



Island Gazette

*The latest news & tips for U.S. citizens in
Jamaica and the Cayman Islands from U.S. Embassy Kingston*

Summer 2013

Message from President Barack Obama

On Independence Day, we celebrate a small, audacious group of patriots who, in signing a declaration, ignited a revolution and made us free. Believing in a democracy they had never known, the patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob. They created a government of, by, and for the people, entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed.

Two hundred and thirty-seven years later, their words are just as bold and revolutionary as they were when they were first inscribed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

But while these truths may be self-evident, history tells us they have never been self-executing. For more than two centuries, our Nation has been on an enduring journey to bridge the meaning of our Founders' words with the realities of our time. Through blood drawn by lash and sword, we learned no Union founded on the principles of liberty and equality can survive half-slave and half-free. We determined a modern economy requires railroads and highways to speed travel and commerce. We learned education is central to a free society and discovered a free market only thrives when there are rules to ensure fair play. We resolved that a great Nation must care for the vulnerable and protect its people from life's worst hazards and misfortunes.

And when our way of life has been challenged and tested, brave members of our Armed Forces have stepped forward to defend our convictions at home and abroad. From the Minutemen who fought for a Nation still only an idea to the proud men and women who serve in uniform today, our service members make the great experiment of America possible. Today, we also honor their extraordinary sacrifice, and we pay tribute to those who gave their last full measure of devotion so we might live free.

On this day, we celebrate our founding creed that what binds this Nation together is not the colors of our skin, the tenets of our faith, or the origins of our name. What makes us American is our allegiance to an idea first declared in a spare hall in Philadelphia—that all of us are created equal. This idea guides us still, and calls on us to carry into an uncertain future the precious light of freedom.

I wish you all the best for a happy Fourth of July. May God bless and protect all those who serve, and may God bless the United States of America.

Hurricane Season 2013

The hurricane season runs June 1 – November 30 and the National Hurricane Center is forecasting a busy one, with the potential for 20 named storms and 3-6 major hurricanes. Remember, it only takes one storm to create serious problems so make sure you are prepared with emergency supplies and an evacuation plan and follow the guidance of local authorities. Also, keep your passports and important documents protected and up to date.

In a disaster, our section:

- Will send messages and updates via email to citizens registered with STEP about approaching storms and conditions
- Will send alerts if a recommended or mandatory evacuation has been ordered for U.S. Embassy personnel or families
- Normally will not provide evacuation transportation – citizens must rely on commercial airlines if available

Spread the Word about STEP!

Are you registered with our Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)? Whether you are in Jamaica temporarily or for an extended period of time, please register with STEP so that we can better assist you in case of an emergency. Registration can be completed online at step.state.gov. If you do not register, we will not know how to reach you to share important emergency messages or information about upcoming meetings for U.S. citizens!

Visas

Many American Citizens living in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands know friends or family members who are interested in obtaining a visa to travel to the United States. Some may just want to visit, and others may be interested in immigrating to the U.S. The U.S. Embassy in Kingston always aims to facilitate legitimate travel, and our website provides detailed information on the application process.

For Non-Immigrant (visitor) visas, individuals applying for the first time must demonstrate that they overcome the concept of immigrant intent, meaning that they have strong enough connections to their home country to cause them to return after a temporary stay in the U.S. The consular officers make decisions based on their level of confidence in the applicant, the information provided, and the stated travel plans.

Even individuals who are in the process of immigrating to the U.S. are eligible for tourist visas. Often the immigration petition process can take years, and officers understand that people are following the rules and regulations for immigrating to the U.S., but still want to visit family while the process is ongoing. Every case is unique, and applicants will need to explain their personal circumstances to the Consular Officer during their interview.

Are you a New Jersey Voter?

New Jersey will hold a special primary election for U.S. Senate on August 13 to fill the seat vacated by the death of Senator Frank Lautenberg.

You can register to vote and request an absentee ballot by mail, email or fax using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) tool at www.fvap.gov/request/request-nj.html. Do not forget to indicate your party preference and how you would like to receive your absentee ballot. Even if you voted last year, you will not get a ballot until you request one!

Tip – Avoid Identity Theft and Scams

Identity theft and scams occur both in the Jamaica and the U.S. Here are some tips to help prevent them:

- Beware of phone or email solicitations requesting personal information or offering prizes requiring prepaid fees
- Check your credit card statements often to detect any fraudulent charges
- Keep your social security card and birth certificate locked in a safe place
- Don't disclose personal or financial information on a website *unless* the site offers a secure transaction

Spotlight on our Services: Minor Passport Renewals

Is your child or a relative's child traveling for the summer? Check the expiration date of the passport and renew it before it expires! Airlines will not allow anyone to board a flight to the United States if the U.S. passport is expired. A child's passport renewal requires signatures or consent from the parents. Please schedule an appointment in Kingston through our website, <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/appointments.html>. You should bring the child and the following items to the appointment:

- DS-11 application form (link available on our website)
- The child's current passport
- One passport-sized photograph with a white background (If the previous passport was a baby photo, bring some age progression photos showing how he/she has changed each year)
- The child's birth certificate
- The presence of the parents listed on the birth certificate (If one or both of the parents are abroad, they must provide a notarized copy of the DS-3053 form with copy of the ID. If no parents are in Jamaica and a third party will apply, include a notarized statement giving that person consent to sign on the parent's behalf)
- \$105 USD (or the Jamaican equivalent) plus a \$1200 JMD delivery fee

Keep in mind that passports take at least 7-10 days and up to several weeks to process.

For more details and to download forms, please visit <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html>

Contact Us

Embassy of the United States of America – Kingston American Citizen Services Section

Monday - Friday, 7:15 AM - 4:00 PM

142 Old Hope Road Kingston 6

(876) 702-6450 (business hours)

(876) 702-6000 (after-hours emergencies)

Email: KingstonACS@state.gov

Website: <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html>

U.S. Consular Agency - Montego Bay

Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Whitter Village, Ironshore

Unit EU-1 Montego Bay

(876) 953-0620

Email: MobayACS@state.gov

U.S. Consular Agency – Cayman Islands

Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Cayman Centre, Unit B-1

118 Dorcy Drive

George Town, Grand Cayman

(345) 945-8173

CaymanACS@state.gov

Other useful contacts:

Social Security Office in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

FBU.SantoDomingo@ssa.gov

(809) 731-4371

Visa Inquiries

Non-Immigrant Visas: KingstonNIV@state.gov

Immigrant Visas: KingstonIV@state.gov

Or visit <http://kingston.usembassy.gov>