

# How Citizens Participate in City Government

It is very important for residents to participate in the activities of their city government. Policies and major decisions of the city are made by city officials with the input of city residents. It is important for citizens to know how their government works and get involved because these decisions impact the lives of all residents.

The following are some ways you can get involved in your city government:

- 🗳️ Voting for someone running for office, or voting for or against an issue that will affect you and all city residents. You must be 18 years old to register to vote.
- 🗳️ Attending and speaking at a city public hearing.
- 🗳️ Writing letters or calling your city officials about an issue that affects you.
- 🗳️ Serving on a city advisory committee and/or board. These are usually set up by the city council/commission to deal with an issue or problem and are made up of both citizens and city council/commission members. Some examples are the Planning and Zoning Board and the Recreation Advisory Committee.
- 🗳️ Running for an elected office, such as mayor or council/commission.
- 🗳️ Working for the city. There are many different types of jobs with city government – accountants, managers, engineers, secretaries, firefighters, police officers, planners and many more.
- 🗳️ Serve as a volunteer in a city department such as parks and recreation.

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## Student Activities

### 2nd Grade

- 🗳️ Brainstorm what students think an elected official is. Ask an elected city official to speak to the class about why he/she ran for public office.
- 🗳️ Hold a mock city election in the class.

### 3rd Grade

- 📖 Hold a mock city election in the class.
- 📖 Students can research how citizen participation in government has evolved through history.
- 📖 Invite elected city officials to speak to the class. What kind of qualifications did they need? What laws and regulations did they have to follow in the process? Has it turned out how they expected?

### 4th Grade

- 📖 Hold a mock city election in the class.
- 📖 Students can research the progression of citizen participation in city government in the United States. Presentations can be written reports, posters, charts, graphs, plays or multimedia.
- 📖 Invite elected city officials to speak to the class.
- 📖 Students can research what kinds of committees/boards local cities have established and the qualifications to serve in this volunteer capacity.

### 5th Grade

- 📖 Hold a mock city election in the class.
- 📖 Invite elected city officials to speak to the class about current issues in the community.
- 📖 Students can follow and investigate a current issue in the community. If possible, students can attend or tape a city council meeting about the issue. Students then can hold their own election on the issue. They may wish to become involved in the actual issue. Presentations can be written reports, posters, charts, graphs, plays or multimedia.

### Student Questions:

1. If you had a problem and wanted to make sure your city officials knew about it, what would you do?
2. Is there a job in the city that you would like to have? Why?
3. Why do you think people run for elected office? Would you ever like to be a mayor or a councilmember?
4. Do you think it is important for citizens to become involved with their city government? Why?