Reading Focus
Have you ever thought about the things that bind people together? What values and beliefs do they share? The American ideal of citizenship has always stressed each citizen’s responsibility to participate in political life.

Read to Discover
As you read, think about the following:
• What are the things that unite people in a common cause?
• What values and beliefs do people in a society share?

Reader’s Dictionary
self-interest: a concern for one’s own advantage or well-being
complacency: self-satisfaction
disinterested: free of bias; impartial
ruthless: without mercy
unbridled: uncontrolled
abridged: cut short
servitude: lack of personal freedom

Democracy in America
In Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville vividly described nineteenth-century American life, politics, and morals.

The Americans, on the other hand, are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of self-interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state. In this respect I think they frequently fail to do themselves justice, for in the United States as well as elsewhere people are sometimes seen to give way to those disinterested and spontaneous impulses that are natural to man; but the Americans seldom admit that they yield to emotions of this kind; they are more anxious to do honor to their philosophy than to themselves.

—Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

The Spirit of Liberty
In his essay “The Spirit of Liberty,” United States Circuit Court Judge Learned Hand promoted the ideal of ethical and committed citizens.

What do we mean when we say that first of all we seek liberty? I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in
which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few; as we have learned to our sorrow.

—Judge Learned Hand, “The Spirit of Liberty”

The Right to Vote

Many groups struggled to win the right to vote. Several amendments to the U.S. Constitution deal with suffrage.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or **abridged** by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of **servitude**.

—Fifteenth Amendment (1870)

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

—Nineteenth Amendment (1920)

The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election . . . shall not be denied or abridged . . . by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

—Twenty-fourth Amendment (1964)

The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

—Twenty-sixth Amendment (1971)

1. **Connecting** What connections did de Tocqueville make between the interests of individuals and the interests of groups?
2. **Responding** What do you think Judge Hand meant when he said, “Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women”?
3. **Predicting** How do you think people would respond to a compulsory voting law in the United States? Explain.
4. **Evaluating and Connecting** The privilege of U.S. citizenship brings with it certain responsibilities. Some responsibilities, such as obeying laws, are required. Other responsibilities, such as participating in political life, are voluntary. Make a list of the voluntary responsibilities you found in these readings. Then write a paragraph in response to the question: What do you think would happen if the voluntary responsibilities you listed became required by law?

Photographs as Primary Sources

What does this photograph tell you about women’s rights in the early 1900s? For what right is this woman campaigning?