

# American Citizen

A newsletter by the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section for American Citizens in Zimbabwe.



## Special points of interest:

- \* Make sure you register your presence in Zimbabwe online using ESTA at <http://step.state.gov>.
- \* Complete the Social Security enforcement questionnaire annually.
- \* Remember children's birth certificate when travelling through South Africa

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## American Citizen Services Hours

To better serve our U.S. citizen community and decrease wait times, we are moving to appointment-based services. Beginning September 1, 2015, Consular Section hours will change to the following for routine services:

**Monday 13:30 – 15:30, Walk-in hours for passport and notarial services**

**Tuesday 13:30 – 15:30, Passport, Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and notarial services by appointment only**

**Thursday 13:30 – 15:30, Passport, Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) and notarial services by appointment only**

Please note that due to the complexity of CRBA applications, we can only accommodate these cases by appointment. The section will process CRBA applications only on Tuesdays and Thursdays. To make an appointment, please visit our website: <http://harare.usembassy.gov>

and click on "U.S. Citizen Services."

If there is a life or death emergency during business hours, call the Consular Section at +263 250 593 or a Duty Officer outside of business hours by calling +263 772 559 727. U.S. citizens may also send a WhatsApp text to +263 772 124 896 in an emergency. For general questions, you may also email the Consular Section at [ConsularHarare@state.gov](mailto:ConsularHarare@state.gov).

## Elimination of Visa Page Inserts



Effective January 1, 2016, the Department will eliminate the consular service of supplemental 24-page Visa Page Inserts for passports. To mitigate the impact of this coming change, applicants at overseas posts are receiving 52-page passports starting October 1, 2014. Requests for VPIs on Form DS-4085 will only be accepted for current (legacy) passports until December 31, 2015.

The determination to eliminate VPIs was made after considering document utility, cost effectiveness, customer service, internal controls, security, international practice, and operational factors. While the Department understands frequent travelers may be inconvenienced by this change, we are phasing out VPIs because they pose vulnerabilities to the physical security of the U.S. passport and to the issuance process.

Beginning October 1, 2014, ahead of the elimination of supplemental Visa Page Inserts, the U.S. Embassy, Harare began to issue 52-page passports. As of that date, the Embassy stopped accepting requests for the 28-page standard passports.

Please be aware of these changes as you plan your travel for the coming year. In line with the changes, the form DS-4085 (for adding supplemental Visa Page Inserts) will be decommissioned starting January 1, 2016, and will not be available to the public. New supplemental Visa Page Inserts will no longer be added to any books (legacy or new). The elimination of visa pages will have the following benefits:

- \* The ePassport integrates the latest concepts in electronic document protection. One of these measures preventing unauthorized reading of ePassports is adding RF block-

ing material to the ePassport cover.

- \* The Next Generation Passport will be produced in two book sizes, 26 pages and 50 pages.

As of October 2014, 52-page passport books are being issued to all applicants applying at overseas posts at no extra cost. This policy aims to lessen the burden that may be placed on frequent travelers who need more pages and those customers who may need to update residence permits or foreign entry/exit visas to comply with foreign country immigration practices.

**SOCIAL SECURITY TALK: JP Morgan Chase Terminates Direct Benefit Card Program**



**The Direct Express® card is a debit card you can use to access your benefits. And you don't need a bank account. With the Direct Express® card program, federal benefit payments will be deposited directly into card accounts.**

American Citizens receiving Federal benefits abroad should note the impending changes to the JP Morgan Chase Embassy DBC (Direct Benefit Card) program for distribution of SSA payments. JP Morgan Chase, the financial institution that was responsible for handling social security benefits of beneficiaries worldwide, has notified us that they are discontinuing the Embassy DBC program for distribution of SSA payments. This means that SSA will no longer be able to send payments to JPM benefit card accounts after July 31, 2015. June payments will be the last payment that will be credited to direct benefit card accounts.

In order to continue to receive uninterrupted payments, it is very important that you make alternative arrangements to receive your funds. The US government strongly encourages you to receive funds via electronic means whenever possible as this is the most efficient and effective means

to receive payment reliably month after month.

Social Security beneficiaries overseas have some options for receiving their benefits via direct deposit:

1. Direct Express – You can enroll for a U.S. electronic funds transfer account through Direct Express. The Direct Express® card is a debit card you can use to access your benefits. And you don't need a bank account. With the Direct Express® card program, federal benefit payments will be deposited directly into card accounts. You can use the card to make purchases, pay bills or get cash at some locations. Note: Cardholders can obtain teller withdrawals over-the-counter at MasterCard member institutions. SSA does not have a list of the institutions. The card may not work at all locations, including ATMs, outside the U.S. The card is serviced by the U.S. bank Comerica and not SSA. Apply for a Direct Express Debit

card directly by visiting the following website:

<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=https://>

[www.usdirectexpress.com/edcfdtclient/index.html](http://www.usdirectexpress.com/edcfdtclient/index.html)

This option is administered by Comerica from the US, and follows basically the same crediting process as Chase before. Please note that the enrollment process must be initiated and authenticated by the applicant only. Enroll in DIRECT EXPRESS by calling 1-800-333-1795.

2. Direct Deposit to a U.S. Bank Account – You will need to supply the U.S. account information to the Federal Benefits Unit. The best way to provide your U.S. Bank information to the Federal Benefits Unit is by contacting the American Citizen Services Unit at the U.S. Embassy Harare or sending an email to [consularharare@state.gov](mailto:consularharare@state.gov).

**DO YOU RECEIVE BENEFITS ABROAD? Complete The Annual Social Security Foreign Enforcement Questionnaire.**

SSA contacts beneficiaries outside the United States annually or biennially (every two years) to verify their current status if they have a foreign address on record. In addition to relying on beneficiaries (a retired person or family member) to report events that may affect their benefits, Social Security mails these questionnaires to the beneficiaries receiving their own benefits or to the repre-

sentative payees (person receiving benefits on behalf of a minor or disabled person) in May/June of each year to the foreign mailing address on their record at the Social Security Administration. Selected beneficiaries receive the form with an envelope to the SSA facility in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. SSA sends a follow-up notice in October and December if the completed questionnaire

has not been received. Failure to provide the required completed questionnaire will result in suspension of benefits effective the payment due on February 3. Important Information for February 3 Benefit Payments If your Social Security benefit is not in your bank account on February 3rd, or your check is not received by February 8th, your benefit may be suspended for failure to complete

and return the Foreign Enforcement Questionnaire form SSA-7162 or SSA-7161. Where to mail your questionnaire: Form SSA-7161 mail to: Social Security Administration P.O. Box 7161 Wilkes Barre, PA 18767-7161

## REMINDER: New South African Regulations for Travelling With Children



### New South African Rules on Travel with Minor Children

Beginning June 1, 2015, new rules for traveling to and from South Africa with minor children went into effect.

These rules apply to children who are entering or departing South Africa. Therefore, the travelers should obtain the required documents in all circumstances throughout the stay of the child in South Africa.

The South African regulations use the term “unabridged birth certificate.” The exact contents of unabridged birth certificate vary among the different jurisdictions that issue birth certificates (countries, states, counties, cities, etc.), but the key distinction between an “abridged” and “unabridged” birth certificate is that an unabridged birth certificate identifies the parents of the child. **All documents must be original or copies certified as a true copy of the original by a commissioner of oaths or the equivalent commissioning authority.**

- **Where BOTH parents are travelling with a child, parents must produce an unabridged birth certificate of the child reflecting the particulars of the parents of the child.**

- **In the case of ONE parent travelling with a child, he or she must carry an unabridged birth certificate and:**

(i) Consent in the form of an affidavit (issued no earlier than 3 months prior to

travel dates) from the other parent registered as a parent on the birth certificate of the child authorizing him or her to enter into or depart from South Africa with the child he or she is travelling with (see [sample affidavit of consent](#));

(ii) Copies of the identity documents or passports of the parents or legal guardian of the child;

(iii) A court order granting full parental responsibilities and rights or legal guardianship in respect of the child, if he or she is the parent or legal guardian of the child; or

(iv) Where applicable, a death certificate of the other parent registered as a parent of the child on the birth certificate,

Parents should note that in all circumstances, your child will need his/her long-form (unabridged with biographic information of both parents) birth certificate, as well as a passport to enter South Africa.

**Note! Although the Department of Home Affairs states that these rules do not apply when directly transiting through South Africa, the embassy has anecdotal evidence that all airlines are requiring documents at check-in at international airports, and denying boarding to passengers without documentation—even when only transiting South Africa.**

## New Vice-Consul



Meet Joshua McCaleb, our new Vice-Consul, who joined the Consular team in March 2015. Joshua primarily works on the Non-Immigrant Visa portfolio.

Hired by the State Department in 2010, Joshua has served previously in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and Islamabad, Pakistan.

Joshua enjoys playing football (soccer) for Obama Boys F.C. and cooking for his wife, who is also a Foreign Service Officer. Joshua is thrilled to be in Zimbabwe and looks forward to serving the lively U.S. citizen community here.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FILING TAXES ABROAD

The IRS guidance is posted under Federal Benefits and Obligations on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). U.S. embassies and consulates cannot mail tax returns on behalf of U.S. taxpayers living abroad through the diplomatic pouch or other Department facilities.

### 1. Who Must File?

All U.S. citizens and resident aliens must file a U.S. individual income tax return, even if they permanently live outside the United States and may not owe any tax because of income exclusion or tax credit.

### 2. When is the 2014 Federal Tax Return Due?

Due date for Form 1040: April 15, 2015

Extensions:

- An automatic extension to June 15, 2015, is granted for taxpayers living outside the United States and Puerto Rico. No form is required; write "Taxpayer Resident Abroad" at the top of your tax return.
  - o Caution: This extension applies only for filing your tax return, not for payment. If you owe any taxes, you're required to pay by April 15, 2015. Interest and penalties

will generally be applied if payment is made after this date.

- To request an additional extension to October 15, 2015, use Form 4868.
- Caution: This extension applies only for filing your tax return, not for payment. If you owe any taxes, you're required to pay by April 15, 2015. Interest and penalties will generally be applied if payment made after this date.

### 3. Can I Mail My Return and Payment?

You can mail your tax return and payment using the postal service or approved private delivery services. A list of approved delivery services is available on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov). If you mail a return from outside the United States, the date of filing is the postmark date. However, if you mail a payment, separately or with your return, your payment is not considered received until the date of actual receipt.

### 4. Can I Electronically File My Return?

You can prepare and e-file your income tax return, in many cases for free. Participating software companies make their products available

through the IRS. E-File options are listed on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

### 5. What Forms May I Need?

- 1040, U.S. Individual Income Tax Return
  - o Instructions to Form 1040
  - o 1116, Foreign Tax Credit
  - o 2013 Instructions to Form 1116 – 2014 instructions will be available soon, please check on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)
- 2350, Application for Extension of Time to File U.S. Income Tax Return (for U.S. citizens and residents abroad)
- 2555, Foreign Earned Income Exclusion
  - o Instructions to Form 2555

### 6. How Do I Pay My Taxes?

You must pay your taxes in U.S. dollars.

- Direct pay. You can pay online with a direct transfer from your U.S. bank account using Direct Pay, the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, or by a U.S. debit or credit card. You can also pay by phone using the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System or by a U.S. debit or credit card.
- Foreign wire transfers. If you have a U.S. bank account, you can use the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System. If

you do not have a U.S. bank account, ask whether your financial institution has a U.S. affiliate that can help you make same-day wire transfers.

- Foreign electronic payments. International taxpayers who do not have a U.S. bank account may transfer funds from their foreign bank account directly to the IRS for payment of their tax liabilities.

### 7. Where Can I Get Help?

Contact the International Taxpayer Service Call Center by phone or fax. The International Call Center is open Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (Eastern Time).

Tel: 267-941-1000 (not toll-free)  
Fax: 267-941-1055  
You may also contact the IRS office in London, Paris, or Frankfurt

## Registering with Smart Traveller Enrollment Program

The Consular section urges all American Citizens visiting or residing in Zimbabwe to Register their presence in Zimbabwe online using the Smart Traveller Enrollment Program (STEP). The STEP website address is:

<http://step.state.gov>

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens/nationals who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming

trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to Subscribe to receive updates on Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and other routine information for a particular country.

If you are registered with the Embassy and you are not receiving email updates from the Embassy, please send an email with your name, email and telephone number to [Consularharare@state.gov](mailto:Consularharare@state.gov) so that your record with the Embassy can be updated