



Mosaico

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The American Citizen Newsletter

Welcome to Belém! Tales From a Consular Agent

I'll never forget my first few months living in Belém do Pará, the Gateway to the Amazon. To me it seemed a rambunctious town, full of colorful, roly-poly buses bouncing down wide avenues lined with towering mango trees. It was steamy and hot. Women hid under bright umbrellas, whether from the sun or from the tropical downpours, and men wore rumpled white linen suits. It never entered my mind that I might end up working for the U.S. Department of State.

A permanent resident of Brazil, I hail from the State of Connecticut. In 1969, I married a Brazilian citizen whom I met in grad school in Wisconsin. We have two daughters, one born in Florida and one in Belém. As I would say later, we were a diplomatically divided family—2 Brazilians and 2 “gringas”. I would soon learn how important that situation would be for me to understand citizenship.

Now, let's get to the American citizens, or as we call them in our jargon, our Amcits. There are people like me, permanent residents, and those who came for short periods to work on oil rigs, prospecting for oil off the coast of Pará. Others are scientists doing other kinds of prospecting... researching the Amazon's biosphere, something that fascinates everyone and invariably draws oohs and aahs when you say that's where you live and work. We have students, tourists, adventurers—and plenty of them. Belém, being a port town, and the Gateway to the Amazon, attracts a very diverse and colorful mélange of visitors, from absolutely average to the bizarre.

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Welcome to the quarterly newsletter dedicated to U.S. citizens living in Brazil. Find news, updates from your local U.S. embassy or consulate, and more ...

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Election Year

2010 is a mid-term election year. In November, U.S. citizens will elect 435 Representatives, 33 Senators, a handful of governors and a large number of state and local officials. The election season will kick off this summer with a series of primary elections.

One of the most important activities a citizen can do from overseas is to continue to exercise his civic duty in the voting

process. To facilitate this process, Congress recently enacted the **Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act**.

This legislation amends existing law regarding overseas voting in federal elections, and should make voting easier for overseas Americans.

See more on voting overseas on page 3





Consul General's Corner

International parental child abductions have received significant media attention recently. Several cases have been highlighted in Japan as well as the Sean Goldman case here in Brazil. Brazil alone has over 15 pending case involving international parental child abduction.

With this in mind, many countries are taking a closer look at travel requirements for minors. Brazil is no exception. These travel requirements affect all American citizens in Brazil that also have Brazilian citizenship.

The Brazilian National Council of Justice (CNJ) published Resolution no. 74 on April 28, 2009, which regulates the international travel of Brazilian minors under the age of 18. If your child has Brazilian citizenship, this rule will apply to you, even if he/she is a dual national.

From now on, both parents must be personally present before a notary to sign the travel authorization for a minor to leave Brazil. This authorization must include a photo of the child/

adolescent. Two copies are necessary: one to be retained by the supervisory agent of the Federal Police at the boarding inspection, and the second copy to remain with the child/adolescent. Each trip requires separate authorizations.

Prior to this resolution, if the child were traveling with only one parent, the other parent needed a notarized authorization, but is not necessarily have to appear in person before a notary. He/she could simply send a signed authorization.

The resolution is intended to prevent parental child abductions

The decision of the CNJ is the result of a request made by the Brazilian Federal Police concerned about the possibility of falsification of documents in disputed child custody cases. The resolution is intended to prevent parental child abductions.

The travel authorization should contain an expiration date, to be determined by the parents or legal guardians. For after hours emergency assistance, you may contact the Judicial Court at 21 3133-2000.

Marie Damour
 Consul General
 U.S. Embassy Brasilia

REGISTER WITH THE EMBASSY OR A CONSULATE

You should register with the Embassy or Consulate that has jurisdiction over the state you reside in or are visiting and update your information every five years or when departing Brazil. Please see the list below of what states are covered by each post to determine with which post you should register. And see page 8 for a list of consular agents in other Brazilian cities. You may register online at;

<http://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>

U.S. Embassy Brasilia covers: Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Distrito Federal, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, and Roraima.

U.S. Consulate Rio de Janeiro covers: Bahia, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and Sergipe.

U.S. Consulate São Paulo covers: Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina.

U.S. Consulate Recife covers: Alagoas, Ceará, Fernando de Noronha, Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, and Rio Grande do Norte.

New Law Makes Absentee Voting Easier for Overseas Americans

New Procedures for 2010 Elections

Beginning with the November 2010 general election, and for all subsequent general, special, and primary elections, states will be required to mail out ballots at least 45 days prior to an election for a federal office. This requirement may cause some states to select earlier primary dates in order to comply with the 45 day mailing deadline, or to request waivers due to special circumstances.

In addition to mailing ballots to overseas voters, the states will be required, at the voter's request, to provide registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and blank ballots via fax or email. However, each state's laws determine whether ballot requests or voted ballots can be returned via fax or email. The new law prohibits states from rejecting marked ballots based on notarization, paper size, or paper weight requirements. The witnessing requirements of individual states remain in place.

Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests

Effective immediately, states will no longer be required by federal law to continue to mail election materials to overseas addresses (even when they are determined to be invalid) for two complete general election cycles on the basis of a

single ballot request. It will now be up to each state to determine how long to continue to send out election materials before requiring overseas voters to submit new ballot requests. This change, sought by local election officials, should greatly decrease the volume of voting materials sent abroad to addresses where Americans no longer reside.

State Department Recommendations

In light of these changes, the Department of State recommends that all U.S. voters residing abroad request absentee ballots from their local election officials at the start of each calendar year, and whenever there is a change of address, change of e-mail address, or change of name, by completing and sending in a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). To locate information on your specific state's requirements, and to obtain an on-line version of the FPCA, please visit www.fvap.gov. Voters may also pick up a hard copy of the FPCA from any U.S. embassy or consulate. FPCAs may be mailed to your local voting officials in the United States via international mail or from any U.S. embassy or consulate. Many states allow U.S. citizens overseas to submit the FPCA by e-mail or fax.

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U.S. Trivia

1. Who was the only U.S. President to serve on the Supreme Court?
2. What university has won the most college football games?
3. What is the highest point in the continental United States?
4. Who was the last American to win the Nobel Prize for literature?

See answers on page 9



Recife

Reflections of Long Time Transplants

Recently two ex-pats wrote to the U.S. Consulate in Recife to share some of their experiences in Brazil. Laura is basing her comments on over 24 years living in Brazil, while Duane has been here for about eight. They both live in the Northeast, Fortaleza and Recife respectively. Most ex-pats who have lived in Brazil for any length of time will recognize some of these observations. For those newer transplants, take advantage of Laura and Duane’s combined 32 years of experience.

Both contributors stated how much they enjoy the general “maneira de ser” of the Brazilians. They have found Brazilians warm, welcoming and generous. Laura described how she has been invited to countless birthday parties as a “friend of a friend” and was treated “like royalty”. Duane echoed Laura’s remarks and added that he was particularly impressed with the devotion Brazilians have to one another. It’s a familial devotion that Duane feels is lacking in the United States. The two also raved about the food, the weather and the natural beauty.

Just like every other place on the planet, Brazil has its ‘challenges’. Both ex-pats firmly stated that the Brazilian bureaucracy was more of a challenge that it needed to be. Duane recounted the tale of the two years and seven months it took him to get his Brazilian Residence card. On a constructive note, Laura compiled a list of tips that she has found helpful when dealing with the Brazilian bureaucracy. First, don’t take a superior attitude – it can be spotted three miles away. Next, dress appropriately, not like you just came off the beach. Also, if you don’t speak Portuguese well, bring a friend that can help you translate and navigate. Always be friendly with the staff. They’re much more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt if you’re nice. Finally, manage your expectations. Expect the process to be lengthy. You may have to go to the same office several times so plan accordingly. If you enter into the Brazilian bureaucracy expecting fast, efficient service you’re just setting yourself up for frustration and disappointment.

Over all Duane and Laura have really enjoyed their time in their adopted county. Their keys to enjoying Brazil are to take full advantage of its wonders and manage the pitfalls with patience and grace.



Fortaleza

It’s That Time of Year Again.

April 15 is the annual day of dread for many. However, take heart, there are many resources available to help taxpayers make the annual process a bit less painful



For General Help

www.irs.gov

Information for International Filers

www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/

NEED TO TALK TO A REAL PERSON ?

The IRS in Philadelphia provides international tax assistance. This office is open Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. EST and can be contacted by;

- Phone: (215) 516-2000 (not toll-free)
- FAX: (215) 516-2555
- Email: www.irs.gov
- Mail: Internal Revenue Service
P.O. Box 920
Bensalem, PA 19020

Rio Consulate Visits Salvador

“The US Consulate’s Public Diplomacy Office in Rio de Janeiro recently sponsored an outreach program to Salvador da Bahia on March 19, 2010. Vice Consul Daniel Aragon and FSN Almerita Sousa met with members of the Associacao Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos (ACBEU), the American Corner Library staff, US Consular Agent Heather Marques, seventy-five junior high and high school students, and an American teacher at ACBEU, Elizabeth Crockett. In addition, the Vice Consul participated in a open forum on the role of Brazil’s first Ambassador to the United States, the abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco. It was hosted by the Pedro Calmon Foundation, the second most important archival center in Brazil.

Consular Agent Marques, resident of Salvador for 27 years, relayed ACBEU’s importance to the Brazilian-American community in Salvador since its establishment in 1958. Ms. Crockett, who has been in Brazil for over a year, agreed. She teaches several English-language courses, but emphasized the need for more English-language teachers because of the high demand of interest among Brazilian youths in American culture, music, and literature. ACBEU’s General Coordinator, and the American Corner’s Director Conceicao Maria Andrade, also highlighted American university students’ interest in Salvador because of the city’s multi-cultural heritage and deeply rooted connection to Brazil’s social, cultural, and culinary evolution. Salvador da Bahia is a catalyst for furthering closer US-Brazilian relations.”



Junior High & High School Students met with consulate representatives in Salvador.



Athina Arcadinos Leite (General Coordinator of the Associacao Cultural Brasil-Estados Unidos) and FSN Almerita Sousa (Rio Consulate, PD section)

Voting

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The Department of State strongly encourages all U.S. overseas voters to provide email addresses or fax numbers on their FPCAs to enable local election officials to transmit election materials in the fastest manner available, which should then allow sufficient time for the return of voted ballots. For information regarding your specific state, please visit www.fvap.gov.

Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for the November general elections for federal offices, although some states also permit its use for elections for state and local offices. Beginning in January 2011, the new law allows use of the FWAB for primary, special, and runoff elections for federal offices. Voters who request an absentee ballot in advance of their state’s ballot request deadline, but who fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials in time to vote, should complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot and send it back to local election officials in time for it to be counted. An on-line version of the FWAB, together with instructions for its use, is available at www.fvap.gov.

Questions?

The Voting Assistance Officer at the nearest consulate or embassy is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, use the contact information on page 9.



Travel Tips

Spring is finally here and summer is on the way. (I know it's the opposite down here, but I'll never get used to that). With that in mind, many thoughts turn to summer vacation. Before you pack up the family and head to Buenos Aires, Budapest or back to the states, take a few minutes to read some of the following travel tips that will help make your next vacation one to remember.

Sign up so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency: Record your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the United States, or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. You'll also receive updated travel information for countries you plan to visit. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

Sign your passport, and fill in the emergency information: Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport. Most passports are valid for ten years. Write the contact information in pencil so you can change it as needed over time.

Leave copies of itinerary, passport data page, and credit card: What happens if there's an emergency back home? Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends so you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Leave a copy of your credit card too; in an emergency, the credit card company can help your family locate you.

Check your overseas medical insurance coverage: Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance. Medical treatment and evacuations can cost thousands of dollars – some countries won't allow you in through customs unless you can show proof of medical insurance!

Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws: While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime: To avoid being a target of crime, practice the same safety tips you would in any place you aren't familiar with: do not wear clothing or jewelry that would attract attention and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

Contact us in an emergency: We are here to help you. Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the United States are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>, or you can call the Office of



Travel Resources

The United States Department of State has a wonderful travel tool at your disposal. Its travel website is a one stop guide to all your travel concerns. This site includes information on visa requirements for U.S. citizens, travel warnings, new TSA guidance, travel tips and much more. Bookmark the site and visit often

www.travel.state.gov

NEWS AND NOTES

ONLINE APPOINTMENTS

The Embassy in Brasilia and the Consulates in Rio, Recife and Sao Paulo require appointments for all American Citizen Services to be scheduled online. It's a very easy process. First, go to our website at <http://brasilia.usembassy.gov>. Then select the "U.S. Citizen Services" tab. Finally, select the desired location of the service (Brasilia, Sao Paulo or Rio) and schedule an appointment.



For emergency services, please contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate directly. Contact information is located on page nine.

Services That Are Scheduled Online

Add visa pages to an undamaged, valid U.S. Passport.

Passport services other than adding visa pages; renewal, replacement, etc.

Report the birth abroad of a child of a U.S. citizen and/or apply for the child's first passport. Report of birth

and Social Security number.*

Request notary and other services not mentioned above.

**It is important to note that registering a child as an American is a lengthy process. You should be prepared to spend several hours in the Consulate / Embassy to complete the process.*

How to Renew a Child's U.S. Passport

The following documents are required to renew a passport for a minor under 16 years of age with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate:

- Completed DS-11 (passport application form). Please complete all sections *except* Section 23. You need to sign this in front of the Consular Officer.
- Child's original birth certificate
- One (1) photo 2x2 inches (5x5 cm or 5x7cm)
- Parents/guardians' evidence of identity
- US \$85 (application fee)

Both parents must appear before the Consular Officer to sign for the minor's passport.

If only one parent is present, the other parent must submit a written statement (in English) of consent authorizing passport issuance for the child.

This statement can be notarized before a Brazilian Notary Public or a U.S. Notary or a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. (The form is called the DS-3043, Statement of Consent, and can be downloaded on our website.)

The parent not present must also submit a notarized copy of an identity document that has their photo and signature.

Please refer to our website (<http://brasilia.usembassy.gov>) for complete instructions and links to the required documentation.



Tales From a Consular Agent

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Images of Belém

My job was and is *to be there* for them if they need a new passport, or have had one stolen, or lost it overboard on those lazy, regional steamers winding their way up the powerful Amazon River to any number of stops: Santarém, Monte Alegre, Oriximiná, Óbidos where the Amazon is its deepest, or on into the State of Amazonas to its capital, Manaus, where another Consular Agent takes care of the western Amazon Region. We both report directly to the Embassy, our supervisory post.

We process consular registrations, passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, Reports of Death, Authentications (yes, we act as Notaries Public). Then, we give support to other agencies like the Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration, Selective Service, and the various sectors of the Embassy or to visiting U.S. dignitaries. Each and every service is important to someone. And it is my pleasure and satisfaction to be the one, in this part of the country, to help get those services done.

I would say that some of the most challenging times I've had were related to accompanying families who have a lost a loved one. It makes no difference if the family are local residents or living in the States. There is a personal involvement that transcends office hours and the normal consular agent/client relationship, where tact and empathy are necessary ingredients. There are the events involving violence...an assault, a murder, disputing parents...or others where mental disturbances or illness may threaten a person's welfare.

Consular Agents don't rotate to other countries. We are not on worldwide availability. We are permanent residents of the city we serve in. That's good. We know local customs, the appropriate local officials to contact on any number of issues. For example, who to see if an Amcit is ar-

rested, how we can visit him and make sure he is being treated in compliance with international laws. Or, what if he needs a lawyer, special medications, or wants to contact his family...or not? What if there is a crisis, a plane crash, a pandemic? We are the arm of the Embassy out here in the Amazon collecting the information the State Department will need to take appropriate measures to safeguard American lives. We save time and, yes, money. We know the lay of the land.

We also fly the flag! And sometimes take the flack. We are the American presence at our posts. We are part-time with regular office hours, but are on call 24/7. With the training we have received from our consular courses at the Foreign Service Institute and the loyal FSNs we interface with at our supervisory posts (or in some cases have as a needed assistant at our own post), we avail ourselves of common sense, attention to details, consultation with our supervisors, plus a plethora of information available in our Foreign Affairs Manuals and other references. Our job is to shorten the distance between American citizens and the help they need. The Consular Agent's role, while one of the oldest precursors of modern day U.S. diplomacy, has grown more and more important in places where American citizens and U.S. interests need support.

Someone once asked me why I like consular work, especially American Citizen Services. I would answer that I like the feeling, at the end of the day, of having accomplished something important, something that helped other persons, although miles from their native United States of America, guarantee the rights they acquired through their precious citizenship.



Christine Serrão contributed this article. Christine has been the consular agent in Belém, Pará for the past 30 years. This is the first article in a series introducing the consular agents in Brazil and highlighting their importance.

Upcoming Holidays

The U.S. Embassy in Brasilia, the U.S. Consulates in Sao Paulo, Recife and Rio de Janeiro and the Consular Agents will be closed on the following dates.

April 21 (Wednesday)	Martyrdom of Tiradentes
April 23 (Friday)	San Jorge (Rio de Janeiro only)
May 31 (Monday)	Memorial Day
June 3 (Thursday)	Corpus Christi Day
June 24 (Thursday)	Saint John Day (Recife only)



American Citizen Services
Contact Information

Post	Email	Phone Number
Brasilia	BrasiliaACS@state.gov	61 3312-7000
Sao Paulo	ACSinfoSaoPaulo@state.gov	55 5186-7000
Rio de Janeiro	ACSRio@state.gov	21 3823-2000
Recife	RecConsular@state.gov	81 3461-3050
Consular Agents		
Belem	91 32594566	
Fortaleza	85 3486-1306	
Manaus	92 3611-3333	
Porto Alegre	51 3226-3344	
Salvador da Bahia	71 3113-2090	

Congratulations Graduates!



- Answers to trivia questions:
1. William Howard Taft
 2. University of Michigan (877 wins)
 3. Mount Whitney, CA—14,495
 4. Toni Morrison (1993)