



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 30

July, 2010

New Schedule of Consular Fees Took Effect on July 13, 2010

This newsletter is published by the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

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- * Ask the Consul: Can I Apply for a Social Security Number here?
- * Does The Service You Need Require an Appointment?

On June 28, 2010, the U.S. Department of State published its Schedule of Fees for Consular Services in the Federal Register. The schedule includes fees for passports, immigrant visas and other consular services. The changes took effect on July 13, 2010, 15 days after publication in the Federal Register. The revised fees cover actual operating expenses for the 301 overseas consular posts, 23 domestic passport agencies and other centers that provide these consular services to U.S. and foreign citizens.

The 27 adjusted fees are based on a Cost of Service Study completed by the Bureau of Consular Affairs in June 2009. The study, which was the most detailed and exhaustive ever conducted by the U.S. Department of State, established the true cost of providing these consular services, which the Department recovers through the collection of fees.

A full list of adjusted fees can be viewed at http://www.travel.state.gov/news/news_5078.html.

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The American Citizen Services Unit will be *CLOSED* on the following days:
September 6, Mon: U.S. Labor Day

A full list of all of our holiday closings is available online at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/holidays.html>.

Please understand that our office is often very busy on the day before and the day after a holiday closure so you should expect longer wait times if you come on such days. If you visit us outside of these time periods, you should experience a shorter wait than pre-/post- holiday closure days.

Embassy Beijing's ACS unit launches Facebook page

On July 20, 2010, Embassy Beijing's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit launched its first Facebook page. On this page, Americans traveling or residing in China can find information about the services ACS Beijing offers, hours of operation, location, and miscellaneous updates. If you have a Facebook account and would like to

receive regular updates, we invite you to visit this page.

This Facebook page is intended as a supplement to, NOT a replacement for, the Beijing ACS webpage (<http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>) and warden message system.

How to Join: From your Facebook page, search for "U.S. Embassy Beijing American Citizen Services" and click the "like" button at the top right of the page. This will allow you to access the page and receive updates.

Let us know if you think it would be helpful for the ACS unit here in Shanghai to create a Facebook page.

Security Situation - Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is prudent for you and your family to review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Uzbekistan</u>	07/22/2010
<u>Pakistan</u>	07/22/2010
<u>Mexico</u>	07/16/2010
<u>Chad</u>	07/09/2010
<u>Haiti</u>	06/24/2010

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted condi-



tions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

<u>Kenya</u>	07/22/2010
<u>Uganda</u>	07/16/2010
<u>Jamaica</u>	06/24/2010

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This informa-

tion is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit "Americans Traveling Abroad" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

You may also visit the Consular Affairs twitter page at <http://twitter.com/TravelGov>.

Changes in Chinese Residence Permits for Foreign Relatives

From the Shanghai Daily 28MAY2010:

FOREIGN family members of a Chinese citizen will be able to apply for a two-year stay permit, one year longer than the current visa allows, local authorities said yesterday.

And those who came to China on visas of six months or less can now ap-

ply for several extensions.

The new rule aims to better serve foreign family members of a Chinese citizen who pay a visit here or raise their families in China, as well as children of overseas Chinese who are living in China. Instead of holding a visa valid for one year at most, they will be entitled to get the two-year stay permit.

Foreign spouses, parents and children under 18 of Chinese citizens or foreigners who have permanent residency permits qualify for the stay permit.

People can apply at the bureau's four outlets - three in the Pudong New Area and one in Puxi. Log onto www.police.sh.cn, or dial 2895-1900 to consult for more information.

Milu Guide Available



A team of Shanghai entrepreneurs has assembled a useful guide to Shanghai for expats. It covers five sections about Shanghai on a daily basis: getting things in order, living in Shanghai, well being and health, work-

ing and setting up a business, and Expo 2010.

It's free (paid for by advertising by local businesses). You can download it at miluguide.com or pick up a copy around town.

Summer Hints for Easier Passport Services

- **Check your passport's expiration date.** Some countries in the region including China, the Philippines, and Indonesia require that a U.S. passport be valid for at least six months for visa issuance or visa-free entry. For further details about visa and entry and exit requirements of countries in the region please go to the travel.state.gov website or check with the airline or your travel agent.

- **Review your children's passports.** Check the expiration date of their passport – remember that passports for children under 16 are only valid for 5 years.

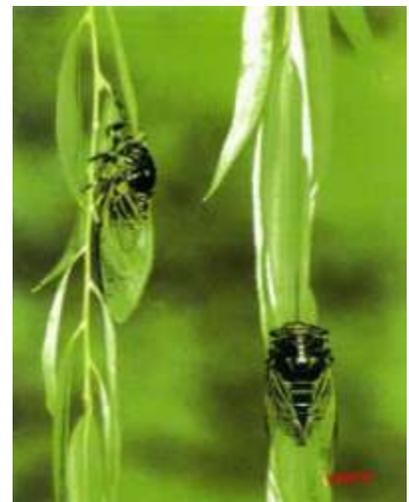
- **Make an appointment early for passport services.** All non-

emergency consular services require an appointment. You can make an appointment online through our website: http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/appointment_system011309.html. It typically takes 7- 10 working days from the time you apply to receive a full validity passport. There is a high level of demand for appointment slots in the days and weeks before a holiday and during the summer school holiday.

- **Avoid a long wait.** Avoid scheduling your appointment on Mondays or the days immediately before or after a holiday when wait times are longest.

- **Check the website.** You can find

answers to common questions, as well as useful forms and instructions, on the Consulate General website at <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>.



August State Primaries around the Corner!

We encourage overseas Americans, who have not yet registered to vote or requested an absentee ballot this year, to do so now!

Voting ties all overseas Americans together, regardless of party affiliation. Did you know that in 2010, every seat in the House of Representatives and 36 Senate seats will be contested? Midterm congressional elections are federal elections, open to overseas voters. This means your vote in 2010 for U.S. Congress is as crucial as was your vote in 2008.

The following States will hold Primary Elections during the month of August 2010 on the dates indicated:

- August 3, 2010: Kansas, Michigan, Missouri
- August 5, 2010: Tennessee
- August 10, 2010: Colorado, Connecticut, Minnesota
- August 17, 2010: Washington, Wyoming
- August 24, 2010: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Vermont
- August 28, 2010: Louisiana (1st Party Congressional)

Register and request your ballot now! Ballot applications and instructions for the above states are available at www.fvap.gov/FPCA. Click on your state on the map and follow the instructions to register and request an absentee ballot.



Federal Voting Assistance Program now on Facebook

You can now follow the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) on Facebook. Click this link: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/DoDFVAP?ref=ts> or just search for the Federal Voting Assistance Program.



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FVAP helps Uniformed Services personnel, their voting-age de-

pendents, and overseas civilians to successfully exercise their right to vote in Federal elections so that they have an opportunity equal to that of the general population to vote and to have that vote counted.

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district after a long stay here and you formally registered your stay with the U.S. Consulate, please do not forget to cancel your registration when you leave.

You can unregister yourself by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov> site if you previously registered through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form to the U.S. consulate, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Tax Information Available on the Internet

The most comprehensive resource for taxes on the web is the Internal Revenue Service website: www.irs.gov. There is a page on that site that is specifically designed for U.S. Citizens and Resident Aliens Abroad: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html>.

Federal Tax forms can be obtained online at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>.

Please note that the IRS has just released the latest comprehensive guide for your 2009 taxes called Publication 17. You can read all about it and download it here: <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=216665,00.html>.

Also useful is Publication 4732, which contains specific tax information for Americans living abroad and can be downloaded at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4732.pdf>.

For more information on U.S. taxes, please consult the list of websites and telephone numbers below to help find the forms and answers you need.

Tax guidance for people in the military: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>

Electronic payment website: <http://www.eftps.gov/>

Refund information: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96596,00.html?portlet=4>

Phone Services

Individuals: 1-800-829-1040*

Businesses: 1-800-829-4933*

For routine tax return and preparation questions, you may call the International Taxpayer Help Line in Philadelphia at 1-215-516-2000.

- Refund Inquiries: 1-800-829-4477 *
- TeleTax: 1-800-829-4477
- ITINs after 6 weeks: 1-800-829-1040 *
- Exempt Organization Help Desk: 1-877-829-5500 *
- Tax Offset Program (TOP) Help Desk: 1-800-304-3107
- E-Services Help Desk: 1-512-416-7750

(* Please note: Toll-free numbers (aka "1-800 numbers" are generally for use only within the U.S., but can be called using Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services such as Vonage, Lingo or Skype. If you do not have access to one of these services, a direct dial phone number is listed on the IRS website.)

State Tax Returns: For individual state income tax information, visit <http://www.taxadmin.org/>. State tax forms are available on <http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html>. The Consulate does not provide any state tax forms or state tax information.

Overseas Taxpayers Get Automatic 2-Month Filing Extension

U.S. income tax returns were due on April 15th. If you reside overseas, however, you are given an automatic two month extension to file. However, any tax money you owe must be paid by April 15th to avoid paying interest and possibly penalties. Note: Payments are not considered received until the date of actual receipt by the IRS, not the postmark date.

U.S. Non-Immigrant Visa Fees Increased on June 4

Although this news does not affect U.S. citizens directly, if you work with anyone seeking a U.S. non-immigrant visa, you can let them know that fees increased on June 4, 2010. The fees for the most common non-immigrant visas: the fee for a B1/B2 visa for business or tourism, the F visa for students and the J visa for exchange program participants increased to \$140. The new fees for H, L, O, P, Q, and R visas is \$150; for E visas \$390, and K visas \$350.

For more information about the fee increase, please click here: http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv_fees2.html.

For an explanation of the types of visas or to answer any other question you might have about visas, please click here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html.

Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

U.S. Consulate General,
Shanghai, China

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Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场

(Méi lóng zhèn guǎngchǎng)

Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650

Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours Emergencies:

(86-21) 6433-3936

Open 8:00am - 11:30am

and 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Monday to Friday *Closed on
Tuesday afternoons, weekends,
and holidays.

<http://shanghai.>

usembassy-china.org.cn/

Someone Asked the Consul:

Can I apply for a Social Security Number here?

Yes, you may apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) at our American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit. Your application will be forwarded to the closest Social Security Administration (SSA) office (Manila, Philippines) for adjudication. Once your SSN is issued, your Social Security card will be mailed from the SSA office in Baltimore to the address that you left on your application. Please keep in mind that due to varying mail pick up times and delays, it takes 3-6 months for you to receive the Social Security card when you apply through the Consulate. If you plan to use the SSN in the near future (e.g. tax filing, school enrollment), please apply as soon as you can.

Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) can be **downloaded from the SSA's website** <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5fs.html>. Documentation required when applying for a SSN is listed on the Form SS-5. Additional documents are required for applicants age 12 and older. Please contact ACS for more details.

Does The Service You Need Require An Appointment?

The Shanghai American Citizen Services Unit uses a mandatory on-line appointment system for all non-emergency services. We hope this tool will assist you in budgeting your time and reduce the wait time during high demand periods.

Appointments are necessary to:

- Obtain a U.S. passport for minors and adults
- Add visa pages to a U.S. passport
- Apply for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and first U.S. passport for children
- Submit additional documents for a pending CRBA application
- Obtain notarial services
- Complete a Marriage-ability Affidavit

Visitors may receive several services during the same visit to American Citizen Services (ACS) unit. Please make a separate appointment for each individual service.

Please arrive at least 10 minutes before your appointment time, to allow time to clear security.

Scheduled appointments will be automatically canceled for applicants who arrive over 15 minutes after their scheduled time.

No appointments are necessary to:

- Apply for Reports of Death
- Report a passport lost / stolen when you are in urgent need to travel outside of China. Bring proof of pending travel
- Register with the Consulate
- Pick up passport and/or Consular Report of

Birth Abroad (CRBA) upon notification

- Pick up Social Security checks or ask questions about SSA benefits
- Submit additional documents for a pending passport application
- Register to vote
- Apply for a Travel Letter (applies to Legal Permanent Residents only)
- Pick up re-entry permits (applies to Legal Permanent Residents only)
- Abandon permanent resident status
- Attend Tuesday *American Citizens' Visa Hour* at 3-4pm
- Attend Wednesday *Education Hour* at 3:30-4:30pm