

# Red Seas, White Sands, Blue Skies: An American Citizens Services Newsletter

March was a busy month for the Embassy staff as we prepared for President Obama’s visit to Riyadh. During their March 28 meeting, President Obama and King Abdullah discussed a range of issues, and reiterated the significance of the U.S-Saudi relationship that has endured for over 80 years.

Now that the dust has settled from the President’s visit, we remind you that the season of dust storms is upon us. The *khamasin* or *aqrab*, as it is known colloquially, can present a serious health hazard. Dust storms contain particulate matter that irritates lung tissue and causes respiratory complications, such as coughing, sneezing, and other allergic responses. We advise everyone, especially those with chronic respiratory and cardiac problems to, as much as possible, remain indoors and avoid exposure to the dust storms. Also, avoid driving during dust storms, as poor visibility and slippery road surfaces make driving particularly dangerous.

Lastly, school holidays are fast approaching, and many of you may be planning to travel outside Saudi Arabia. Plan ahead! Make sure your passports are valid for at least six months and that there are sufficient pages in your passport for travel. If you need passport or other services, please schedule an appointment with the American Citizen Services unit. In preparation for your trip, please review the country specific information at <http://travel.state.gov> for information on visa requirements, safety and security conditions, and the location of the U.S. embassy and consulates for every country in the world.

**Remember** to register your itinerary with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>

*Christopher Gooch, Vice Consul*



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## How to Reach Us

**The US Embassy is located in the Diplomatic Quarter, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**

**Public hours:** Sunday through Thursday, 1:00pm-3:30pm

Schedule an Appointment:  
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>

**Phone:** (966)(11)488-3800

**US Consulate Jeddah**  
**Public hours:** Sunday through Thursday, 1:00–3:00pm

Schedule an Appointment:  
<https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=JDD&appcode=1>

**Phone:** (966)(12)667-0080

**US Consulate Dhahran**  
**Public hours:** Sunday through Thursday, 1:00-3:30 pm

Schedule an Appointment: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=dhr&appcode=1>

**Phone:** (966)(13) 330-3200

### Additional Visa Pages

Travelling this summer? Plan ahead to renew your passport or obtain additional visa pages! Visit our website to check the required documents for passport services and to schedule an appointment to renew passports or add additional visa pages for yourself and your family.

We can add extra pages to your passport if you are out of blank visa pages. This service is done by appointment only. Please bring a completed, signed application form [DS-4085](#) with the passport and the fee of \$82 (or 312 SAR) and allow one working day for processing.

By special arrangement with Consulate General Dhahran, Saudi Aramco employees may use the Al Fifa courier service without appointment for adult passport renewals and extra page requests (courier fees separate).

*Contributed by U.S Consulate Dhahran*

Please see Saudi Arabia’s updated Country Specific Information  
Oct 2013 : <http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/saudi-arabia.html>

### Upcoming Holiday Closures

May 25, 2014 - Memorial Day  
Jul 3, 2014 - Independence Day

**Your vote counts!** Did you know that many recent U.S. elections have been decided by a margin smaller than the number of ballots cast by military and overseas voters. All states are required to count every absentee ballot as long as it is valid and reaches local election officials by the absentee ballot receipt deadline. ***Follow a few simple steps to make sure that you can vote in the 2014 U.S. elections:***

**Registering to Vote: Complete a new [Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA\)](#).** *Even if you have voted by absentee ballot in the past, you **must** complete a new [Federal Post Card Application \(FPCA\)](#) to vote in the 2014 elections.* The [FPCA](#) is accepted by all local election officials in all U.S. states and territories. It allows you to register to vote and to request absentee ballots for all regular, primary, run-off, and special elections for federal offices (President, U.S. Senate, and U.S. House of Representatives) during the course of the year it is submitted in.

You can complete the FPCA **online** at [FVAP.gov](#). The online voting assistant will ask you questions specific to your state. It will tell you if your state allows the [FPCA](#) to be returned electronically or if you must submit a paper copy with original signature.

**Receiving Your Ballot: Request Electronic Delivery!** States are now required to send out ballots 45 days before a regular election for federal office (President, U.S. Senate or U.S. House of Representatives) and states generally send out ballots at least 30 days before primary elections. No matter which state you vote in, 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). Be sure to include your email address on your FPCA to take advantage of the electronic ballot delivery option. You can now also confirm your [registration and ballot delivery online](#) for most states.

**Researching the Candidates and Issues: Online Resources.** Check out the [FVAP links page](#) for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues. Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues are widely available and easy to obtain via numerous websites such as [Project Smart Voter](#). You can also read national and hometown newspapers on-line, or search the Internet to locate articles and information. For information about election dates and deadlines, subscribe to FVAP's Voting Alerts ([vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov)). FVAP also shares Voting Alerts via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

**Returning Your Completed Ballot: Other Options.** 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 embassy or consulate. They must be in either postage paid return envelopes or in envelopes bearing sufficient domestic U.S. postage, and must also be addressed to the relevant local election officials.

**Returning your ballot by mail.** If you still wish to send your ballot via mail, place your voted ballot in a U.S. postage-paid envelope addressed to your local election officials. Drop it off at the Embassy in Riyadh or Consulates General in Jeddah or Dhahran, and we will send it for you without the need to pay international postage. If you can't visit the Embassy or Consulates in person, ask a friend or colleague to drop it off for you. If it is easier for you to use Saudi Arabia's postal system, be sure to affix sufficient international postage and allow sufficient time for international mail delivery.

Voters may submit completed voting forms and ballots during regular public service hours (1:00 – 3:00pm Sunday thru Thursday) at the American Citizen Services units of the Embassy or Consulates General. Voters should allow a minimum of two weeks transit time for delivery to the United States.

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.

**Learn more at the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) website [FVAP.gov](#).**

**Have Questions?** Please contact the U.S. Embassy Riyadh Voting Assistance Officer at 488-3800, ext. 4758 or 4223 during regular business hours or at [VoteRiyadh@state.gov](mailto:VoteRiyadh@state.gov)

**Need help?** Voters requesting assistance may call or e-mail the American Citizens Services units at the Embassy or Consulates General as follows:

U.S. Embassy Riyadh Tel: (966) (11) 488-3800, ext. 4758 or 4223 e-mail: [RiyadhACS@state.gov](mailto:RiyadhACS@state.gov)

U.S. Consulate General Dhahran Tel: (966) (13) 330-3200 e-mail: [DhahranACS@state.gov](mailto:DhahranACS@state.gov)

U.S. Consulate General Jeddah Tel: (966) (12) 667-0080 e-mail: [JeddahACS@state.gov](mailto:JeddahACS@state.gov)



**[INDIANA PRIMARY ELECTION ON MAY 6:](#)** Indiana will hold its primary election on May 6. If you are an Indiana resident living outside your voting jurisdiction and want to vote in the primary, you must register by April 28.

**[NORTH CAROLINA PRIMARY ELECTION ON MAY 6:](#)** The State of North Carolina will hold its primary election on May 6. If you are a North Carolina resident and want to vote in the primary, you must be registered by April 11.

**[OHIO PRIMARY ELECTION ON MAY 6:](#)** Ohio will hold its primary election on May 6. If you are an Ohio resident and want to vote in the primary, you must be registered by April 7.

**[ALABAMA 6TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS TO USE INSTANT RUN-OFF BALLOTS FOR JUNE 3 REPUBLICAN PRIMARY AND RUN-OFF ELECTION:](#)** The 2014 Alabama State Primary elections are scheduled for June 3 with potential primary run-off elections scheduled for July 15. For this election only, Congressional District 6 (CD 6) Republicans will be sent a special instant run-off ballot by the office of the Alabama Secretary of State. The CD 6 Republican ballots will be transmitted, received and counted by the Secretary of State's office to ensure compliance with a court ruling enforcing the 45-day mandate for sending Federal Office ballots to all military and overseas citizens.

The 6th Congressional District consists of parts of Jefferson County, all of Bibb, Blount, Chilton, Coosa and Shelby counties. If you are unsure if you reside in CD 6, check your voter registration record on the Secretary of State's election website: [myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/VoterView/RegistrantSearch.do](http://myinfo.alabamavotes.gov/VoterView/RegistrantSearch.do)

## FLORIDA TO HOLD SPECIAL REPUBLICAN PRIMARY ELECTION FOR REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 19

March 18 - ALEXANDRIA, Va. - The State of Florida will hold a special Republican primary election in Congressional District 19 (CD19) on Tuesday, April 22, 2014 to fill the seat vacated by Congressman Trey Radel. No other party is holding a primary election for CD19.

The special election will only apply to voters in Lee and Collier counties within CD19. If you are unsure of what Congressional District you live in, please contact your county Supervisor of Elections at: [http://election.dos.state.fl.us/SOE/supervisor\\_election\\_list.asp](http://election.dos.state.fl.us/SOE/supervisor_election_list.asp).

The subsequent special general election will be held on Tuesday, June 24, 2014.

You can register to vote and/or request an absentee ballot using the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) online assistant at: [fvap.gov/florida](http://fvap.gov/florida).

If you are registered and have requested your ballot, but are concerned you may not receive your ballot in time to vote, use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The FWAB cannot be used to register to vote. Florida allows registered voters to use the FWAB to vote in elections for any Federal office, and any State or local office with at least two candidates.

The FWAB online assistant is available at: [fvap.gov/florida](http://fvap.gov/florida).

The forms are also available at military installations and embassies around the world. You can track your ballot status online by logging into your local election official's website or indirectly through the Florida Division of Elections' Voter Lookup Portal available at: [registration.elections.myflorida.com/](http://registration.elections.myflorida.com/).

For more information on FVAP or assistance with the absentee voting process, visit [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) call FVAP at 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584 (CONUS)/312-425-1584 (OCONUS), or email [vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov). Twitter [@FVAP](https://twitter.com/FVAP) Facebook.com/[DoDFVAP](https://www.facebook.com/DoDFVAP)

Important Dates	
Register to vote	Monday, March 24, 2014
Ballot request received (by mail)	Wednesday, April 16, 2014
Ballot request received (by fax or email)	Tuesday, April 22, 2014
Ballot postmark	Tuesday, April 22, 2014
Ballots must be received	<p><b>For absent Stateside Uniformed Service members:</b> Tuesday, April 22, 2014</p> <p><b>For overseas Uniformed Service members and overseas citizens:</b> Friday, May 2, 2014</p>

## Appointments

**Reminder – Appointment Required for All ACS Services :** In order to reduce your wait time and serve you more efficiently, the American Citizen Services unit uses an online appointment system for all routine services. This includes passport renewals for adults and minors, report of birth abroad, adding visa pages, and notarials.

If you have an urgent, unforeseen need to travel, such as a death or illness, please contact us at [RiyadhACS@state.gov](mailto:RiyadhACS@state.gov). Please note that we cannot book appointments over the phone. To make and cancel an appointment, please visit the U.S Citizens Services Appointment System <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=RID&appcode=1>



### Enrolling in STEP

Please remind your family and friends to enroll in the U.S. State Department's free [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](http://SmartTravelerEnrollmentProgram.gov) in order for them to be included on the Messages and ACS Newsletter mailing list. It is a great way to keep abreast of any public announcements on Travel Warnings, safety and security issues in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided to U.S. citizens who are traveling to or living in a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that U.S. Embassies and Consulates can better assist you in an emergency, including situations where your family or friends in the U.S. are having problems contacting you with important news.

### Leaving Saudi Arabia?

If you no longer live in or travel to Saudi Arabia, or you need to update your registration status so that you no longer receive travel updates and our ACS Newsletter, please go to the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](http://SmartTravelerEnrollmentProgram.gov). Updating your status in [STEP](http://STEP) will remove you from the mailing list for this newsletter and other Embassy Messages for U.S. citizens traveling to or living in Saudi Arabia .

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about our travel registration website, please send an e-mail to [CASTEP@state.gov](mailto:CASTEP@state.gov).



### IRS Seeks Volunteers for Taxpayer Advocacy Panel

WASHINGTON, March 10, 2014 — The Internal Revenue Service seeks civic-minded volunteers to serve on the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP), a federal advisory committee that listens to taxpayers, identifies major taxpayer concerns, and makes recommendations for improving IRS services.

The TAP provides a forum for taxpayers to raise concerns about IRS service and offer suggestions for improvement. The TAP reports annually to the Secretary of the Treasury, the IRS Commissioner and the National Taxpayer Advocate. The Office of the Taxpayer Advocate is an independent organization within the IRS and provides oversight of the TAP.

“In trying to comply with an increasingly complex tax system, taxpayers may find they need different services than the IRS is currently providing,” said Nina E. Olson, National Taxpayer Advocate. “The TAP is vital because it provides the IRS with the taxpayers’ perspective as well as recommendations for improvement. This helps the IRS deliver the best possible service to assist taxpayers in meeting their tax obligations.”

The TAP includes members from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Each member is appointed to represent the interests of taxpayers in his or her geographic location as well as taxpayers as a whole.

The TAP is also seeking to include at least one additional member to represent international taxpayers. For these purposes, “international taxpayers” are broadly defined to include U.S. citizens working, living, or doing business abroad or in a U.S. territory. The new international member will not be required to attend any face-to-face meetings.

To be a member of the TAP you must be a U.S. citizen, be current with your federal tax obligations, be able to commit 200 to 300 hours during the year and pass an FBI criminal background check. New TAP members will serve a three-year term starting in December 2014. Applicants chosen as alternate members will be considered to fill any vacancies that open in their areas during the next three years.

The TAP is seeking members in the following locations: Alaska, Arizona, California, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and International.

The panel needs alternates for the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina and West Virginia.

Federal advisory committees are required to have a fairly balanced membership in terms of the points of view represented. As such, candidates from underrepresented groups, including but not limited to U.S. taxpayers living abroad, Native Americans, and non-tax practitioners, are encouraged to apply.

Applications for the TAP will be accepted through April 11, 2014. Applications are available online at [www.improveirs.org](http://www.improveirs.org).

More information on taxes: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

### IRS Releases FY 2013 Data Book

WASHINGTON, March 21, 2014 — The Internal Revenue Service today released the 2013 IRS Data Book, a snapshot of agency activities for the fiscal year.

The report describes activities conducted by the IRS from Oct. 1, 2012, to Sept. 30, 2013, and includes information about returns filed, taxes collected, enforcement, taxpayer assistance and the IRS budget and workforce, among others.

During fiscal year 2013, the IRS collected almost \$2.9 trillion in federal revenue and processed 240 million returns, of which 151 million were filed electronically. Out of the 146 million individual income tax returns filed, almost 83 percent were e-filed. More than 118 million individual income tax return filers received a tax refund, which totaled almost \$312.8 billion. On average, the IRS spent 41 cents to collect \$100 in tax revenue during the fiscal year, matching low-cost results for 2008 and 2001.

The IRS examined just under one percent of all tax returns filed and about one percent of all individual income tax returns during fiscal year 2013. Of the 1.4 million individual tax returns examined, over 39,000 resulted in additional refunds. The IRS provided taxpayer assistance through 456 million visits to IRS.gov and assisted almost 91 million taxpayers through its toll-free telephone helpline or at walk-in sites.

An electronic version of the 2013 Data Book can be found on the Tax Stats page of [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

### IRS Now Offers Download of Prior Year Tax Filings

The IRS has made it easier than ever to get a record of your past tax returns, otherwise known as tax transcripts. Tax transcripts can be used for a number of things, such as to validate income and tax filing status for mortgage applications, to apply for student and small business loans, and to prepare to file current tax returns.

You can download and print your transcripts instantly, or request the transcript be mailed to your address on record. For further information and to request transcripts visit [Get Transcript](#).

### U.S. Citizen and Permanent Residents - Tax Season

U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents who live abroad may have questions about filing taxes. Working and living overseas does not exempt you from filing a U.S. tax return, although much of your income may be exempt.

Want to find out more about filing taxes while living abroad? Visit the [IRS site for overseas Americans](#).

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien residing overseas, or are in the military on duty outside 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.

## IRS Warns of New Email Phishing Scheme Falsely Claiming to be from the Taxpayer Advocate Service



WASHINGTON, March 28, 2014—The Internal Revenue Service today warned consumers to be on the lookout for a new email phishing scam. The emails appear to be from the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service and include a bogus case number.

The fake emails may include the following message: "Your reported 2013 income is flagged for review due to a document processing error. Your case has been forwarded to the Taxpayer Advocate Service for resolution assistance. To avoid delays processing your 2013 filing contact the Taxpayer Advocate Service for resolution assistance."

Recipients are directed to click on links that supposedly provide information about the "advocate" assigned to their case or that let them "review reported income." The links lead to web pages that solicit personal information.

Taxpayers who get these messages should not respond to the email or click on the links. Instead, they should forward the scam emails to the IRS at [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). For more information, visit the IRS's [Report Phishing](#) web page. The Taxpayer Advocate Service is a legitimate IRS organization that helps taxpayers resolve federal tax issues that have not been resolved through the normal IRS channels. The IRS, including TAS, does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email, texting or any social media.

For more on scams to guard against see the "[Dirty Dozen](#)" list on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).



**TRAVEL.STATE.GOV**  
A SERVICE OF THE BUREAU OF CONSULAR AFFAIRS  
U.S. Department of State

## Travel.State.Gov Redesign and Public Launch

On January 14, the Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) launched the redesign of its official website, [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) (TSG). The new format is user-centric and is based on your needs so that you can find the information you need more easily. The [TSG](#) website provides a wealth of information. **Learn about:**

- How/where to apply for a new passport
  - The status of your passport application
  - Safety tips for traveling abroad
  - The State Department's role in a crisis
  - Parental child abductions to and from the United States
  - Getting a U.S. visa to visit or live in the United States
  - How a U.S. citizen parent, can document the U.S. citizenship of a child born overseas
  - Federal Benefits and Federal Agency Programs and Services for U.S. Citizens Abroad
  - Countries you plan to visit
  - Divorce Abroad
  - Resources for students traveling abroad
  - Emergency financial assistance for U.S. citizens abroad
  - The process of adopting a child outside the United States
  - Protecting yourself from internet scammers
- There is so much more. Visit [TSG](#) and discover!**

## Earth Day 2014 – April 22

The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970.

Earth Day originated in the US but became recognized worldwide by 1990.

U.S. senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day.

On the very first Earth Day, 20 million people gathered in the streets of America to protest the industrial revolution. An environmental movement was born as a result.

Every year on April 22, men, women, and children collect garbage, plant trees, clean up coral reefs, show movies, sign petitions, and plan for a better future for our planet.

Some schools and communities celebrate Earth Day for a whole week to expand the time frame that people focus on the earth and how they can preserve it.



