

**SSCG16: Analyze the difference between involuntary and voluntary participation in civic life.**

**Overview:** The intent of this standard is to analyze and describe the various ways that citizens voluntarily and involuntarily participate in civil life. The standard addresses the meaning and history behind the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Resources:**

\*PBS offers a series of 48 videos on American Government in a series called Crash Course. This is an excellent resource that can be used to introduce the specific elements of American Government to students. The link is: <http://www.pbs.org/show/crash-course-government-and-politics/episodes/>

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**SSCG16a:** Describe how and why citizens are required by law to pay taxes, serve on a jury, and register for military duty.

\*The payment of taxes is considered a **civic duty**, even though it is not optional. A civic duty is a responsibility of a citizen. Taxes are used to pay for public benefits that citizens receive. Taxes are collected to pay for: government workers, common resources such as police officers and firefighters, public roadways, libraries, public parks, and schools. Taxes are collected on the income that we earn, on property we own, such as homes and vehicles, and purchases that we make. The taxes we pay are pooled together to pay for the collective services that we receive; it would be next to impossible to tax every single person for each public service offered.

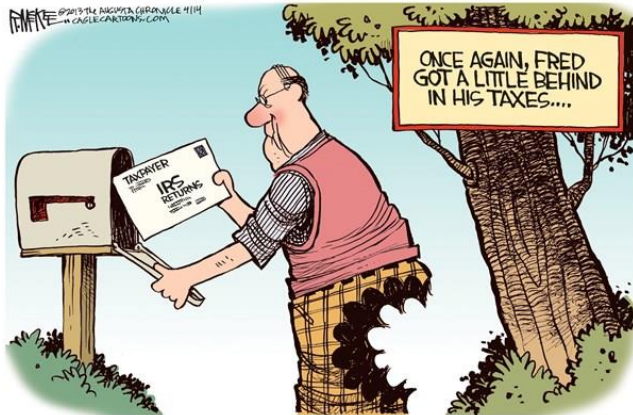
\*Another civic duty is serving on a jury. As U.S. citizens, we all have a right to a trial by jury and a civic responsibility to serve on a jury if called upon. Jury duty is an opportunity to actively participate in allowing other citizens to exercise the basic freedoms that we are all entitled to. A jury is one of the checks and balances that make the judicial process fair. All citizens eligible to serve on a jury are pooled together, and potential jurors are chosen and summoned randomly. If you are summoned, that does not mean that you will be chosen to serve. The attorneys for each side go through a process of elimination to choose jurors that they think will provide the best representation for both sides.

There are requirements of eligibility to serve on a jury: at least 18 years old, United States citizen, no disqualifying physical or mental conditions, and no felony convictions.

\*The **selective service** is an independent agency of the U.S. government that maintains information on those potentially subject to enroll in the military. All male citizens in the United States between the ages of 18 and 25 are required by law to register within 30 days of their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, unless they are in prison or a mental hospital. In addition, all male non-citizens living in the United States must register, with the exception of diplomats and international students. Enrolling in the selective service does not mean that you are joining the military. In a crisis requiring a military draft, men would be called to serve in a sequence determined by a random lottery number and year of birth.

**Activity:** The following link provides lesson plans and activities related to jury duty: <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplan.jsp?id=330>. The lesson plan includes an essential question and activities that support Common Core for Social Studies and English/Language Arts.

**Activity:** Students should break into small groups and interpret the meaning of the political cartoon below on taxes:



**Resources:**

<http://www.wisageek.org/why-do-i-have-to-serve-jury-duty.htm>

<http://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/jury-service/juror-qualifications>

<http://wonderopolis.org/wonder/why-do-you-have-to-pay-taxes>

<https://www.sss.gov/Registration/Why-Register>

McClenaghan, W.A. (2015). *Macgruder's American Government*. Boston: Pearson Prentice Hall.

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SSCG16b: Describe how citizens voluntarily and responsibly participate in the political process by voting, performing public service, being informed about current issues, and respecting differing opinions.

\*There are various ways that citizens can voluntarily and responsibly participate in the political process. One of the most important ways to perform our civic duties is to vote! By voting, you are making your voice heard and are registering your opinion on how you think the government should operate. Even if your candidate does not win, it is still important that you voice your opinion. Citizens have the right to cast a vote for local, state, and federal level public office candidates and policies. Many people think that their vote does not count; however, if we were to add up all of the people who did not vote because they don't think their vote counts, we would potentially see very different election results.

Performing public service is another way to voluntarily participate in civic life. There are many categories of public service: running for public office, working directly for the government, volunteering at local precincts or with campaigns, and taking employment in areas that serve the public, such as health care or education.

As American citizens, it is important to be informed about current issues, both domestic and foreign. The more we know about current issues, the more educated we become about what is going on in the United States and internationally. When it comes to elections, voters need to be informed about each candidate, how the candidate stands on particular issues, and what types of policies the candidates support. We elect

representatives to stand up for and pursue our interests. If we are not informed, then we may elect someone who does not share the same ideology as we do.

Finally, it is important that citizens respect each other's opinion; we do not necessarily have to agree, but we should be respectful of differing opinions. When we take the time to listen to other's opinions, even if we do not agree, we can learn more about the issues at hand and the various perspectives.

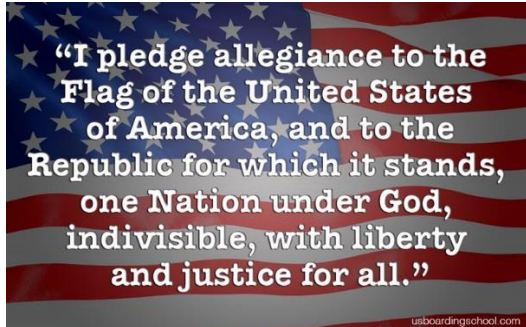
**Resources:**

<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/speakout/path-to-the-presidency-why-is-it-important-to-vote>

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SSCG16c: Explain the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was originally written in 1887 by Colonel George Balch. It was revised in 1892 by Francis Bellamy. Balch supported the notion that it was important for children, particularly children of immigrants, to be loyal to the United States. The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1942 as the formal pledge for the country. Congress created the right hand over the heart for both the recitation of the pledge and for the singing of the National Anthem. There has been much controversy over the years regarding the pledge and whether children in schools should be required to perform the pledge. Most states still have the pledge as a daily event in public schools, but there is no punishment if children, based on religious or personal reasons, do not participate. When we recite the pledge, we are pledging our loyalty to the United States of America; the flag represents our nation.



**Activity:** Click on the following link to show demonstrate to students what each word of the Pledge of Allegiance means: <http://www.conservativedailynews.com/2011/08/what-does-the-pledge-of-allegiance-really-mean/>.

**Resources:**

<http://www.ushistory.org/documents/pledge.htm>