**A Checklist For Good Citizenship**

American democracy depends on good citizenship because it's a where people are the final authority. Unlike authoritarian regimes where power flows from the top down, a democracy derives its legitimacy and effectiveness from the active participation and responsible conduct of its citizens.

An informed electorate has the tools to understand complex issues and evaluate candidates for public office. Without an informed citizenry, decisions can be based on ignorance, emotion, or manipulation, leading to poor governance and the weakening of democracy,

But what’s involved in good citizenship? Informed voting is a big part of it but there is more to being a good citizen in a democracy than just showing up at the polls every two or four years. American democracy is not a spectator sport. Its success rests on the shoulders of its citizens. If we are apathetic, gullible to misinformation and lack a sense of civic responsibility, our democratic institutions can weaken become unstable.

So are you a good citizen? Here’s a checklist you can use to grade yourself on just how good a citizen you are. If you are honest with yourself and keep score, the results might surprise you.

Scoring is simple. Give yourself a point for each of the following good citizen traits that describe you.

* You are registered to vote.
* You have at least a basic knowledge about each candidate and each ballot issue in every election in which you are eligible to vote.
* You actually vote in all local, state and national elections.
* You know basic American history.
* You can name the branches of American federal government and describe how they relate to each other.
* You understand American federalism and how local, state and the national government share powers.
* You can define liberty and equality and justice and how they affect each other.
* You understand what a democratic republic is and can distinguish it from oligarchy, monarchy and dictatorship.
* You have a good grasp on the relative role of Individuals and the political system at large.
* You understand the rights and responsibilities of citizen participation in a democracy.
* You can compare American political institutions to those of at least three different foreign governments.
* You understand the government role in the economy.
* You can describe the overall themes of American foreign policy.
* You know what to do to influence public policy.
* You have a basic understanding of international geography, politics and global interdependence.
* You understand what causes political change and its consequences.
* You are a critical thinker who uses can use basic logic and can distinguish facts from values.
* You are media-savvy and can recognize media bias.
* You follow current events most of the time
* You can name all three of your elected federal representatives, your governor and at least two local elected officials.

**So how did you do?**

If you got 10 points or fewer, you need some basic review.

If you got between 10 and 15 points, you can pat yourself on the back and proclaim yourself a good citizen.

If you got more than 15, you might be a candidate for an advanced degree in political science.