

## Section 4

# Citizens and Government

As you read, look for:

- the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and
- vocabulary terms **open primary** and **lobbying**.

Abraham Lincoln described American democracy as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. When people join together to form a government, each citizen is an equal member of that government. All have rights *and* responsibilities.

Responsibility for personal actions and respect for the rights of others are expected from citizens. Civic responsibilities include obeying the law, paying taxes, and serving on a jury.

Citizens have personal rights that are named in the U.S. Constitution and the state constitution. These include free speech, freedom of religion, and the right to vote. Voting is both a right and a responsibility of citizens.

### Voting and Elections

In 1971, the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowered the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen. This is now the legal age for voting in every state, including Louisiana.

## Lagniappe

A person must register to vote at least 30 days before an election in order to vote in that election.

**Civic:** Relating to a citizen

### Figure 14 Voter Qualifications

To register to vote in Louisiana, a citizen must be

- A U.S. citizen
- At least 18 years old prior to the next election
- Not in prison or have been convicted of a felony
- Not judged mentally incompetent
- A resident of Louisiana and the parish in which the person seeks to vote