

## "U.S. CITIZENSHIP INCENTIVES & RESPONSIBILITIES"

WE LIVE IN FREEST, MOST PROSPEROUS COUNTRY EVER TO HAVE EXISTED IN THE WORLD. OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND OUR CONSTITUTION WITH ITS BILL OF RIGHTS GUARANTEE THE GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK TO KEEP OUR COUNTRY STRONG. ONE OF THOSE DOCUMENTS, OUR CONSTITUTION, IS 200 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR. CONTAINED WITHIN THESE DOCUMENTS ARE THE INCENTIVES THAT MAKES US WANT TO BE AMERICAN CITIZENS AND MAKES MILLIONS MORE DREAM OF OBTAINING U.S. CITIZENSHIP FROM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

IF YOU WOULD LOOK UP THE WORD CITIZEN IN THE DICTIONARY, YOU WOULD READ SOMETHING LIKE, "A PERSON OWNING LOYALTY TO AND ENTITLED BY BIRTH OR NATURALIZATION TO THE PROTECTION OF A GIVEN STATE," OR, YOU MIGHT READ, "A RESIDENT OF A CITY OR TOWN, ESPECIALLY ONE ENTITLED TO VOTE AND ENJOY OTHER PRIVILEGES THERE."

PERHAPS FORMER UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN SAID IT BEST, WHEN IN ISSUING A COURT OPINION, HE NOTED, "CITIZENSHIP IS MAN'S BASIC RIGHT, FOR IT IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE RIGHT TO HAVE RIGHTS."

CITIZENSHIP IS WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE A PRIVILEGE. WITH THAT PRIVILEGE COMES RESPONSIBILITY. IN OUR NATION'S CONSTITUTION, A DEMOCRACY WAS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT WAS ESTABLISHED. OUR FOUNDING FATHERS ALSO SET UP A LIST OF PRIVILEGES FOR ALL CITIZENS. THIS LIST IS KNOWN AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS. IT ESTABLISHED CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS FOR ALL AMERICANS THAT EXIST TO THIS DAY AND ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT.

THESE RIGHTS ALSO CARRY WITH THEM RESPONSIBILITIES. FOR INSTANCE, THERE IS THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE FREE TO EXERCISE THAT RIGHT BY SLANDERING OTHERS OR TOSsing ABOUT RACIAL OR ETHNIC SLURS. WE DO HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST INJUSTICE, TO CRITICIZE IN A RATIONAL MANNER, TO COMMENT ABOUT EVENTS, PEOPLE AND LIFE AND TO AIR OUR OPINIONS. WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO EXERCISE THE RIGHT IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS GIVES ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS. THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE CAN USE A GUN TO SHOOT DOWN ANYONE WE DO NOT LIKE OR TO USE ARMS IN IRRESPONSIBLE WAYS.

I THINK THAT THAT IS THE BEAUTY OF OUR NATION AND OUR GOVERNMENT. NOT ONLY DID THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION SET UP RULES TO GOVERN THE CITIZENS, BUT THEY MADE IT CLEAR, IN BLACK AND WHITE, THAT CITIZENS HAVE CERTAIN FREEDOMS THAT SHALL NEVER BE TAKEN AWAY, AND THAT CITIZENS HAVE A RIGHT, AND YES, A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT. OUR UNIQUE FORM OF GOVERNMENT HAS LASTED FOR OVER 200 YEARS, WHICH TO ME INDICATES THAT OUR NATION'S FOUNDERS DID AN EXCEPTIONAL JOB OF FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT - A GOVERNMENT OF, FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE. AS GOOD CITIZENS, WE MUST DO ALL THAT WE CAN TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE OUR NATION, AND THAT MEANS TAKING OUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES SERIOUSLY.

I URGE YOU TO BE ACTIVE CITIZENS; TO BECOME INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITIES; TO BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICALLY AND VOTE - THAT BEING ONE OF OUR GREATEST PRIVILEGES AND MOST IMPORTANT DUTIES; TO STUDY OUR HISTORY; AND TO WORK TO IMPROVE OUR STATE

AND OUR NATION IN ANY WAY THAT YOU CAN. THAT IS THE REAL JOY OF CITIZENSHIP - HAVING SOMETHING TO STAND FOR AND DOING YOUR UTMOST TO IMPROVE IT.

IN A DEMOCRACY SUCH AS WE ENJOY IN THIS GREAT COUNTRY, IT'S IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THAT GOOD CITIZENSHIP REQUIRES PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, "POLITICAL ACTIVITY," PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY SAID, "IS THE HIGHEST RESPONSIBILITY OF A CITIZEN."

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOUR PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IS AS IMPORTANT AS ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY, INDEED, IT IS POLITICAL ACTIVITY. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN A DEMOCRACY IS NOT BUILDINGS AND LAWS, IT'S PEOPLE...IT'S OUR COMMUNITY.

BE ACTIVE IN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS. GET INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SERVICES. WORK IN A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM.

CITIZENSHIP IS NOT JUST SALUTING THE FLAG, IT MEANS AN HONEST ALLEGIANCE TO WHAT THAT FLAG STANDS FOR. MAKING OUR NATION STRONG INVOLVES MORE THAN JUST WORDS, IT REQUIRES ACTION. ACTION ON BEHALF OF OUR COUNTRY, ACTION IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND ACTION TO HELP OUR COUNTRYMEN.

YES, U.S. CITIZENSHIP HAS ITS INCENTIVES BUT IT ALSO MEANS RESPONSIBILITIES. RESPONSIBILITIES THAT WE MUST SHARE IN. WE CANNOT DELEGATE, WE CANNOT GIVE AWAY THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES OR THE FAMOUS DOCUMENTS OF OUR NATION'S PAST THAT SO MANY GAVE SO MUCH TO PRESERVE WON'T BE WORTH THE PAPER THAT THEY'RE WRITTEN ON.

FOR WE ARE A NATION OF PEOPLE UNDER A SET OF  
CONSTITUTIONAL LAWS AND ONLY WE CAN KEEP OUR NATION STRONG AND  
FREE FOR ALL NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. THAT'S OUR  
INCENTIVE...THAT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY. IT'S WHAT CITIZENSHIP  
IS ALL ABOUT.