Dear American Community,

Summer has passed and the autumn is upon us. This brings the start of school for children and a busy agenda for those in the private sector or, as I can attest, government.

America is facing global challenges that will demand our best efforts. The United Kingdom will remain as we know it with the recent decision by the Scottish people to remain in the union. Yet, changes will come to all the people of the United Kingdom as promises have been made regarding devolution of powers. Major efforts to deal with the complexities of this issue are likely to take place over the coming months. There are critical challenges to be surmounted here in Northern Ireland too. As always, the United States will stand with the people of Northern Ireland and do what we can to help.

This edition of Danesfort Dispatches will bring you up to date on other important news and information that could affect you or your family. Please have a look.

Gregory S. Burton
Consul General

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**Holiday Time: Plan Ahead for Happy Travels!**

When it comes to bringing items through checkpoints, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has seen just about everything. Traveling with food or gifts is a challenge. Everyone has favorite foods from home that they want to bring to holiday dinners, or items from their destination that they want to bring back home. Not sure about what you can and can't bring through customs and into the U.S.? Here's a partial list of liquid, aerosol and gel items that you must put in your checked bag, ship ahead, or leave at home if they are above the permitted 3.4 oz.

- Cranberry sauce; Jams; Jellies; Lotions; Maple syrup; Perfume; Salsa; Sauces; Snow Globes; Wine, liquor and beer. You can bring **pies and cakes** through the security checkpoint, but they are subject to additional screening.

While you can bring **wrapped gifts** through the checkpoint, TSA officers may have to unwrap a gift to take a closer look inside. We recommend that you wrap gifts after your flight or ship them...
HAPPY TRAVELS, CONTINUED.

(Continued from page 1)

ahead of time. This way you will avoid having to open them during the screening process.

**Items you purchase after the security checkpoint** have already been screened; you can bring these on the plane without further screening.

For an extensive list, go to the TSA website at [http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/traveling-food-or-gifts](http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information/traveling-food-or-gifts).

**Passport Validity** - Many international travelers may not realize that having an unexpired passport is sometimes not enough to enter certain foreign countries. U.S. citizens traveling on passports that expire in fewer than six months have increasingly been denied airline boarding or been detained upon arrival in certain foreign destinations, including popular European travel destinations in the Schengen area. This is not a new requirement, but it is only recently that the requirement has been more strictly enforced.

U.S. passport holders who will have less than six months validity on their passport for upcoming international travel through the end of 2015 should consider renewing their passports now, to avoid delays due to increased passport demand in the weeks before Thanksgiving. It is especially important to check the passports of any minors who may be traveling. Passports for minors have a shorter validity period (5 years).

The 26 European countries comprising the Schengen area require that U.S. passports are valid for at least 90 days beyond the traveler’s intended date of departure for visa-free short-term tourism, business trips, or transit. Adherence varies from country to country. For all other destinations worldwide, the U.S. Department of State recommends that those traveling ensure our [Country Specific Information](http://www.travel.state.gov) pages at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). For more information on U.S. passports, visit our website at [Passport Services](http://www.travel.state.gov). Or contact the U.S. Consulate at 02890 386104, Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5:00pm, except U.S. and UK holidays.

SOCIAL SECURITY: ARE YOU CLOSE TO RETIREMENT?

Are you close to retirement? Remember, if you have worked in the United States, you can claim Social Security retirement benefits from age 62 provided you meet all the requirements. You will find a wealth of information on our user-friendly website: [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

If you are retired, you can apply for benefit online at [http://www.ssa.gov/planners/about.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/planners/about.htm). It is fast and easy.

The online hours of operation are: Weekdays 5 AM – 1 AM Eastern Time (E T); Saturday 5 AM – 11 PM ET; Sunday 8 AM – 11:30 PM ET

If you file online, the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) will review your application within a few days. If they have all the information they need to adjudicate your claim, they will do so, and send you an award letter telling you how much you will get per month in benefits. If they need additional information and/or documentation, they will refer your claim to the Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) at U.S. Embassy London.

One thing you will not be able to do is set up a “My Social Security” account if you have a foreign address.

If you still need further assistance, remember, FBU is your local SSA office in the United Kingdom, and you can contact them via the contact form on our website –[http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/fbu/index.html](http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/fbu/index.html).
The U.S. Consulate in Belfast is sometimes contacted by U.S. citizens who have been refused entry into the UK. Often they are refused entry because they did not acquire the appropriate entry clearance from the British authorities in the US - commonly referred to as a visa - before traveling to the UK. UK visas are processed by the UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI), a part of the UK Home Office.

Perhaps surprisingly most of the cases that come to our attention involve U.S. citizens coming to Northern Ireland to volunteer at a charitable organization or church.

U.S. citizens intending to volunteer at a charitable organization or church in Northern Ireland must obtain a visa from the British authorities before they leave the U.S.

The charity/church must be licensed by UK Visas and Immigration. A register of licensed sponsors can be found at UK charity sponsors.

Organizations that want to apply to become a licensed sponsor will find information on the process at Guidance for Employers.

In order to apply for a visa, you must first have a Certificate of Sponsorship from a licensed sponsor. Information on the visa application process is at https://www.gov.uk/tier-5-temporary-worker-charity-worker-visa.

We would encourage any U.S. citizen travelling to the UK for any purpose other than a short visit for tourism or business to use the Check If You Need A Visa wizard at https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa/y before making travel arrangements.

**ABSENTEE VOTING WEEK—September 29—October 6, 2014**

Be an Active Voter by taking the necessary steps to vote in the 2014 U.S. elections and participating in Absentee Voting Week!

**In many states, the voter registration deadline for the November 2014 elections is October 6.** For some voters this might mean their paper voter registration and absentee ballot request must reach their local election officials by October 6. In order to vote in the November 2014 elections, all overseas U.S. citizens need to have completed a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) in 2014. Whether you are a first-time voter or have already received ballots and voted absentee in past elections, you must complete an FPCA **each year** to ensure you are able to participate in elections as an overseas absentee voter.

If you have already completed a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) in 2014 and requested electronic delivery of your ballot, you will be receiving your blank ballot or instructions for how to access your ballot soon if you have not already received it. To check the status of your absentee ballot request you should contact your local election officials in the United States or check the status of your registration via your state's voter registration verification website.
ULSTER AMERICAN WOMENS CLUB (UAWC)

Announcement from the Ulster American Women’s Club: The Ulster American Women’s Club is a group of ladies hailing from all over the U.S. who have found themselves living in Northern Ireland. Some are here short term while others have been here for decades, but all are equally excited about connecting with fellow Americans and exploring our new home away from home.

We meet up regularly, with this quarter's activities scheduled to include monthly coffee mornings, book club evenings, and chances to further explore Northern Ireland. In October, join us for a family friendly Day in Derry, Coffee Chat in Craigavon, and Book Club in Belfast. In November, join us for a coffee morning in Templepatrick, book club in Belfast and a Thanksgiving luncheon in Ballyhackamore. In December, we will celebrate together with a festive coffee morning and Christmas party for those unable to return home for the holidays.

For more details on the events, please sign up to our monthly newsletter by emailing Christy McAllister (memphisqueen@hotmail.com) or join the private UAWC Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/groups/UAWClub/). We look forward to seeing you soon!

MEDI CARE COVERAGE OUTSIDE THE U.S.

Medicare coverage outside the United States is limited. In most situations, Medicare won't pay for health care or supplies you get outside the United States. The term “outside the United States” means anywhere other than the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands. There are some exceptions that would allow coverage outside the United States under Original Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and/or Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance), outlined on the Medicare Fact Sheet. Find out more about the Fact Sheet at Medicare Fact Sheet June 2014. There is more information on their website at Medicare.

VISA NEWS: IMMIGRANT VISA LOTTERY (DV-2016)

Some of you may have family or friends who are interested in immigrating to the U.S.

An annual Diversity Immigration Program, commonly known as the “Visa Lottery”, makes a number of immigrant visas available each year by random selection to people from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. For fiscal year 2016, 50,000 visas will be available.

Eligibility to apply for this Program is determined by a person’s place of birth, not by citizenship. People born in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland are eligible to apply. For a complete list of countries/areas by region whose natives are eligible, refer to the DV Instructions.

Applicants must meet the education/work requirements of the DV program. Again for details of those requirements, refer to the DV Instructions.

Application/Registration for the lottery is online only at www.dvlottery.state.gov between October 1, 2014 and November 3, 2014.

Note: There is no cost to register for the DV Program.

For full DV-2016 details, visit the website at DV Instructions.

Be advised that scams surrounding the Diversity Visa program are numerous. Please read this Fraud Warning.

“The E-DV system will open for applications beginning noon Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on October 1, 2014 and ending at noon Eastern Standard Time (EST) on November 3, 2014.”
CHRISTMAS EVENTS in
NORTHERN IRELAND


A Magical Christmas - December 13-22, 2014 - Belfast City Zoo - Come and meet Santa in his grotto and take part in a range of activities. For further details, visit Belfast Zoo Christmas event.

Santa's Christmas Grotto - A great family day out at The Argory. Come take a magical journey with Santa and Mrs. Claus. More info at Santa’s Grotto.

Disclaimer: Listing of events and performances is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed but the U.S. Consulate accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

THE CULTURE SPOTLIGHT

The U.S. Consulate General often provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Queens Festival, Belfast - October 16–November 1, 2014—Various venues—Ireland’s renowned international arts and music festival returns for more stellar performances and many never-seen before exhibits. Details at http://www.belfastfestival.com/.

Halloween Family Festival - Ulster Folk & Transport Museum—October 29-31, 2014 - the ghouls and goblins come out to play at the famous transport museum! Book tickets and find out more at http://www.nmni.com/uftm/What-s-on/Events/Halloween-Family-Festival.

Banks of the Foyle Hallowe'en Carnival - October 29–November 3, 2014 - One of Europe’s biggest Halloween events. Check it out at Derry Halloween.

Service and Sacrifice - November 8-9, 2014 - A weekend of events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. More details at www.firstards.org.uk or telephone 02891 811802.
Halloween History

Virtually all present Halloween traditions can be traced to the ancient Celtic day of the dead. Halloween is a holiday of many mysterious customs, but each one has a history, or at least a story behind it. The wearing of costumes and roaming from door to door demanding treats can be traced to the Celtic period and the first few centuries of the Christian era, when it was thought that the souls of the dead were out and around, along with fairies, witches, and demons.

As the centuries wore on, people began dressing like these dreadful creatures, performing antics in exchange for food and drink. This practice is called mumming, from which the practice of trick-or-treating evolved.

To this day, witches, ghosts, and skeleton figures of the dead are among the favorite disguises. Halloween also retains some features that harken back to the original harvest holiday of Samhain, such as the customs of bobbing for apples and carving vegetables, as well as the fruits, nuts, and spices cider associated with the day.

Veteran's Day
is November 11, 2014

Originally called Armistice Day, it honors Americans who served in World War I. It falls on November 11, the day the war ended in 1918, but it now honors veterans of all wars in which the United States has fought. The president customarily places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

Famous Birthdays this Quarter!

- Jimmy Carter - October 1, 1924 - Former U.S. President
- Bill Gates - October 28, 1955 - Founder of Microsoft
- Mark Twain - November 30, 1835 - Writer and Humorist
- Brad Pitt - December 18, 1963 - Actor
- Steven Spielberg - December 18, 1946 - Film Director

Color in the Trick-or-Treaters as they head out on Halloween!