

Welcome to the October newsletter! Here are this month's topics:

- Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures
- Voting Information for the 2008 Primary and General Elections
- Check Your Passport's Validity
- Need More Passport Pages?
- Internet-Based Registration System

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The Consulate General will be closed on the following holidays:

November 11 Veterans Day (Observed November 12)

November 22 Thanksgiving Day

Voting Information for the 2008 Primary and General Elections

This is a reminder that in just three months we will be entering the U.S. presidential and state primary season. Five primaries are currently slated for January, another 20 are scheduled for February, and the rest take place from early March through early October. Registration for the first primary (the District of Columbia) closes December 10, 2007. We encourage you to act now so that your opinion is heard – not only in the November 2008 presidential and general elections, but also in the presidential primary and state primary elections! The official U.S. Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website www.fvap.gov.

Generally, all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who are or will be residing outside the United States during an election period are eligible to vote absentee in any election for Federal office. This includes primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general election in November 2008. Some states allow overseas voters to vote in elections for state and local offices, and for state and local referendums.

Voting eligibility and residency requirements are determined by the various U.S. states, and are available on-line at <http://fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html>. Your legal state of residence for voting purposes is the state where you last resided immediately prior to departure from the United States. Voting rights extend to overseas citizens even though they may no longer own property or have other ties to their last state of residence, and even if their intent to return to that state may be uncertain. For those who have never resided in the U.S., sixteen states, to date, allow eligible U.S. citizens to register where a parent would be eligible to vote.

To register to vote and/or apply for an absentee ballot, you can use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). The on-line version, the OFPCA, is accepted by all states and territories except American Samoa and Guam. Voters from American Samoa and Guam must use the standard form of the FPCA, available at the Consulate General or through many American civic groups. The on-line OFPCA form must be completed legibly, printed, signed, dated, and mailed to your local election officials. Your state may allow faxing to speed the process, but you will still need to send in the original by mail. Use an envelope and affix proper postage. The official U.S. Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance, www.fvap.gov, has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the state-specific instructions for completing the FPCA form, links to state and local officials, and a downloadable emergency ballot for use by those who register in time but fail to receive an official ballot.

As a general rule, you should try to send in the FPCA so that it reaches your local election officials at least forty-five days before the first election in which you are eligible to vote --- ample time for them to process the request and send you a blank ballot. If applying for both registration and an absentee ballot, you may want to mail the FPCA earlier. One FPCA will qualify you to receive all ballots for Federal offices for the next two regular Federal elections (through 2010).

However, we recommend that you submit a new FPCA in January of every year, and whenever you move, to ensure that your most recent mailing and e-mail addresses are on file with your local election officials.

Under normal circumstances, most states and territories begin sending ballots to overseas citizens 30-45 days before an election. However, if you haven't received your ballot within three weeks of your state's ballot receipt deadline, and you are required to return your voted ballot by mail, you should download, complete, sign, date, and send in a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB), available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefwab.html>. Make sure it is witnessed if required by your state. If you subsequently receive your regular absentee ballot, execute it and return it regardless of when you receive it. Court decisions sometimes require late counting of ballots voted by Election Day, but received by local election officials for a specified period of time following Election Day.

Be an Educated Voter

Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via the Internet. Use the links appearing on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/otherlinks.html>, read your hometown newspaper on-line, or search the Internet to locate articles and information.

The Voting Assistance Officer at the Consulate General is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, send an e-mail to VoteShanghai@state.gov or call (86-21) 32174650 ext. 2114 or 2142.

Check Your Passport's Validity

Please carefully review the validity of your current U.S. passport. Many governments require US travelers to have at least 6 months validity left in their passports for entry into their countries.

Regular passports are received within 10 business days after the US Consulate receives the application.

Need More Passport Pages?

If your full-validity U.S. passport has not expired yet, but has no blank pages left for visas, we can add additional pages for you free of charge. Barring any unusual circumstances, we can usually add pages to your passport in about 30 minutes, while you wait.

Internet-Based Registration System

U.S. citizens around the world who travel or reside abroad can record foreign trip and residence information at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/>. The Department of State invites US Citizens to register themselves and their families. The registration information is used to communicate with US citizens and assist them in case of an emergency. The registration site provides up-to-date travel information customized to each citizen's unique travel agenda and itinerary. The data citizens provide is secured behind Department of State firewalls, accessed only by cleared personnel in Embassies, Consulates, and the Department of State, and releasable only with the US Citizen's permission under the provisions of the Privacy Act.

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