

ACS BRIEF



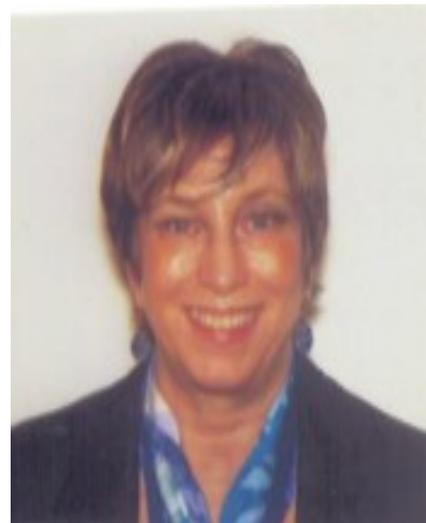
American Citizen Services Newsletter

August 2014

Meet the New Consul General!

Or maybe we should say "Not-So-New" Consul General. Those of you who have been living in Bangladesh for more than a handful of years may remember me from my previous tour in Dhaka. For those of you who are more recent arrivals, I am Elizabeth Gourlay. I have worked for the Department of State for over 28 years and I am on my 11th tour of duty. I'm delighted to be back -- I've found so many familiar faces, so many old friends, but also a much larger consular section than the one I left behind in 2008! We have a dynamic and energetic team serving the American citizens here, and there have been a number of positive changes: our new pass-back system which is more convenient for you to collect your new passports, and new ways to communicate with you -- Facebook, Twitter, SMS. And of course this is an exciting year -- election years always are! If you're not registered to vote, please check our website and our upcoming messages on how to do so. It's quick and easy and we are all here to help!

I'm very much looking forward to our next Town Hall Meeting and hope to see many of you in person there! In the meantime, please enjoy this issue of our quarterly newsletter.



Elizabeth Gourlay



Rickshaw Procession by Former Consul General, Jamie Fouss

In This Issue

- Meet the New CG
- Affordable Care Act
- New STEP Website
- Online Passport Application Tips
- Petitioning for Family While Living Overseas
- Election Season
- Happenings in ACS

The Affordable Care Act: How does it affect me?

U.S. citizens living abroad are generally subject to the same individual shared responsibility provision for health insurance as U.S. citizens living in the United States. Starting in 2014, the individual shared responsibility provision calls for each individual to have minimum essential coverage (MEC) for each month, qualify for an exemption, or make a payment when filing his or her federal income tax return. However, U.S. citizens or residents living abroad for at least 330 days within a 12 month period are treated as having MEC during those 12 months and thus will not owe a shared responsibility payment for any of those 12 months. Also, U.S. citizens who qualify as a bona fide resident of a foreign country for an entire taxable year are treated as having MEC for that year.

All U.S. citizens are subject to the individual shared responsibility provision as are all permanent residents and all foreign nationals who are in the United States long enough during a calendar year to qualify as resident aliens for tax purposes. Foreign nationals who live in the United States for a short enough period that they do not become resident aliens for federal income tax purposes are not subject to the individual shared responsibility payment even though they may have to file a U.S. income tax return. The IRS has more information available on when a foreign national becomes a resident alien for federal income tax purposes. Learn more [here](#).

For general questions about the Act, see the dedicated ACA website operated by [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#). The [HHS website](#) includes a link to information about whether U.S. citizens residing abroad are subject to ACA. The Health Insurance Marketplace, sometimes known as the Health Insurance Exchange, is a new way to find quality health coverage. To be eligible for health coverage through the Marketplace, you must live in the United States; must be a U.S. citizen or national (or be lawfully present) and can't be currently incarcerated.

For tax issues related to ACA, see the [ACA page](#) within the IRS website. For more information, see the [Question and Answer page for Individuals](#).

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you and your family are not already enrolled, please visit the [website](#) to learn more.



Learn more at step.state.gov

Tips for filling out the Online passport application:

- Fill out the address fields completely. You should fill in your current address, whether in Bangladesh or the U.S. At this time, the Embassy does not return passports through the mail. You will need to collect it at our off-site collection facility—Saimon Overseas Ltd. (more information about off-site collection is on Page 4).
- Where a zip code is required, use the Post Code if giving a Bangladeshi address.
- When providing a mobile phone number, leave off the initial '0' so that the number will fit in the space allowed. When providing a land number, enter a maximum of ten digits. If necessary you can correct the information when you come for your appointment.
- If completing an application and you do not have a social security number, you may enter all zeroes as a placeholder. If you have a social security number, you are required to provide it.

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2)

- Expedite fee: You do not need to select the "expedite fee" option; passports printed for citizens abroad are automatically expedited.
- Please fill out the emergency contact information. If your emergency contact does **not** have an address in the U.S. then leave **all** of the information blank. We will collect the information when you come for your appointment.
- Print the form using one-sided printing (please do **not** use two-sided printing).
- Please do **not** sign the application, before your interview. Unless it is for the renewal of an adult passport, you **must** sign in the presence of a consular officer.

More information on the online application is available at this [website](#)

Petitioning for Family While Living Overseas

Certain immigrant visa petitions may be filed at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [offices abroad](#), however, only for residents of those countries where the office is located. Bangladesh does not have a USCIS office and petitions can **only** be filed by mail with the USCIS Chicago Lockbox, except under exceptional circumstances. More information is available here: [USCIS Centralizes Filing of Form I-130](#).

Election Season

During election season, diplomats, private U.S. citizens, or government employees residing overseas may still participate. You can receive your blank ballots electronically through email, fax, or internet download. To obtain the ballot, visit www.FVAP.gov to complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), print and sign the form then return it to your local election office in the U.S. or to U.S. Embassy Dhaka.

Overseas U.S. Citizens are encouraged to complete FPCA's each January. If you have not yet completed this application, please do so as soon as you can.

Contact us for more details at DhakaACS@state.gov.



Source: commons.wikimedia.org

Happenings in ACS

Passback at Saimon

Effective July 6, 2014, rather than collecting passports or Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) from the Embassy, customers will retrieve their passports or CRBA's from Saimon Overseas Ltd. Customer will have the advantage of Saimon's expanded hours of picking up their passports or CRBA's.

Saimon's hours and work days are:

Sunday - Thursday between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. and Saturday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The Saimon Overseas Ltd. Office is located at:

Saimon Centre (Ground Floor) House 4A, Road 22, Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212.

Ph. No. 88-02-9893964

Customers whose passports or CRBAs are ready to pick up will receive an email from the Embassy advising them to go to Saimon Overseas Ltd. The documents will be available the following day after receipt of the email.

New Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) website:

Formerly known as traveler registration, enrollment in STEP is an easy to use and free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. Enrollment allows you to record information about your trip abroad that the Department of State can use to assist you in case of an emergency. It also allows the Embassy to convey message to you of a routine, security, or emergency nature, letting you know places or activities to avoid or informing you about holidays or procedural changes at the Embassy.

During a disaster overseas, American consular officers can assist in evacuation of those they are aware are living or traveling within the consular district. Most importantly, we cannot assist you or keep you informed if we do not know who or where you are. Please register: <https://step.state.gov/step/>



Private Security, Threats, or Property Disputes: How ACS can or cannot help me?

Although we hope that during your travels you do not have issues with personal security, threats, or other disputes, there are a few ways the Embassy and the Consular section can provide support. However, under U.S. and local law, there are some things we cannot do.

The U.S. Embassy *cannot* provide security or protection for private U.S. citizens abroad. If a dispute arises, we encourage the parties involved to report the matter to the local police.

The U.S. government *cannot* get U.S. citizens released from foreign jails. We can, however, visit an arrested U.S. citizen to ensure that there is no maltreatment.

A consular officer *cannot* serve as an attorney or give legal advice. We can provide you with a list of attorneys in Bangladesh.

The U.S. government *cannot* pay your legal fees or other related expenses. We can assist you in contacting your family or friends who could offer such help.

Full versions of the recent warden messages are available on our website:

<http://dhaka.usembassy.gov/msg.html>

