

# *What Are the Benefits and Responsibilities of Citizenship?*

## **Benefits**

The Constitution and laws of the United States give many rights to both citizens and non-citizens living in the United States. However, some rights are only for citizens, such as:

- **Voting.** Only U.S. citizens can vote in Federal elections. Most States also restrict the right to vote, in most elections, to U.S. citizens.
- **Bringing family members to the United States.** Citizens generally get priority when petitioning to bring family members permanently to this country.
- **Obtaining citizenship for children born abroad.** In most cases, a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen is automatically a U.S. citizen.
- **Traveling with a U.S. passport.** A U.S. passport allows you to get assistance from the U.S. government when outside the United States.
- **Becoming eligible for Federal jobs.** Most jobs with government agencies require U.S. citizenship.
- **Becoming an elected official.** Many elected offices in this country require U.S. citizenship.
- **Showing your patriotism.** In addition, becoming a U.S. citizen is a way to demonstrate your commitment to your new country.

The above list does not include all the benefits of citizenship, only some of the more important ones.

## **Responsibilities**

To become a U.S. citizen you must take the Oath of Allegiance. The oath includes several promises you make when you become a U.S. citizen, including promises to:

- Give up all prior allegiance to any other nation or sovereignty;
- Swear allegiance to the United States;
- Support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States; and
- Serve the country when required.

U.S. citizens have many responsibilities other than the ones mentioned in the Oath. Citizens have a responsibility to participate in the political process by registering and voting in elections. Serving on a jury is another responsibility of citizenship. Finally, America becomes stronger when all of its citizens respect the different opinions, cultures, ethnic groups, and religions found in this country. Tolerance for differences is also a responsibility of citizenship.

When you decide to become a U.S. citizen, you should be willing to fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. We hope you will honor and respect the freedoms and opportunities citizenship gives you. At the same time, we hope you become an active member of your community. It is by participating in your community that you truly become an American.