COLLECTION I — THE 12 POINTS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Accountability — Citizen's Guide

How elected officials and institutions are held accountable, and what tools citizens have to demand it.

By Daniel P. Devine · Civest Sphere · November 2026



WATCH THE VIDEO

Accountability in 60 Seconds · 1:01

Watch it on American Civic Power or YouTube.

https://www.americancivicpower.com/goodgovernance#accountability

What it means

Accountability means officials have to explain their decisions and face consequences when they fail. That happens through elections, audits, oversight by other branches, courts, a free press, and active residents.

Why it matters

Power that never has to answer to anyone tends to drift toward serving itself. Accountability keeps public institutions pointed at the public.

Signs it's working

- Officials explain their votes and decisions publicly.
- Audits by the state comptroller or independent auditors are published, and findings get fixed.

- Elections are competitive, and voters have real information about incumbents' records.
- Mistakes are acknowledged and corrected.

Warning signs

- Audit findings repeated year after year with no change.
- Officials who won't answer questions or attend public meetings.
- Uncontested elections, cycle after cycle.
- Spending decisions no one will take responsibility for.

What you can do

1. Track how your representatives vote. Civest Sphere's Active Legislation tool and NYSenate.gov make this easier.
2. Read audits. The NY State Comptroller publishes audits of towns, counties, school districts and agencies.
3. Ask questions during public comment, and follow up in writing.
4. Vote in every election, including primaries and local races, where margins are often smallest.

Related points

Transparency, Rule of Law, Responsiveness.

Last reviewed November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal advice. Laws, deadlines and procedures change, so confirm details with the official source before you act.

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