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## American Citizens Services

# Message from Consul General Phillip Min



Welcome to the summer newsletter for American citizens and their families living in the Chennai Consular District.

The July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday is just around the corner. Our country's Independence Day takes on even more significance against the backdrop of the upcoming 2016 elections. Elections are a great opportunity for all U.S. citizens of voting age to exercise their voting rights. Americans living overseas can vote in American elections and I encourage you to do so. The Consulate General in Chennai has resources to assist you. We can help you register to vote, request an absentee ballot, and we even have a ballot box where you can drop off your ballot to have it sent to your local election officials in the United States.

For more information on casting your vote from overseas, go to page 2 of this newsletter.

The December rains and flooding in the greater Chennai area swept away the homes and livelihoods of thousands, and I know many of you were impacted as well. The Consulate General was also damaged and we had to close the building for several days. Our most important role is to help Americans in need, and during the floods we continued to assist U.S. citizens affected by the tragedy. The entire crisis served as a reminder of how important personal preparedness is for all of us. On page 5 of this newsletter you'll find links to resources on keeping yourself and your families' safe during natural disasters.

Traveling throughout the region this past year, I have continued to be impressed by the growing partnerships between citizens of India and the United States. From health to teaching to business, it's always an education for me to see how many ways American citizens are deeply involved in South India.

On the occasion of America's 240<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is my honor to lead the men and women working at the U.S. Consulate General in Chennai. All of us wish you and yours a happy and meaningful Independence Day and a safe and rewarding summer.

### **American Citizens Services Hours:**

9:00am to 12:30pm

(by [appointment](#))

9:00am-4:30pm  
(telephone hours)

Monday through Friday,  
excluding holidays

**Follow us on:**



## Your Vote Counts!

Did you know that many Congressional elections have been decided by a margin smaller than the number of ballots cast by absentee voters? States are required to count every valid absentee ballot that reaches local election officials by the receipt deadline. Follow these steps to ensure that you can vote in the 2016 U.S. elections:



**Request Your Ballot:** Complete a new [Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA\)](#). *You must complete a new FPCA after January 1, 2016 to ensure you receive your ballot for the 2016 elections.* The completion of the FPCA allows you to request absentee ballots for **all elections for federal offices**, including primaries and special elections during the calendar year in which it is submitted. The [FPCA](#) is accepted by all local election officials in all U.S. states and territories.

**Complete the FPCA online** at [FVAP.gov](#). The online voting assistant will ask questions specific to your state. We encourage you to ask your local election officials to deliver your blank ballots to you electronically (by email, internet download, or fax, depending on your state). Include your email address on your FPCA to take advantage of the electronic ballot delivery option. Return the FPCA per the instructions on the website. FVAP.gov will tell you if your state allows the [FPCA](#) to be returned electronically. If you must return a paper version, please see below for mailing options.



**Return Your Completed Ballot:** If your state requires you to return paper voting forms or ballots to local election officials, you can do so free of charge at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Place your ballots in postage paid return envelopes or in envelopes bearing sufficient domestic U.S. postage and address them to the relevant local election officials.

You may drop off your ballot inside the locked ballot box which is located inside the Cathedral Road entrance of the U.S. Consulate in Chennai. The hours for drop off are from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. You do not need an appointment to drop off your ballot and there is no need to see a consular officer, but please remember to bring your U.S. passport for entry purposes. The U.S. Consulate will forward your state ballot through the diplomatic pouch. Transit time is normally about 2-3 weeks. We strongly encourage you to cast your ballot electronically if possible.

If it's more convenient for you, you can also return your FPCA or ballot to your local election officials via international mail or professional courier service at your own expense.



## Have You Visited the American Library at the U.S. Consulate?

The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai invites you to visit the American Library! Since its establishment in 1947, the Library has played a special role in the relationship between the people of the United States and South India.



The Library holds more than 15,000 books and contains collections in the social sciences, business, management, and American literature. The Library also provides information on the United States, its democratic institutions, history, and politics. Our dedicated staff provide a wide range of resources and services, offering accurate and up-to-date information on American governmental and non-governmental institutions, policies, the economy, global issues, institutions, society, culture, literature, history and contemporary life.

We're open 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday through June 25. As of June 27, we will be open Tuesday through Saturday 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing you soon!

**To visit the American Library**, please bring valid original Photo Identification (ID) to the Consulate General's Cathedral Road entrance. Acceptable photo IDs include passports, driver's licenses, voter ID cards, PAN cards, Aadhaar cards, and government employer or college/university issued IDs. Please bring original IDs. Photocopies will not be accepted. All electronic devices must be deposited with our security staff before entering the building. Please note that there is no vehicle/two-wheeler parking available at the Consulate.

Do you know about the **U.S.-India Education Foundation**? Located inside Consulate General Chennai's American Library, USIEF offers services through EducationUSA to students interested in pursuing education in the United States. Their consultants provide accurate, comprehensive and current information to students interested in pursuing higher education and scholarships in the U.S. Specialized seminars and workshops on admission application procedures and strategies, education fairs, and pre-departure orientation programs are held all the year round. Visit their website at [www.educationUSA.state.gov](http://www.educationUSA.state.gov).



USIEF offers a fee-based membership plan to individual students. Members have access to books, test preparation materials, CD-ROMs, student profiles, individual counseling, and special seminars and workshops. The **EdUSA toll-free hotline 1-800-103-1231** is available between 2:00 and 5:00 pm (Monday to Friday).

## What does ACS do in an emergency?

The December 2015 floods in Chennai showed many U.S. citizens the importance of American Citizens Services. Emergencies can happen every day, and in the event of an emergency, ACS is here to help. We can assist when a U.S. citizen in India is arrested, is missing, becomes ill or dies, or when there is otherwise a need for immediate help. We provide the following services:



- 24-hour duty officer for emergencies involving American citizens in the Chennai consular district at **(+91-44) 2857-4000**
- Send updates about crisis situations
- Provide information on local resources
- Contact family members in the United States
- Assist U.S. citizens who have been arrested or detained
- Locate and inform next-of-kin and assist for burial or return arrangements for U.S. citizens who die abroad
- Provide replacement passports if a passport has been lost/stolen
- Share travel warnings related to natural disasters
- Help crime victims obtain appropriate medical care
- Explain the local criminal justice process
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of a crime
- Provide lists of local lawyers who speak English
- Connect victims to local and U.S.-based resources for victims' compensation

## Get in STEP before taking your first step!

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Enrolling in STEP allows you to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans.



The State Department's Smart Traveller Enrollment Program (STEP) website (<https://step.state.gov/step/>) provides a convenient way to ensure that you receive accurate, timely information about safety conditions in your country and that the Embassy can contact you in an emergency. Providing assistance to Americans who might be injured or stranded becomes problematic against the backdrop of a natural disaster that has taken thousands of lives, but this job is more difficult if the Department of State does not know who or where U.S. citizens might be or how to contact them.

Enrolling in the Smart Traveller Enrollment Program takes just a few minutes and gives the Department of State all the information necessary to contact you in an emergency. Completing this information should be a priority for every traveller, especially in remote areas.



## PERSONAL PREPAREDNESS

Being prepared when disaster strikes can mean the difference between riding out a difficult situation and needing to call for help, or worse. Being prepared for these situations means making plans and taking action.

**Make plans:** At a minimum, talk to your family members about how you would contact each other should normal lines of communication break down. Discuss escape routes from your home, work, and town. Do you have a meeting point should you be separated from family when disaster strikes? What essentials should you keep on hand at home and in your workplace?

- Water: one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food: at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight (torch) and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Extra medications for those in the family that need prescription medicine
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air
- Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Local maps

It's important to review this list and consider where you live and the unique needs of your family in order to create an emergency supply kit that will meet your needs.

**Take action:** Have you heard of a Go Bag? They're invaluable should you have to leave your home quickly, and every member of your family should have one. Include important documents (birth and marriage certificates, passports, credit cards) you would need should you have to leave your home with only an hours' notice.

For further information on being prepared in all types of emergencies, check out [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), where you'll find information on building an emergency supply kit, making an emergency plan, and preparing for any number of natural or manmade disasters.

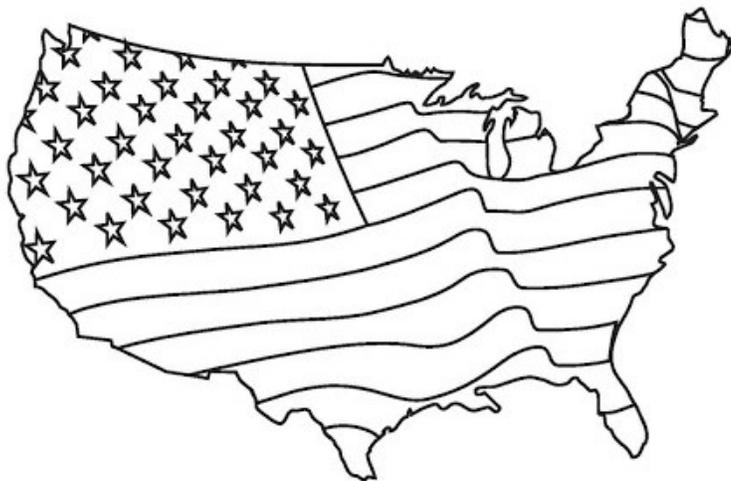


## American Word Search

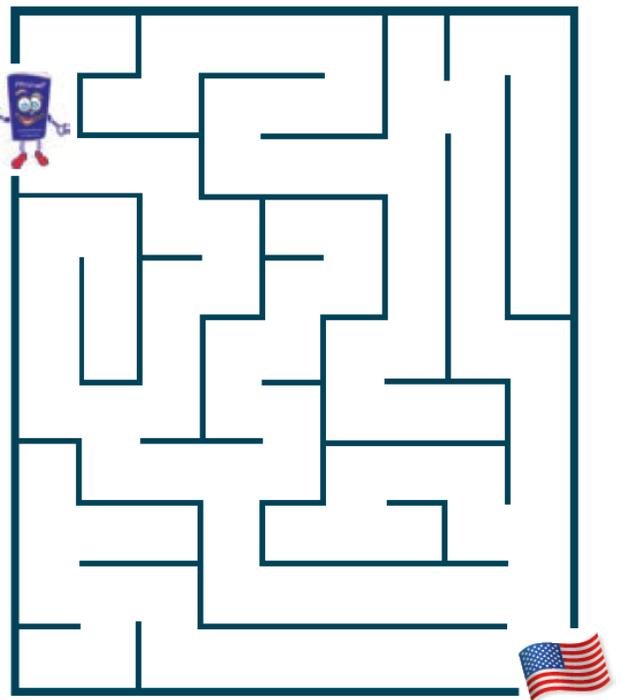
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| AMERICA     | LIBERTY      |
| BALDEAGLE   | PLEDGE       |
| BRAVE       | REDWHITEBLUE |
| CAPITAL     | REPUBLIC     |
| CITIZENSHIP | RIGHTS       |
| COLONY      | STARS        |
| COUNTRY     | STATE        |
| FLAG        | STRIPES      |
| FREEDOM     | UNITY        |

Can you help Passport Pal find his way home?



UNITED STATES  
 of AMERICA



Visit [kids.usa.gov](http://kids.usa.gov) to play games, watch videos,  
 and learn about the United States!

