

TEXT SUMMARY

The vast majority of people living in the United States are American **citizens**—people who owe loyalty to the United States and, in turn, receive its protection. Most Americans are citizens because they were born in this country—because of **jus soli**, or the law of the soil—where one is born. Because of **jus sanguinis**, or the law of the blood—to whom one is born—a child born abroad can become an American citizen at birth if he or she is born to a parent who is a citizen and who has lived in the United States at some time.

Several million **aliens**—citizens or nationals of a foreign country who live in the United States—become citizens at some time after birth through the legal process of **naturalization**, over which Congress has exclusive control. States have no power in the matter.

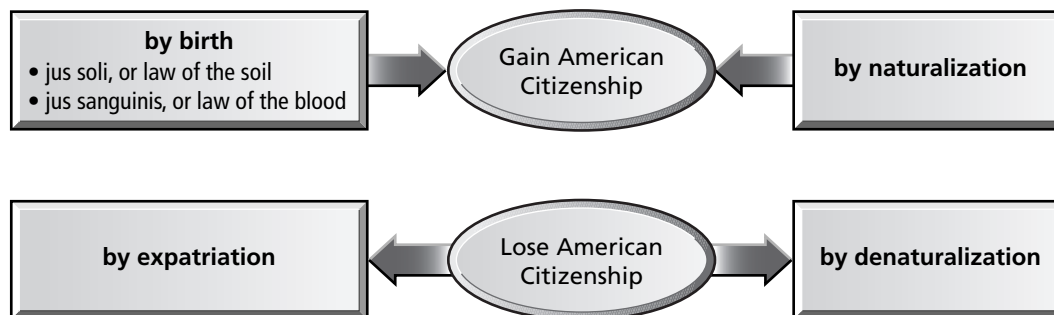
Americans can choose to give up, or voluntarily abandon, their citizenship. This occurs through the legal process of **expatriation**. Naturalized citizens who have gained citizenship through fraud or deception may lose their citizenship through a court-ordered process called **denaturalization**.

Most immigrants to the United States have entered the country officially. Many others, however, arrive illegally and then face special challenges to stay in this country. Congress has the power to place and remove immigration restrictions. Aliens may be subject to **deportation**, a legal process in which they are required to leave the United States.

THE BIG IDEA

People can receive American citizenship through birth, from their parents, or through the naturalization process.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Ways of Gaining and Losing American Citizenship



Americans must qualify for citizenship; they may also give up their citizenship or have it taken from them.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the process of naturalization?
2. **Diagram Skills** By what two rules are people born citizens of the United States?