

American Citizens Services Newsletter

American Citizens Services
Department of State

Monday, December 17, 2012

Consul General's Corner



Dan Perrone, Consul General

Greetings, U.S. Citizens!

As the holidays approach, I'd like to take a look back at the past year in the Consular section of the United States Embassy here in Buenos Aires.

So far this year, we have welcomed over 250,000 visa applicants and processed nearly 3,000 passport applications. We have maintained contact with U.S. citizens imprisoned throughout Argentina, which incidentally is the 8th largest country in the world in terms of territory. We have processed more than 220 consular reports of births abroad, performed over 3,000 notarial services, and have put U.S. citi-

zens in touch with their friends and family and seen them safely home in over 150 welfare and whereabouts and repatriation cases. In addition, one of our biggest efforts this year was encouraging Americans living abroad to exercise their right to vote.

In the run up to this year's elections, the Embassy hosted Absentee Voting Day on October 4th from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. The event was the culmination of the joint efforts of Embassy officials to mobilize overseas U.S. citizens to vote.

Over 700 people were in attendance. Ambassador Vilma Martinez gave a speech while attendees enjoyed music, treats, and refreshments.

Voters cast their ballots in a festive patriotic atmosphere. The ballots were later sent to each of the 50 states by American Citizen Services in time for the elections on November 6th.

I would like to thank Embassy officials for mobi-



Informal photo shoot in front of the ballot box

lizing and encouraging U.S. citizens abroad to be active in our elections. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank you, U.S. citizens living in Argentina, for casting your votes. Even though we may be far from home, every vote counts. We here at the Embassy are pleased to ensure that Americans can act upon this fundamental right.

Thank you, and may you all have safe, Happy Holidays, and a very Happy New Year!

Dan Perrone
Consul General

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or Flickr! You can also find useful information on our website at:

<http://argentina.uscembassy.gov/>

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Filing Taxes Abroad

When April 15th rolls around, will you be ready? As a U.S. citizen living abroad, filing taxes can be a very confusing process. Fortunately, the IRS can help. Below, you will find some basic information on filing tax returns internationally, as well as contact information for additional help.

When to File Tax Returns

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien residing overseas, or are in the military on duty outside of the U.S., on the regular due date of your return, you are allowed an automatic 2-month extension to file your return and pay any amount due without requesting an extension. For a calendar year return, the automatic 2-month extension is to June 15.

If you are unable to file your return by the automatic 2-month extension date, you can request an additional extension to October 15 by filing Form 4868 before the automatic 2-month extension date. However, any tax due payments made after June 15 will be subject to both interest charges and failure to pay penalties.



Where to File Tax Returns

If you are a U.S. Citizen or resident alien (Green Card Holder) and you live in a foreign country, mail your U.S. tax return to:

**Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service Center
Austin, TX 73301-0215
USA**

Estimated tax payments should be mailed with form 1040-ES to:

**Internal Revenue Service
P.O. Box 1300
Charlotte, NC 28201-1300
USA**

For the most up-to-date information:

- Please visit <http://www.irs.gov>
- Scroll to the top-left and mouse over “**Information For...**”
- Click on “**Individuals**”
- Click on “**International Taxpayers**”

Exchange Rates

You must express the amounts you report on your U.S. tax return in U.S. dollars. If you receive all or part of your income or pay some or all of your expenses in foreign currency, you must translate the foreign currency into U.S. dollars. Taxpayers generally use the yearly average exchange rate to report foreign-earned income that was received regularly throughout the year. However, if you had foreign transactions on specific days, you may also use the exchange rates for those days.

Do You Have a Foreign Financial Account?

You may be required to file Form 8938 to report activity from foreign bank accounts, brokerage accounts, mutual funds, trusts, or other foreign financial accounts for tax purposes. You may also be required to report foreign accounts on Form TD F 90-22.1 with the U.S. Treasury Department.

For information:

Go to <http://www.irs.gov>

Scroll over “**Information For**”

Click on “**Individuals**”

Click on “**International Taxpayers**”

Click on “**Income From Abroad is Taxable**”

Exchange rates can be found at [Foreign Currency and Currency Exchange Rates](#). Yearly average currency exchange rates for most countries can be found at [Yearly Average Currency Exchange Rates](#).

Questions?

IRS Contact Information:

BY MAIL:

Internal Revenue Service
International Accounts
Philadelphia, PA 19255-0725

BY TELEPHONE/FAX:

Telephone: 267-941-1000 (not toll-free)
Fax: 267-941-1055
Phone service is available M-F from 6:00am to 11:00pm (EST)

You may also contact the International Taxpayer Advocate based in Puerto Rico at:
Tel. (Español): 787-622-8930
Tel. (English): 787-622-8940
Fax: 787-622-8933

Visiting Argentina Soon?

Planning a visit to Argentina soon? U.S. citizens who visit Argentina as tourists or for business must pay a reciprocity fee of \$160 USD or its equivalent in pesos.

If your port of entry is Aeroparque Jorge Newberry or Ministro Pistarini International Airport (Ezeiza), you may pay upon entry using: U.S. dollars, Argentine pesos, credit/debit cards, traveler's checks, or you may pay in advance online.

For Online Payment:

Visit <http://>

www.migraciones.gov.ar/accesible/templates/reciprocidad/reciprocidad.htm

Payment can be made via: Visa, American Express, and Mastercard.

The voucher received must then be printed and submitted to the immigration authorities. The period of validity of such proof will begin from the date on which the payment was made.



The Obelisk in Buenos Aires, located in Plaza de la República

As of January 7, 2013, the reciprocity fee will be extended to all border crossings of Argentina: maritime, fluvial, terrestrial and aerial.

Until June 30, 2013, passengers on

cruises entering the country are exempted from the reciprocity fee.

U.S. citizens do not need to pay the fee again if they have paid before and its validity period has not expired in accordance with the provisions of the National Migration Directorate.

For more information, please click [here](#).

Are You A Smart Traveler?

As an American citizen traveling abroad, we want you to remain safe, connected, and informed. Enrolling in our **STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program)** allows you to do just that!



Sign up with STEP to stay up-to-date on travel warnings and alerts

Stay informed—by signing up with STEP, you will receive travel updates and information, including information about the country to which you are travel-

ing, travel warnings, and travel alerts (where appropriate).

Stay connected—in the event of an emergency, the Embassy will have access to your emergency contact information. We can contact you and your loved ones, or if friends or family in the U.S. have problems contacting you, the Embassy can help you get in touch.

Stay safe—We believe that a well-informed traveler is a safer traveler. Our country-specific information, travel alerts, travel warnings, fact sheets, and warden messages will provide you with invaluable information about any country that you may visit. We will provide you

with information on possible risks and security threats so you can make informed decisions about your travel plans.



Click [here](https://step.state.gov/step/) to sign up, or go to <https://step.state.gov/step/>

What To Do in an Emergency—Be Prepared!

Is your family prepared for a disaster? Emergencies can strike when we least expect them—the best way to handle them is to be prepared. After a natural disaster or gas leak, etc., regular services and utilities such as water, electricity, gas, communication, and transportation can all be compromised. Below are recommendations on how to prepare you and your family for an emergency or disaster.

*Plan for disaster **before** it strikes, so your family will be ready to manage situations in which there is little to no certainty.*

WHAT TO DO:

Create an emergency disaster plan. Disaster could strike at any time. Establish a way to communicate with family members in case of separation.

- Establish an evacuation plan and emergency meeting places.
- Establish what emergency items are available and where.
- Establish who will reach or take care of children, should parents be unable to.
- Program emergency numbers in your speed-dial and place emergency contact cards in wallets and bags.

Plan for disaster *before* it strikes, so your family will be ready to manage situations in which there is little to no certainty.

WHAT TO HAVE:

Emergencies can mean days without aid. You should have enough supplies to last you for at least three days.

- **Water:** Store at least 1 gallon of water per person per day.
 - **Food:** Keep a 2-week supply of nonperishable food at home.
 - **Outerwear:** Have clothes ready for cold and hot temperatures; plan for lots of blankets and sleeping bags.
 - **Medicines:** Consult with your physician about storing prescription medicines; have a First Aid Kit ready.
 - **Documents:** Know the location of important documents and phone numbers.
 - **Tools:** Flashlights, wrenches to shut off water and gas valves, can opener, hammer, pliers, shovels, and a screwdriver.
 - **Sanitation supplies:** Toilet paper, plastic bags, and antibacterial soap.
 - **Cash:** Banks may be closed in the event of a disaster.
- ### OTHER TIPS:
- Do not use matches or candles unless you are certain there are no gas leaks; use flashlights instead (consider one for each frequently occupied room).
 - Periodically replace emergency water supplies to keep it fresh. Water purification tablets can be very helpful in this situation and

take up very little space. Alternatively, with household chlorine bleach and a medicine dropper, nine parts water to one part bleach can be used as a disinfectant. In an emergency, you can also treat water by using 16 drops per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color-safe bleach, or bleaches with added cleaners.

- Rotate emergency food periodically.



ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust masks
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- Chemical light sticks
- Pet food and extra water for pets
- Water purification straw

Visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's website at <http://www.fema.gov/> for more emergency planning guides and tips.

Did You Know...

Did you know that you could be subject to a penalty of \$50 for failure to include your social security number (or that of another person where required) on a return, statement, or other document?

For example, if you have a bank account that earns interest, you must give your social security number (SSN) to the bank. The number must be shown on the form 1099-INT or other statement the bank sends you. If you do not give the bank your SSN, you will be subject to the \$50 penalty. Please click [here](#) for more information regarding policies from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

But what if you haven't applied for a SSN, either for you or for your child?

What you may not know, is that at the Embassy in Buenos Aires, the **Federal Benefits Unit (FBU)** offers assistance and advice regarding the United States Social Security Administration, Veterans Affairs Department, Department of Labor, Office of Personnel Management, Railroad Board and other federal benefit programs to individuals who are interested. At the FBU you can:

- Apply for a Social Security Number card
- Apply for retirement, spouse, survivor, and disability benefits
- Update your record if you are already receiving payments from SSA, VA, OPM or any other federal agency
- Report a change of address
- Report the death of a beneficiary
- Report a lost or stolen check
- Request direct deposit of your benefits

To apply for a **Social Security Number Card** or any of our services, apply for an appointment and, once scheduled, arrive in a timely manner at the Consular Section/FBU Window # 17 at the designated date and time. Please call for more information as to the specific requirements for your particular case. The SS5 form is available at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>; **you can download it and complete it prior to your appointment along with the documentation previously requested from you.**



You may call FBU at:

54-11-5777-4510

54-11-5777-4371

54-11-5777-4763

from 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. every business day, except for on the first and last Wednesday of the month.

You may e-mail FBU at:

fbu.argentina@ssa.gov

Please call or e-mail **before** you decide to come in, as many questions do not require a visit to the Embassy. If, after a consultation, you do need to visit the FBU in person, it **must be by appointment only.**

Beware of the Mustard Scam!

It's a time-tested ruse—you get what looks like bird droppings on your clothes (or just good old mustard), turn around to find out why, and a couple comes out of nowhere offering to help clean you up.

This is what we have now come to call the “mustard scam.”

The tactic: while the “friendly” cou-

ple helps you clean up, they're also emptying out your purse and wallet; usually one person does the cleaning, and the other person does the cleaning out.

The defense: If this happens to you, get away as quickly as you can. Do not be afraid to be rude, or better yet, just head the other direction!



Don't let this happen to you! If you get targeted, walk away immediately and clean up later.

American Citizens Services
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A Message from American Citizens Services Chief

The holidays are upon us, which means gift-giving, merriment, and family. It also means gift-shopping and increased vulnerability! As ACS Chief, I would like to take the time to remind you to be careful this holiday season.

Traditionally, the incidence of burglaries, thefts, and robberies increases during the holiday season. Some safety tips for when you are out shopping or on your way home—be aware of your surroundings and those surrounding you, remember exactly where you parked your car, and have your keys at the ready. If you are going to be away for the holidays, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to check on your home occasionally and make sure that your house maintains a “somebody’s at home” look.

As 2012 draws to a close, I want to send the Embassy’s sincere thanks to all the U.S. citizens who have signed up to keep in touch with us through the STEP program.

Be safe and happy holidays!

Warmly,
Martha Pacheco
ACS Chief

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