



AMERICAN CONNECTIONS

AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES NEWSLETTER

La Paz, Bolivia

DECEMBER 2012

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Contact Us

Phones:

Regular Hours 216-8246
After Hours (Emergencies Only) 715-33713

E-mail:

consularlapaz@state.gov

Web Page:

<http://bolivia.usembassy.gov>

Hours of Operation

LA PAZ

Mondays through
Thursdays
08:00 to 12:00
13:00 to 15:00

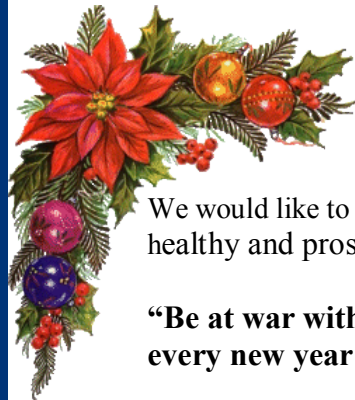
COCHABAMBA

Mondays, Tuesdays and
Thursdays
8:30 to 12:30
Wednesdays
13:30 to 17:30

SANTA CRUZ

Mondays through
Thursdays
9:00 to 12:00

(except U.S. and local holidays)



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

We would like to wish you and your family a very happy holidays and a healthy and prosperous 2012!

“Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man” — Benjamin Franklin

Holiday Travel Tips

We all know that the holiday season is peak travel time. Although airports will be crowded, that doesn't have to ruin your holiday travel experience. Whether you are packing your bags for the sunny beaches of the Caribbean or headed to the snowy slopes of Switzerland, we hope you will take advantage of the following tips to help make your holiday travels safe, smooth, and stress-free.

Enroll in STEP

Record your travel plans with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), a free online service that allows us to better assist you if there is a family emergency in the United States or a crisis where you are traveling. You'll also receive updated travel information for countries you plan to visit. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

Apply early for your passport

Did you know that a U.S. passport book or passport card is now required for land and sea travel to Mexico and the Caribbean? If you do not have a passport and you plan to travel outside of the United States this holiday season, apply for your passport now. The current processing time for a passport at the U.S. Embassy La Paz is two weeks. [Passport application forms](#) are available on our website.

Once you receive your passport, sign it and fill in the emergency information

Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport. Most passports are valid for ten years. Write the contact information in pencil so you can change it as needed over time.



Holiday Travel Tips (Cont.)

Leave copies of itinerary, passport data page, and credit card

Sure, you've enrolled in STEP so that your family and the State Department can contact you in an emergency. But you should also leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends at home. Leave a copy of your credit card too; in an emergency, the credit card company can help your family locate you.

Check your overseas medical insurance coverage

Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance. Medical treatment and evacuations can cost thousands of dollars – some countries won't allow you in through customs unless you can show proof of medical insurance!

Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws

While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. Our website has useful [safety and other information](#) about the countries you will visit. You can also download the [Smart Traveler iPhone app](#) to have the country information at your fingertips.

Find the closest U.S. embassy or consulate

Take a moment to locate the nearest [U.S. embassy or consulate](#) in your destination country. This can come in handy if you need the assistance of a consular officer.

Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime

Practice the same safety tips you would in any unfamiliar place: do not wear clothing or jewelry that will attract attention and do not carry excessive amounts of money; do not leave luggage unattended in public areas; do not accept packages from strangers and do not travel with anything you'd hate to lose.

Contact us in an emergency

We are here to help you. Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the United States are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. [Contact information](#) for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on our website, or you can call the Office of Overseas Citizen Services for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747 (if calling from the U.S. or Canada), or 202-501-4444 (if calling from overseas).

From the Bureau of Consular Affairs to you, we wish you good cheer this holiday season and safe travels!

Consular Web Chats

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in La Paz began a series of monthly web chats in October of this year. Topics to date included general questions on non-immigrant visas, the diversity visa lottery and American citizen services. Upcoming web chats are:

Voting Abroad in the U.S. Elections on January 11
Immigrant Visas on February 15

For further information and to participate in these web chats please visit the U.S. Embassy La Paz Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/usdos.bolivia>. You can also friend us for other information about Embassy events!

2012 ELECTION CYCLE – BEGINS NOW

Be an active voter. Start thinking about your participation in the U.S. 2012 elections today!

The Consular Section staff at the U.S. Embassy La Paz is ready to assist with completing your Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) -- the form you need to complete **this year** to participate in the 2012 elections as an overseas absentee voter. Our purpose is to inform and educate you about your voting rights, to ensure you are able to exercise your right to participate in elections for federal offices (President, Vice President, Senator, and Representative), and to assist you with voting in state or local elections, if allowed by your state.

New absentee voting laws are in effect for the 2012 elections. You will no longer automatically receive ballots based on a previous absentee ballot request. All U.S. citizens outside the United States who want to vote by absentee ballot in the 2012 primary and general elections must complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) every year if they wish to vote from abroad. States are now required to send out ballots 45 days before an election. No matter what state you vote in, you can now ask your local election officials to provide your blank ballots to you electronically (by email, internet download, or fax, depending on your state). You can now also confirm your registration and ballot delivery on-line. Be sure to include your email address on the form to take advantage of the electronic ballot delivery option. This is the fastest and most reliable way to receive your ballot on time, and we strongly recommend every overseas voter take advantage of it. Learn more at the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) website www.FVAP.gov.

Beginning in January 2012, presidential primaries will be held in the states of New Hampshire (January 10), South Carolina (January 21), Florida (January 31), Missouri (February 7), Wisconsin (February 21), Arizona (February 28), and Michigan (February 28). Other states will follow throughout the spring and summer. Voter registration deadlines for primaries are as early as January 3, 2012. Note: Participation in party presidential caucuses by overseas voters is not protected by federal law and requires in-person attendance in most cases. If the party you are affiliated with selects presidential nominees by caucus in your state, contact state party officials for further information.

You can obtain a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) at [FVAP's website](http://www.FVAP.gov). The FPCA is accepted by all local election officials in all U.S. states and territories. It allows you to register to vote and request absentee ballots for all elections for federal offices (presidential and state primaries, run-off, special, and the November general elections) during the course of the year. An online wizard will help you complete the form. Depending on your state's voting requirements, you then either send in the FPCA electronically or mail it to your local election officials. To mail it, print out the completed FPCA and the (U.S.) postage-paid envelope containing the address of your local election officials. If you bring in your forms or ballots to us, we will mail them back home for you without you having to pay for international mail. If it's easier for you to use Bolivia's postal system, be sure to affix sufficient postage and allow sufficient time for international mail delivery.

In order to be able to submit forms and ballots to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in La Paz or at the Consular Agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz to be returned to the U.S. via U.S. postal service, please schedule an appointment to visit our offices through our web page at <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

Even if your state does not have a presidential primary in the early months of 2012, it is important that you submit a new Federal Post Card Application this and every January to receive all absentee ballots for which you are eligible. By applying early, you also allow enough time for election officials to contact you and resolve any questions or problems with your registration/ballot request.

Remember that your vote counts, and that many U.S. elections within the past ten years have been decided by a margin of victory of less than 0.1%. All states are required to count every absentee ballot as long as it's valid and reaches local election officials by the absentee ballot receipt deadline.

Be an Educated Voter. Check out the FVAP links page for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues. Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues are widely available and easy to obtain via numerous websites such as [Project Smart Voter](http://ProjectSmartVoter.org). You can also read national and hometown newspapers online, or search the Internet to locate articles and information. For information about election dates and deadlines, subscribe to FVAP's Voting Alerts (vote@fvap.gov). FVAP also shares Voting Alerts via [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fvap) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/fvap).

If you have any questions about registering to vote overseas, please contact the U.S. Embassy in La Paz Voting Assistance Officer at 216-8246 or at consularlapaz@state.gov.

Reopening of the U.S. Consular Agency in Cochabamba

The United States Embassy in La Paz is pleased to announce the reopening of the Consular Agency in Cochabamba. The Agency resumed normal operations to provide American Citizen Services on April 27, 2011.

U.S. Consular Agencies provide routine service including passport renewals (and extra passport pages), birth registrations, notarial services, and federal benefits. Applicants who wish to receive services at the Consular Agency in Cochabamba, the Consular Agency in Santa Cruz, or at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz must make an appointment online at <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

Please note that Consular Agency staff are explicitly prohibited from providing any visa related information to the public. As a result, no appointments will be available for visa inquiries. If you or someone you know has a question related to a visa matter, please direct the inquiry to consularlapaz@state.gov.

The hours for the Cochabamba Consular Agency are:

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays: 08:30 to 12:30

Wednesdays: 13:30 to 17:30

Only customers with appointments will be admitted into the consular agency in Cochabamba.

Changes to Notarial Services

Notarial services are now available at the Consular Agencies in Santa Cruz and Cochabamba as well as at the Embassy in La Paz. Please note that anyone requesting notarial services must make an appointment in advance. Only customers with appointments will be admitted into the Consular offices for all non-emergency matters.

Please note that documents translated from English to Spanish which will be used in Bolivia or a third country cannot be notarized at the U.S. Embassy or any of the Consular Agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz with the exception of documents which will be used for immigration purposes. Persons seeking this service will be required to provide evidence that the documents are for immigration purposes. Otherwise they will be directed to contact a Bolivian notary.

New Information Pages on Passport and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad

Although the application forms and final documents for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad are the same everywhere, U.S. embassies and consulates have different procedures to get them. If you haven't done so already, check our web site at <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov> to learn the local procedures.

Applying for a U.S. passport while *outside* the United States is a different process from applying for a U.S. passport while *inside* the United States. Although the application forms, supporting documentation, fees and finished products are the same everywhere, each U.S. Embassy and Consulate has different procedures for submitting and processing documents.

In an effort to standardize the information, the Department of State has created new [Passport](#) and [CRBA](#) pages which highlight the differences with procedures inside the United States. These pages can be found at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/living/living_5497.html and http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html



Redesigned Consular Reports of Birth Abroad

The Department of State is pleased to announce the introduction of a redesigned Consular Report of Birth Abroad. The redesigned CRBA, has been updated with a variety of state-of-the-art security features to help prevent fraud and identity theft.

If you are a U.S. citizen and the parent of a child born out of the United States, you will need to document your child's U.S. citizenship with a Consular Report of Birth Abroad. This document is used in the United States like a certified copy of a birth certificate, and it is acceptable evidence of citizenship for obtaining a passport and entering school. Although the application forms and final documents are the same everywhere, U.S. embassies and consulates have different procedures to get them. If you haven't done so already, check our website at <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov/citizenshipba.html> to learn the local rules. The U.S. Embassy and Consular Agencies will need you to make an appointment for this service at <http://bolivia.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

No matter where you apply, some things are the same in every country outside the United States. Here is what's standard everywhere:

You will use the same application form -(the DS-2029)- no matter where you apply for the "Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA)." Here's a link to the DS 2029 form: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/156216.pdf>

You will need all of the following:

- The child's foreign birth certificate.
- Proof of citizenship of the U.S. citizen parent(s). Your current passport is the preferred form of proof. Your U.S. birth certificate or naturalization certificate is also acceptable.
- Proof of the relationship between the U.S. citizen parent(s) and the child. Your child's birth certificate with both parents' names on it is the best form of proof.
- If you are married, we need to see proof. If you have prior marriages, we need to see proof of how those marriages ended.
- A statement from either U.S. citizen parent and evidence that she/he lived in the U.S. long enough to transmit citizenship to her/his child. The statement you give is called an Affidavit of Parentage, Physical Presence, and Support.

How you prove you were physically present will depend a lot on your situation. There is no one-size-fits-all answer. Some examples of acceptable evidence include school transcripts, old passports, income tax returns, utility bills in the name of the parent, employment records, military records, and or medical records. The more you can provide, the easier it will be for the consular officer to approve the CRBA.

The current fee for this service is \$100.

List of Upcoming Holidays To Be Observed by the U.S. Mission

The U.S. Embassy and the Consular Agencies will be closed on the following U.S. and Bolivian holidays:

Christmas Day (observed)	December 26
New Year's	January 1
New Year's Day (observed)	January 2
Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.	January 16
Plurinational State Day	January 22
Plurinational State Day (observed)	January 23
President's Day	February 20
Carnival	February 20-21