

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

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

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- Registration with the Police & Chinese Visa Problems
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- Summer Olympics and Paralympics in China
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Greetings from the U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

The Consulate hopes everyone had a wonderful 4th of July.

As we pass the halfway point in summer we would like to remind everyone to register early for this November's election.

The Federal Voter's Assistance Program located at www.fvap.gov has information on how to register to vote based on the requirements of each state.

You can also fill out an absentee ballot request form at the Consulate in Shanghai which we will send in for you free of charge.

When registering it is best to do so as early as possible so that your State has a chance to get you the ballots in time for your vote to be counted.

In addition to registering to vote you can be a part of the elections in many ways even while abroad.

Candidates are using the internet to campaign. Candidates' websites have information on their positions and also volunteering opportunities some of which can be done from abroad using the internet.

Candidates' websites may also have information on local events that their campaign is hold here in China. For more information on overseas offices of political parties see our Ask the Consul section on page 6.

We hope everyone is having a wonderful summer.
Shanghai ACS

Voting: Use of the Return Envelope Template

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has informed the Consulate that voters using the return envelope template available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/returnenvelope.html> must print it on an actual envelope. The U.S.

Postal Service reported that envelopes with plain paper templates affixed to them were jamming up mail sorting machines at gateway postal facilities. USPS will not accept plain paper templates affixed to envelopes.

Hard copies of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA or Standard Form 76) are available at the Consulate and could also be used to minimize mailing problems. For voters using the PDF versions, however, please print out return envelopes in advance. You may use a standard business size, or larger, envelope.

Registration with the Police & Chinese Visa Problems

Although anecdotal evidence supports the following information, the PSB (Police Security Bureau) has not provided official notification regarding changes listed here. This information is being provided because of numerous inquiries ACS has received regarding enforcement of registration guidelines.

The Embassy has been informed that the PSB recently issued guidelines to hotels and apartment management companies concerning the registration of foreigners in China. The rule states that all foreigners must be registered with the local PSB office within 24 hours of arrival. Both individual violators and hotels and apartment managers could be subject to fines for failing to adhere to the rule.

Hotels and serviced apartments

Guests must be registered upon arrival with the PSB by their hotel or serviced apartment management company. Usually this procedure is automatic, as guest information is directly given to the PSB at check-in, with no additional action being required from the guest. However, the PSB is conducting some checks by physically visiting hotels to request copies of the hotel's in-house guest list to make sure they match the PSB's own records. If the records do not match, the hotel / serviced apartment will be fined up to RMB5,000 per missing entry. Hotel guests under these circumstances would not be fined.

However, this does mean that foreigners wishing to stay at a hotel must provide full passport and visa credentials in order to check in. Some hotels have denied check-in to guests with reservations who are not in possession of a passport and visa.

Foreign personnel living in private apartments

Apartment management companies are supposed to contact foreign tenants to remind them to register with the local PSB. Tenants who do not register risk being fined themselves as well as having their apartment management company fined. Fines can be up to RMB 5,000. This applies to any foreigner living in any apartment or private dwelling - even if it is for just for one night. If staying overnight or visiting friends in China, registration must be carried out upon arrival with the local PSB office responsible for the area.

VISA Problems

The Embassy has also anecdotal evidence that people are having difficulty renewing or changing their visas while in China. Please check that you have a valid visa as the PSB has been fining and in some cases, detaining people who remain in China with the incorrect visa or a visa that has expired. Under Chinese law, the PSB may ask to see your passport, so keep it handy when traveling. The Embassy recommends that you carry your passport with you, but be careful to keep it out of easy reach from pickpockets or where it can be easily lost or mislaid. You should keep a copy of the passport bio page and your valid visa in a safe place at home. Do keep in mind that should you lose your passport, you will need to have it replaced at the Embassy or one of our Consulates, and you will also need to have a new visa placed in your replacement passport by Chinese officials. This process may take several days.

Minnesota Overseas Voting Law Change

Minnesota has recently passed a new law related to overseas voting. The new law does the following:

1. Allows ballots to be sent to overseas voters electronically. Voters are still required to print out and mail their ballot back to their county auditor. Sending ballots electronically cuts the mailing time in half.

2. Allows voters to use any of the following types of ID numbers on their absentee ballot application:

- * U.S. passport number
- * Minnesota driver's license number
- * Minnesota ID card number (for those without a driver's license)
- * The last four digits of their Social Security Number

Voters must put the same number on the certification they return with the ballot for verification purposes.

3. Removes the requirement that voters get a non-commissioned officer (NCO) or someone authorized to give oaths to witness their ballot when unable to provide one of the ID numbers mentioned above. Instead, the law allows voters to self-certify that their information is accurate.

4. Clarifies that protections of private information afforded to domestic voters are also available to military and overseas voters who vote using their military ID or passport numbers.

5. Allows county auditors to update voters' addresses if they move between elections and send them a replacement ballot if their ballot has been spoiled or lost in transit.

6. Allows voters who will be out of the country during the 180 days prior to the state general election to use write-in ballots (aka "submarine ballots") for state and local offices, as long as they specify the name of the candidate.

7. Requires counties to process Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) absentee ballots by using an Absentee Ballot Board. The Board will determine whether to accept or reject an absentee ballot during the 30 days before the election and send a replacement ballot to voters if their ballot is rejected at least five days before the election. Allows counties to use their staff as board members, and specifies that political party balance requirements do not apply if staff is doing the work. Provides the Absentee Ballot Board additional authority to make sure that as many UOCAVA voters get to vote as possible by using other information to determine if the ballot was submitted by the same person who submitted the application where ID numbers did not match.

Additional information regarding the provisions of this law is available online by visiting the Minnesota Secretary of State's web site at <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/home/index.asp?page=10&recordid=250>.

Questions regarding the above may also be referred to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Department of Defense, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20301-1155 or through email: vote@fvap.ncr.gov.

Visit the FVAP website at www.fvap.gov for more information.

New Department of Homeland Security initiatives

The Department of Homeland Security has recently announced the launch of three initiatives – the Global Entry pilot program, the Passenger Service Program, and an expanded Model Ports Initiative – intended to strengthen customer service at U.S. ports of entry.

Global Entry is a customer service and security program designed to expedite the screening and processing of pre-approved, low-risk travelers entering the U.S. Currently only U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) are eligible to join. The pilot started June 6, 2008 at George Bush Intercontinental, John F. Kennedy International and Washington Dulles International airports. Global Entry applicants will voluntarily provide their biographic and biometric information, undergo a background check and complete an interview with a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer. Once accepted, Global Entry travelers can use a kiosk at any of the three pilot airports to verify their identity electronically and make any needed customs declarations. CBP has been accepting applications at www.cbp.gov/travel since May 12, 2008.

Under the new Passenger Service Program, CBP Program Service Managers will serve as a dedicated point of contact for identifying and resolving passenger issues. The initiative promotes customer service techniques in officer interactions

with the traveling public, and includes joint efforts with the private sector and industry stakeholders to reduce wait times through the use of improved signage and technology. The program will be established at CBP's top 20 Model Ports.

The Department also is expanding the Model Ports Initiative to 18 additional airports. Originally established in 2006 as part of the Rice-Chertoff Initiative, Model Ports has enhanced border security with the use of the new technology while streamlining security processes and facilitating travel for legitimate visitors. In addition to brochures and increased signage, a new video, currently available in Spanish, French, German and English, will assist travelers through the customs and immigration process by providing practical information about the entry process and required entry documents and forms.

In a related effort, CBP is providing wait times online at www.cbp.gov for 16 of the busiest international airports and pedestrian wait times for 12 land border crossings in Arizona, California, and Texas.

Someone Asked the Consul: "Where would I obtain information on issues, positions, and candidates?"

Both Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad maintain overseas offices and have information about the candidates and issues. The party organizations can be contacted as follows:

Democrats Abroad

430 South Capitol Street, S.E.

Washington, DC 20003

Website: www.democratsabroad.org

Email: info@democratsabroad.org

Republicans Abroad International

1275 K Street, NW, Suite 102

Washington, D.C. 20005

Website: www.republicansabroad.org

Email: chairman@republicansabroad.org

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

Please remember that the days just before and just after a holiday are often extremely busy and you can expect significantly longer waiting times. If you visit us outside of these times, you should have a shorter wait. A full list of all of our holiday closings is online at <http://shanghai.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>. Americans who require emergency assistance during holidays should contact their nearby Embassy/Consulate.

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.

E-mails claiming to be from the IRS are Bogus

Please be aware that the IRS does not initiate taxpayer communications through email. Moreover, the IRS does not request detailed personal information through email, or ask taxpayers for any sensitive information such as personal identification numbers, passwords, or similar access information for credit cards or bank accounts.

Anyone receiving unsolicited email communication claiming to be from the IRS, please forward the original message to: phishing@irs.gov and then follow the instructions given on the following website:

<http://www.irs.gov/privacy/article/0,,id=179820,00.html>

There are reports of scammers contacting people via email that claim to require detailed personal information in order to receive the economic stimulus payment.

Please note that the economic stimulus payments are automatic for eligible taxpayers who filed a 2007 tax return; taxpayers do not need to take any additional action to receive the payment.

For more detailed information and FAQs, please see the following website:
<http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=182735,00.html>

Local News: Beijing Lays Down the Law for Visitors to Olympics

On June 2, the Beijing Olympics organizing committee, issued a detailed handbook on behavior by foreign visitors to this summer's Olympics. The 57 points addressed a range of behavior from public drunkenness to political statements. In recent months, the government has reported several attempted terrorist plots to disrupt the Games. It has also increased supervision of foreigners in China by tightening rules for issuing visas and checking up on foreign residents already inside the country.

Most of the guidelines issued Monday, are simply restatements of existing laws and regulations. They stipulate that foreign visitors to China should carry passports and other official documents at all times. Visitors staying with Chinese residents in urban areas must register with local police within 24 hours of arriving. The limit in rural areas is 72 hours. Don't plan for any late-night karaoke: Entertainment venues have to be closed by 2 a.m. Another guideline reminds visitors that "it is prohibited to sleep in public places," including airports, train stations and parks.

The document is not immediately available in English, but is posted in Chinese at <http://www.beijing2008.cn/news/official/bulletin/official/n214387789.shtml>.
From Wall Street Journal Asia June 3, 2008 Geoffrey A. Fowler and Sky Canaves
The Associated Press June 2, 2008 Stephen Wade

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.

New Website with Information for U.S. Students Abroad

The Department of State has launched a public affairs campaign that targets American citizen college students and young people studying and traveling internationally. The campaign is designed to promote safe, smart travel to college students and spring-breakers.

Through a new comprehensive website created for the campaign, <http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov>, the State Department offers college students a one-stop reference for international travel. The website offers country specific information, tips for safe travel, and other important information, such as who to contact if the student is victim of a crime; what to do in case of a natural disaster or emergency; where the nearest U.S. embassy is located; when to apply for a passport and visa; and how to vote in U.S. election from abroad.

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

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