

## **Citizenship**

Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans regardless of race, religion, and ethnicity. Citizenship represents a belief in freedom, liberty, and equality for all. With United States citizenships comes both rights and responsibilities. One of the most important rights of citizenship is the right to vote. For more information regarding rights and responsibilities visit <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/citizenship-rights-and-responsibilities>.

## **Rights and Benefits of Voting**

Voting is a fundamental right afforded to eligible citizens of the United States. Voting enables citizens to vote for political parties and choose leaders, but it also helps them realize the importance and power of a democratic republic. Voting is important in a nation because it provides people an opportunity to voice their opinions and vote according to their beliefs. Voting holds elected officials accountable, preventing the creation of an oligarchy.

Abraham Lincoln once said democracy is "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Many citizens do not vote thinking that one vote will make little difference. However, it does, and to have your voice count, you must vote. By not voting, you limit your own power and the ability to be a part of the grand experiment of democracy that Lincoln so eloquently defined.

## **Voting Eligibility and Registration**

Voting in the United States occurs at the local, state, and federal levels. The first step to become eligible to vote in these elections is to submit a Voter Registration Application through the citizen's state of residency. You can register to vote if:

- You are a United States citizen.
- You are at least 17 years of age.\*
- You will be a resident of the State and county 30 days before the election.
- You are NOT currently serving a sentence, probation or parole because of a felony conviction.

*\*You may register to vote if you are at least 17 years old but cannot vote until reaching the age of 18.*

For your convenience, the New Jersey Voter Registration Application is attached. Citizens can also register online at [www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml](http://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml).