

## U.S. Consulate General Shanghai

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

### New Topics:

- Are You Ready to Vote?
- Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures
- Conflict De-escalation Information
- Helpful Info Regarding New Chinese Visa Policies
- Redesigned Website Simplifies Voter Registration
- Computer Virus Alert – UPS Virus Verified
- Medical Alert: Sao Paulo State in Brazil
- Security Situation – New Worldwide Caution Issued
- The Beijing Paralympic Summer Games
- Scam Alert – Faxes Claiming to be from the IRS Are Not Legitimate
- Ask the Consul

### Continuing Topics of Interest:

- Leaving Shanghai Consular District?
- Links of Interest to Overseas Citizens

### Are You Ready to Vote?

We strongly encourage Americans residing in the Consular District who are 18 and over to ensure that you are registered to vote and have requested an absentee ballot from your home voting district. If you have not yet done so, we recommend taking these steps at your earliest convenience as the November 4 general election is rapidly approaching. Every state has their own process, but in most cases, an absentee ballot must be requested, and then sent to you by mail, adding significant time to the process.

### How Do I Request My Ballot?

Absentee ballots are requested by sending a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to the local Voting Registrar where you were last registered to vote. FPCA's are downloadable online at [www.fvap.org](http://www.fvap.org) (also [www.fvap.com](http://www.fvap.com)). Alternatively, if you can get to the Consulate, come in and fill out a hard copy. We can mail your FPCA at no charge via the US Postal Service. Mailing addresses for your voting registrar can also be found on the FVAP websites or at ACS in the Consulate. Some states allow you to request your ballot electronically or by fax, but require you to follow-up by mail. In all cases, the process requires a small investment of time to complete. See p.3 for more info.

### When Should I Vote?

Vote early, and just once please. Deadlines for absentee ballots vary by state so there's no hard rule, but plan ahead and allow time for mailing. State deadlines are listed at [www.fvap.org](http://www.fvap.org).

### How Can the Consulate Help?

If you can get your ballot to the Consulate, we can mail it back for you. We are also working to simplify ballot collection by arranging for drop-box locations throughout Shanghai and courier service from Nanjing and Hangzhou and will provide further details when available.

### Who Can I Ask For Help?

The Consulate's Voting Assistance Officer can answer questions by e-mail at: [VoteShanghai@state.gov](mailto:VoteShanghai@state.gov).

### 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.

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

September 1, Monday - U.S. Labor Day

September 15, Monday - Mid-Autumn Festival

### **Conflict De-escalation Information**

The Embassy has seen more cases of minor confrontations involving Americans escalating into serious altercations. In a few cases arguments over as little as 10 RMB have led to injuries, police involvement and restitution. Identifying potential confrontation before they become physical and extracting you from the situation before blows are exchanged is the wisest course of action. To avoid situations that might lead to a physical confrontation we ask that you please consider the following:

- If you become the target of attention of a drunken group or individual, leave the area immediately. Do not try to talk to, reason with, or argue with them. Once targeted, staying in the same area and “ignoring” them normally makes matters worse. Get away from them as soon as possible.
- Avoid situations involving individuals who are intoxicated, arguing, and/or causing a disturbance. Leave the area before they involve you in “their” problem.
- If you find yourself in a challenged situation, it is far better to disengage immediately and leave the area. Fighting over a bump, a perceived slight, a parking spot, 10 RMB, or a stare just isn’t worth it.
- Avoid putting others into a situation where they feel challenged and required to act. Be apologetic if the situation warrants, and do what you can to indicate that no offense was intended.

If someone tries to engage you in a fight, back away, remove yourself from the area immediately. Should a confrontational situation occur involving someone in your party, companions should, if the situation permits, immediately step in and extract any would-be combatants ASAP. Once disengaged, leave the area immediately. If you are out with friends who drink to excess urge them to return home ASAP. Many of the confrontational situations involve those who have consumed so much alcohol that their judgment is impaired.

Helpful Info Regarding New Chinese Visa Policies

\*\*\* 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. \*\*\*

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. For details, please see the July ACS newsletter at <http://shanghai.usembassy.gov/newsletter0708.html>.

### **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 need to have it replaced at the Consulate, and you also need to have a new visa placed in your replacement passport by Chinese officials. This process may take several days.

While visa policy and decisions are made by the Chinese government and ACS is not in a position to directly intervene in particular cases, below are several websites that might be helpful to you regarding new visa policies:

<http://www.chinatravel.net/Forum/ForumTopicInfo.asp?Topic=403>

[http://www.shanghaiexpat.com/community/index.php/2008/](http://www.shanghaiexpat.com/community/index.php/2008/04/25/guide_to_getting_your_z Visa_work_aamp_r?blog=5)

[04/25/guide to getting your z visa work aamp r?blog=5](http://www.shanghaiexpat.com/community/index.php/2008/04/25/guide_to_getting_your_z Visa_work_aamp_r?blog=5)

<http://en.beijing2008.cn/spectators/beijing/links/n214102410.shtml>

### **Redesigned Website Simplifies Voter Registration**

If you are not yet registered to vote, we encourage you to visit the newly redesigned Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov), the official U.S. government website for overseas voters. The updated website features an automated Voter Registration and Ballot Delivery tool that we hope will improve the vote-by-mail process a little bit easier.

### **Request Ballot by Mail or Online**

1. By mail: Visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) and click "Get Started" to be directed to an online Federal Postcard Application mail; or
2. Online: Visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) and click "Use our New Automated Tool to Register/Request a Ballot" under Quick Links in the lower right-hand corner of the home page. You will be redirected to [www.fvap.com](http://www.fvap.com), a fully-automated site that requires you to create a user account and password. You will need to follow-up via snail mail.

You should also complete a new FPCA if you have moved or changed your name since the last time you voted.

Your local voting officials should mail your absentee ballot 30 to 45 days before the November 4 general election.

Return your voted ballot as early as possible. Be aware of your state's ballot receipt deadline, as well as any postmarking requirements.

"I Didn't Get My Ballot on Time..."

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for voters who registered in time but fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials. The FWAB can be downloaded from [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### **Still Have Questions?**

The Consulate's Voting Assistance Officers are available to answer questions and can be reached via e-mail at [VoteShanghai@state.gov](mailto:VoteShanghai@state.gov) or by fax at 21 6217-2071.

### **Information for Missouri Voters**

Some designated Missouri absentee voters can return voted ballots by email or fax. For details, please see <http://www.fvap.gov/global/news/nr11/index.html>.

### **Computer Virus Alert – UPS Virus Verified**

UPS has become aware there is a fraudulent e-mail being sent that says it has been sent by UPS and leads the reader to believe that a UPS shipment could not be delivered. The reader is advised to open an attachment reportedly containing a waybill for the shipment to be picked up.

Be aware that this e-mail attachment contains a virus. UPS recommends that you do not open the attachment; rather, delete the e-mail immediately.

UPS may send official notification messages occasionally, but such messages rarely include attachments. If you receive a notification message that includes an attachment and are in doubt about its authenticity, please contact [customerservice@ups.com](mailto:customerservice@ups.com).

Please note that UPS takes its customer relationships very seriously, but cannot take responsibility for the unauthorized actions of third parties.

[http://www.ups.com/content/us/en/about/news/service\\_updates/virus\\_us.html](http://www.ups.com/content/us/en/about/news/service_updates/virus_us.html)

### **Medical Alert: Sao Paulo State in Brazil**

A yellow fever alert in Brazil was widened to include parts of Sao Paulo state, which had its first human fatalities from the lethal disease in eight years in June. In January, Brazil's health ministry released a yellow fever disease alert for tourists and diplomats residing in the country after suspected cases emerged in late 2007.

People entering the South American country are not required by the Brazilian government to be immunized against the mosquito-borne virus, though the CDC recommends travelers be vaccinated before visiting endemic areas. Risk areas cover all or part of 19 of the nation's 26 states.

Although the risk of people contracting the disease is low, travelers going to Yellow Fever endemic areas from most Asian countries will be required to have proof of Yellow Fever vaccination ON RETURNING to Asia in many instances. There have been incidents in the past where some travelers have been refused entry back into Asia for not having proof of Yellow Fever vaccination when coming from a Yellow Fever endemic country. With this particular alert, scrutization by immigration officials will most likely be heightened. In addition the requirement is that the vaccination be given at least ten days before returning to Asia.

Please note that Yellow Fever vaccination can only be given at a limited number of governmental/travel clinics in most countries and this vaccine is not available at the majority of private/international clinics throughout the world. It is valid for a period of ten years.

For people on business or vacation in South America, particularly Brazil, and Central Africa please ensure that you have the necessary vaccinations and keep documented proof of this with you at all times when traveling.

### **Security Situation – New Worldwide Caution Issued**

On July 16, 2008, the U.S. Department of State issued an updated Worldwide Caution Public Announcement. It supersedes the Worldwide Caution dated January 17, 2008. Please view the full text online at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/pa/pa\\_1161.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1161.html).

The U.S. Department of State has recently issued four Travel Warnings for the following countries:

Democratic Republic of the Congo 07/23/2008  
Timor-Leste 07/21/2008  
Saudi Arabia 07/09/2008  
Uzbekistan 07/03/2008

The U.S. Department of State also has recently issued one Travel Alert for the following country:

Comoros 08/12/2008  
China 07/03/2008

Please review them online here: <http://travel.state.gov/>. The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online here: <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. 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.

### **The Beijing Paralympic Summer Games**

As a follow on to the recently concluded XXIXth Olympic Summer Games, the Beijing Paralympic Summer Games will take place from September 6-17, 2008.

The Beijing Paralympic Summer Games website provides additional information on the Games, including information on

hotel accommodations, tickets, transportation, and advice for spectators.

The U.S. Embassy's Beijing Olympics website and the CDC travelers' health website provide additional information to American citizens planning to travel to China or Hong Kong SAR to see or participate in the Games.

Many U.S. citizens will be traveling to the Olympics this summer. If you plan on being in China for events in August or September, early preparation is the key. Please review carefully the information presented here: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1762.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1762.html).

Please visit U.S. Embassy Beijing's ACS site at [http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/acs\\_olympic.html](http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/acs_olympic.html) for complete information about expanded hours, services and other important information to assist visitors and residents alike during the Olympic Games in China.

### **Scam Alert – Faxes Claiming to be from the IRS Are Not Legitimate**

The Internal Revenue Service cautions taxpayers to be on the lookout for a new wave of scams using the IRS name in identity theft faxes and emails that have circulated during recent months.

A bogus IRS letter and Form W-8BEN (Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding) asks non-residents to provide personal information such as account numbers, PINs, mother's maiden name and passport number. The legitimate IRS Form W-8BEN, which is used by financial institutions to establish appropriate tax withholding for foreign individuals, does not ask for any of this information.

During May and June 2008, taxpayers reported almost 700 "phishing" incidents to the IRS. "Taxpayers should take steps to keep their personal information out of the hands of identity thieves," said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman, "That includes not falling for any of the phony emails or faxes now in circulation pretending to come from the IRS."

The most common scams involve tax refunds and economic stimulus payments. Although most of these scams consist of emails requesting detailed personal information, the IRS generally does not send email to taxpayers, nor does the IRS discuss tax account matters with taxpayers via email. Moreover, the IRS never requests security-related personal information, such as PIN numbers from taxpayers. Please review the following IRS website for more information: <http://www.irs.gov/privacy/article/0,,id=179820,00.html>

Those who have received a questionable fax or email claiming to come from the IRS may forward it to the following address: [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). You may also forward suspicious e-mails to the Federal Trade Commission at: [spam@uce.gov](mailto:spam@uce.gov) or call 1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338).

For information about other scams and what you can do to protect yourself (or what to do if you are the victim of a scam), visit the following U.S. Department of State website: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/financial\\_scams/financial\\_scams\\_3155.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_3155.html).

### **Someone Asked the Consul: "Does the Consulate provide voter education for groups of American Citizens?"**

The Consulate's Voting Assistance Officer is available to answer questions over the phone, via e-mail, or in-person. If you have a group of ten or more Americans, we would be happy to try to arrange an introduction to the process of voting overseas.

As noted on page 1, we will work to assist groups of voters residing in outlying areas of the Consular District in getting their voted ballots to the Consulate and express mailed back to the United States. We may not be able to honor all requests, but we are happy to do what we can to ensure that all eligible voters have a chance to make their voice heard. Contact us at [VoteShanghai@state.gov](mailto:VoteShanghai@state.gov) or the phone or fax numbers listed on the left.

### **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](http://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](mailto:ShanghaiACS@state.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.expatexchange.com/](http://www.expatexchange.com/)

American Citizens Abroad (ACA)

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

Overseas Vote Foundation

[www.overseasvotefoundation.org](http://www.overseasvotefoundation.org)

Democrats Abroad

Tel (202) 863-8177

Fax (202) 863-8063

[www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org)

[info@democratsabroad.org](mailto:info@democratsabroad.org)

Republicans Abroad

Tel: (202) 608-1423

Fax: (202) 608-1431

[www.republicansabroad.org](http://www.republicansabroad.org)

[chairman@republicansabroad.org](mailto: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.

This newsletter is published by the American Citizens 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](mailto:ShanghaiACS@state.gov).