

Summer 2014

Island Gazette

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

Special points of interest:

- Caribbean hurricane season officially started June 1
- Follow us on Twitter @USEmbassyJA
- Like us on Facebook – U S Embassy Kingston
- Register to vote and request an absentee ballot by mail

Inside this issue:

Address from President Obama	1
Hurricane Season	2
Visas and Hurricanes	2
Mid-Term Elections	3
Connect	3
Spotlight on our Services	3
Contact Us	4

President Obama's Independence Day Address

On July 4, 1776, a small band of patriots stood up to a king. They declared our destiny would not be determined for us; it would be determined by us. Believing that freedom was possible, they willingly laid down their fortunes, their honor, and their lives to make it a reality. Now, more than 200 years later, the United States of America stands as the greatest nation on Earth.

On Independence Day, Americans across our country and around the world pause to remember the brave, bold declaration from which our Nation was born. As we mark a day that forever made us the authors of our own story, we celebrate our Founders' enduring legacy. And we reflect on what makes America great—our values and the brave men and women who take a stand for them.

Today, America is a land of liberty and opportunity, a global defender of peace and freedom, and a beacon of hope for people everywhere who cherish these ideals. This is an America earned by generations of selfless heroes in uniform— from the patriots who fought a revolution to the courageous troops who serve in our name today. It is an America reaffirmed by our Foreign Service professionals at our Embassies, Consulates, and Missions who advance human rights and represent our objectives around the globe.

This day and every day, we pay tribute to those who defend the land we love, the values we hold dear, and the way of life we treasure at home and

abroad. We renew our commitment to meeting the obligation each of us shares — as citizens — to shape the debates before us and to set our country's course together. We honor our forebears' resolve and rededicate ourselves to the improbable experiment of American democracy.

I wish all Americans a happy Fourth of July, and I thank all those who dedicate themselves to serving our country. May God bless all those who serve, and may God bless the United States of America.

Barack Obama



“In the event of an evacuation, your non-U.S. citizen loved ones may need a visitor’s visa to enter the U.S.”

Hurricane Season 2014

Caribbean hurricane season officially started June 1. As many as six hurricanes may strike the region between now and November 30, according to predictions by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Department of State urges all U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to take appropriate precautions.

All U.S. citizens are encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Whether you are in Jamaica or the Cayman Islands 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, including evacuation alerts. NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center predicts a 70 percent chance of 8 to 13 named storms this season, of which three to six are predict-

ed to strengthen to a hurricane (with top winds of 74 mph or higher). Of those, one to two are expected to become major hurricanes (with top winds of 111 mph or higher).

Travel insurance is highly recommended. If a storm requires evacuation, U.S. law requires that you pay all evacuation costs. The Department of State will work with commercial airlines to help U.S. citizens leave the region, however other means of evacuation, such as military transports, are utilized as a last resort and are very expensive.

Stay aware. Monitor local media, Embassy Kingston’s webpage and Facebook account, and the National Weather Service. Tropical storms can develop into hurricanes quickly, limiting the time available for a safe evacuation. Inform family and friends of your whereabouts and remain in contact with your tour operator, hotel staff, transportation providers (airlines, cruise lines, etc.), and local authorities.

Visas and Hurricanes

In the event of an evacuation, your non-U.S. citizen loved one may need a visitor’s visa to enter the U.S. even if they hold a passport from a visa waiver country or territory, such as the Cayman Islands or the United Kingdom.

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) can take as long as 72 hours for approval. Airlines may refuse to board travelers without ESTA approval or a valid visa. Visas are required for all non-U.S. citizens who arrive via private plane or boat.

All Jamaican and Cayman citizen family members of U.S. citizens are required to have visas to enter the U.S. If travel to the U.S. is part of your family’s hurricane evacuation plan, please make certain all family members are properly documented for travel. U.S. citizens should also ensure their passports have not expired.

The U.S. Embassy in Kingston always aims to facilitate legitimate travel, and our website provides detailed information on visa applications.

kingston.usembassy.gov/visas.html



This Year’s Mid-Term Elections

Just because you are overseas, doesn’t mean you lose your voice!

Deadlines are approaching to register for and vote in the summer primaries and the fall mid-term elections.

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. Don’t forget to indicate your party preference. Even if you voted last year, you will not get a ballot until you request one!

To return the ballot simply place it in the envelop included and drop the envelop in the ballot box outside of the Embassy.

Spotlight on our Services: Social Security Benefits

The Social Security Administration’s Regional Benefits Officer hosted town hall meetings in Kingston and Montego Bay this past May. Did you miss them? No problem. We can help with your inquiries.

For more information about federal benefits services the U.S. Embassy in Kingston is able to provide several important services to Social Security beneficiaries, including:

- Submit Social Security Number (SSN) Card Applications
- Certify and forward documents to the Regional Federal Benefit Unit

- Respond to General Inquiries regarding federal benefit

More than 3,000 individuals in Jamaica receive \$1.3 million in Social Security benefits each year. Those benefits are administered out of the SSA’s regional office in San Jose, Costa Rica. That means that beneficiaries may receive inquiries about their individual claims from either San Jose or the main Social Security Administration office in Baltimore, Maryland.

Please also be aware that the SSA’s Foreign Enforcement Program may contact you by mail this

Join the Conversation

Embassy Kingston’s Facebook page has over 35,000 “Likes” and is growing more popular everyday.

Our Facebook page is a great way to stay current with Embassy news and events along with important developments throughout the region.

It’s a great place also to engage the Embassy with your own questions or comments.

Our Twitter page is another excellent way to stay informed. Follow us @USEmbassyJA!

summer asking you to verify you current address. If you do not respond in a timely manner your benefits may be suspended.

For more information about federal benefits services visit: http://kingston.usembassy.gov/federal_benefits2.html

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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

sjregion@ssa.gov

(809) 731-4371

Visa Inquiries

Non-Immigrant Visas: KingstonNIV@state.gov

Immigrant Visas: KingstonIV@state.gov

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