

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

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

New Topics:

- Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures
- New Voting Pamphlet Available in ACS
- Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption Enters into Force
- Summer Olympics and Paralympics in China
- State Voter Registration Verification Websites
- Passport Card
- IRS - Economic Stimulus Payments Information
- Leaving Shanghai Consular District?
- Voting Information Updates

Continuing Topics of Interest:

- Spring Greetings from the U.S. Consulate Shanghai
- New Parental Signature Requirements for U.S. Minors
- Tips For A Smooth Consular Visit
- Check Your Passport's Validity
- Links of Interest to Overseas Citizens

Spring Greetings from the U.S. Consulate Shanghai

Dear Fellow Americans,

Happy Spring! We hope you find this newsletter helpful. Please spread the word to your American friends and colleagues to register with the Consulate. We frequently send important messages and want everyone to be informed.

Don't forget to vote! This year's Presidential election is right around the corner, and we are privileged to have the opportunity to vote overseas. We encourage you to fill out an absentee ballot registration form next time you come into our office. We can help mail the registration request for you.

Volunteer Opportunity: Become an American Citizen Warden

We are currently looking for volunteers to serve as an American Citizen Warden in your area.

What do wardens do?

Wardens help transmit messages to Americans, and help assist the Consulate in emergency situations. This position is voluntary and unofficial. There is no compensation other than the sincere appreciation of the U.S. government, and hopefully, the appreciation of any American in distress who receives assistance.

What are the qualifications to be a warden?

- You must be an American citizen
- You must be at least 18 years of age
- You must be legally resident in the Shanghai Consular District (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui), preferably for at least another year
- You must be registered with the Consular Section

We greatly appreciate the service of our wardens, and invite you to participate. If you are interested please email us at: shanghaiacs@state.gov

Yours truly,
American Citizen Services
U.S. Consulate Shanghai

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The American Citizen Services Unit will be closed all day on the following days:

May 1-2, Thur. & Fri.
International Labor Day

May 26, Monday
Memorial Day

New Parental Signature Requirements for U.S. Minors

Effective February 1, 2008, passport applicants who are U.S. citizen minors under the age of 16 must appear personally with their parents to establish identity, proof of citizenship and proof of relationship.

For parental application permission, both parents must appear together and sign, or one parent may appear to sign and submit the other parent's notarized statement, or one parent may appear, sign, and submit primary evidence of sole authority.

Minors age 16 and 17 may apply in person with their own identification, but for security reasons, parental consent may be required. If your child does not have identification of their own, a parent will be required to accompany the child and present identification.

Tips For A Smooth Consular Visit

Come early. Our busiest time is 10:30 to 11:30 AM, and 2:30 to 3:30 PM. Lines are long and we recommend you come early since all customers are served on a first-come first-served basis.

For passport applicants: Complete (but don't sign) passport applications and bring copies in addition to the originals (such as passports, children's birth certificates) ahead of time – this considerably shortens your visit.

For passport applicants: Pay special attention to passport photographs. We will ask you to get other photos if they don't meet State Department's requirements.

For passport and more visa page applicants: Please remember to fill in your social security number. This is required by law.

For minor (below age 16) passport applicants: Parents - please remember to bring your child's original birth certificate when applying for a new or replacement passport.

For notary clients: Please make sure you have read your document(s) to be notarized and know the contents. Do not sign your document, but make sure that all other blanks are filled in before coming to the Consulate.

For notary clients: If your signature must be notarized and witnessed, you must bring witnesses and their IDs with you.

New Voting Pamphlet Available in ACS

We invite you to view our new pamphlet with absentee voting information. It includes important information such as your voting assistance contacts, basics about the absentee voting process, and your state deadlines for registration. To find out more, please visit <http://shanghai.usembassy.gov/voting.html>

If you are unable to download the absentee ballot registration form, you may also pick one up in our office. We are also happy to mail the registration request for you free of charge!

Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption Enters into Force

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption entered into force in the United States on April 1, 2008. The provisions of the Hague Convention now govern both incoming and outgoing intercountry adoptions between the United States and other Convention countries.

The Hague Convention establishes international norms and procedures for processing intercountry adoption cases involving more than 70 Convention member countries. It mandates safeguards to protect the interests of children, birth parents, and adoptive parents. It also provides that member nations recognize adoptions that take place within other Convention countries.

As the designated Central Authority for the United States, the Department of State is responsible for ensuring that these new requirements are met for all intercountry adoption cases under the Hague Convention involving a U.S. adoptive parent or child.

Membership in the Convention will change the U.S. intercountry adoption process with respect to other Convention countries in many ways, including:

- Establishing federal accreditation of adoption service providers, through accrediting entities designated by the Department.
- Launching the Adoption Tracking Service that the Department will use to track incoming and outgoing cases. For the first time, it will be possible to track the cases of American children who are adopted by citizens of other Hague countries.
- Establishing a Hague Complaint Registry which will track public complaints related to intercountry adoptions.
- Using new Department of Homeland Security petition forms (I-800A and I-800) for "Convention adoptees."
- Issuing new certificates from consular officers in Hague cases stating that the requirements of the Convention have been met for an adoption or custody declaration completed overseas.
- Issuing a declaration from the Department, for outgoing adoptions or custody declarations under the Hague Convention, documenting that the new requirements have been met.

For additional information, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions, please go to this State Department Web page: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/convention/convention_462.html.

Summer Olympics and Paralympics in China

Are you planning to go to the Olympic Summer Games or the Beijing Paralympic Summer Games this summer? The Department of State has released a fact sheet that provides essential information for travel to China. Read the fact sheet carefully at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1762.html and start preparations for your trip early.

State Voter Registration Verification Websites

States and territories are making it easier to determine your voter registration status. Twenty-two states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have web sites where a voter can check their registration status. The website addresses are subject to change. Please check <http://www.fvap.gov/vao/stregissites.html> for updates.

Arizona: https://servicearizona.com/webapp/evoter/select_language.do

Arkansas: <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/>

Colorado: www.sos.state.co.us/Voter/voterHome.do;jsessionid=0000XG2ue4KEtN2QUYQ

Delaware: pollingplace.delaware.gov/

District of Columbia: www.dcboee.org/voterreg/vic_step1.asp

Georgia: www.sos.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/Locator.asp

Indiana: www.indianavoters.com/PublicSite/Public/PublicVoterRegistration.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

(Note: You can also check the status of your provisional vote)

Iowa: www.sos.state.ia.us/elections/VoterReg/RegToVote/search.aspx
Kansas: <https://myvoteinfo.voteks.org/>
Kentucky: cdc.ky.gov/VICWeb/index.jsp
Louisiana: sos.louisiana.gov/polllocator/
Maryland: mdelections.umbc.edu (Note: You can get a sample ballot at this site also.)
Michigan: michigan.gov/sos/0,1607,7-127-1633-49313--,00.html
Nebraska: <https://www.votercheck.necvr.ne.gov/> (Note: You can also check the status of your provisional vote.)
Nevada: www.nvsos.gov/elections/
New Mexico: <https://voterview.state.nm.us/>
North Carolina: www.sboe.state.nc.us/votersearch/seimsvot.htm (Note: You can check the status of your provisional vote at this site also.)
Ohio: www.sos.state.oh.us/sosapps/elections/voterquery.aspx
Pennsylvania: www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/cwp/view.asp?a=1206&Q=446253&sureNav=|
Puerto Rico: www.ceeput.org/serviciosLineas/estatusElectoral/index.htm
(Note: This site is in Spanish and you need your voter registration number to verify your status.)
Rhode Island: www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/
South Carolina: <https://webprod.cio.sc.gov/SCSECVoterWeb/voterInformationSearch.do>
Utah: gva1.utah.gov/elections/polling.aspx
Virginia: <https://www.voterinfo.sbe.virginia.gov/PublicSite/Public/FT2/PublicLookup.aspx?Link=>
Washington: www.secstate.wa.gov/elections/lookup.aspx/
West Virginia: www.wvvotes.com/voters/am-i-registered.php

Passport Card

The new U.S. passport card is designed to facilitate entry and expedite document processing at U.S. land and sea ports-of-entry when arriving from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. The card cannot be used to travel by air and cannot be used to enter or exit China. The card will have the same validity period as a passport book: 10 years for an adult, five for children 15 and younger. For adults who already have a passport book, they may apply for the card as a passport renewal and pay only \$20. First-time applicants will pay \$45 for adult cards and \$35 for children.

At the moment, the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is not able to accept applications for the passport card. Once we are able to accept such applications, an announcement will appear in this newsletter and on our website: http://shanghai.usembassy.gov/general_information_acs.html.

IRS - Economic Stimulus Payments Information

Congress passed, and the President signed, the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008. In response to this, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has developed Tax Package 1040A-3, "Information about Economic Stimulus Payments for Social Security, Veterans and Other Beneficiaries."

In the next several weeks, the IRS will mail approximately 500,000 of these packages to individuals living outside the U.S. In the meantime, U.S. citizens may refer to the IRS web site at www.IRS.gov for information on benefits, eligibility and other details regarding the Economic Stimulus Act.

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. The processing time is already quite fast so we cannot expedite your application.

We may issue limited validity passports locally for Americans who have emergency travel needs and who have proof of their immediate travel plans. However, your need to renew a passport in order to apply for a visa does NOT constitute an emergency.

Individuals who have lost more than one passport cannot be issued an emergency passport.

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing from Shanghai consular district after a long stay here, and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. consulate, please be sure to "cancel" your registration when you leave.

You can deregister yourself by visiting the travelregistration.state.gov site if you were previously registered through this site. If you previously submitted your registration at the U.S. consulate, you may deregister yourself by sending an email request to ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Voting Information Updates

American Samoa: American Samoa now accepts the online Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). For more information please go to www.fvap.gov.

North Carolina: The North Carolina, Davie County Board of Elections' new address is:

Davie County Board of Elections
161 Poplar Street, Suite 102
Mocksville, NC 27028-2148

For more information on how to vote in U.S. elections in North Carolina and other states, please go to www.fvap.gov.

Links of Interest to Overseas Citizens

If you have difficulty accessing the official Federal Voting Assistance Program website, you may also try the following links to get voting information.

Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO)

<http://aaro.org/>

Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas

<http://www.fawco.org/>

Expatriate Exchange

www.expateexchange.com/

American Citizens Abroad (ACA)

<http://www.aca.ch/>

Overseas Vote Foundation

www.overseasvotefoundation.org

Democrats Abroad

Tel (202) 863-8177

Fax (202) 863-8063

www.democratsabroad.org

info@democratsabroad.org

Republicans Abroad

Tel: (202) 608-1423

Fax: (202) 608-1431

www.republicansabroad.org

chairman@republicansabroad.org

The appearance of external hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the United States Federal Government, United States Department of Defense or the Federal Voting Assistance Program of the linked web sites, or the information, products or services contained therein. The Federal Voting Assistance Program does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations.

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