule of law by ensuring that officials are held accountable and do what they can to defend the rule of law as well.

The civic responsibilities of citizens also fortify the rule of law by guaranteeing that the people can call out those who are encroaching on it. Another of the key civic responsibilities is to stay informed, both in terms of community and national issues and information. By staying informed and up to date, citizens are able to act accordingly in a manner that best serves the democratic process. Additionally, informed people are likely to make a more nuanced and thoughtful decision when fulfilling other civic responsibilities like voting. One other aspect of staying informed is allowing others within one's community to stay informed as well. This means performing other civic responsibilities such as tolerance (1), where a fair and equal opportunity is presented for all, no matter their demographic status. By doing so, it means that more people have greater access to information, allowing them to stay informed as well, which improves democratic integrity for all involved. Adding on to this, just as important as ensuring information is available to all in a manner that is not discriminatory or exclusive, it is important to pass on this information and these values, such that future generations can uphold these principles as well. Clear and concise information combined with the responsibility to stay

informed allows for the law to be public and applied evenly, another portion of the rule of law (2). The more people are informed, the more they can interpret and denounce violations of the rule of law, and open information allows these denouncements to be heard widely and not be suppressed. In general, the responsibilities of staying informed and passing on and maintaining open access to information for all allows the rule of law to be properly followed along with the ability to call out those who do not.

Overall, the civic responsibilities of citizens of the United States tie in directly with the rule of law, and both work in tandem to reinforce each other and the principles of democracy within the nation. However, it is lastly important to remember that civic responsibilities are not a one-time action, and require persistent effort to follow. For the rule of law to be truly supported, people must consistently vote, stay informed, share and ensure open access to information, and more, such that when attempts to infringe upon the concepts of accountability and just and impartial law occur, they can be thwarted and prevented.

## Works Cited

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