ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM

MARCH 2017

The monthly newsletter of the American Citizen Services Units of the U.S. Embassy Hanoi and the U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

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Upcoming U.S. Citizens Services Visits

Officials from the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit in Ho Chi Minh City will offer consular services in **March** at the following locations:

Can Tho

Date: Thursday, 9 March 2017 (Thứ Năm, ngày 9 tháng 3 năm 2017)

Place: Victoria Hotel, Cai Khe Ward, Ninh Kieu District, Can Tho City (Phường Cái Khế, Quận Ninh Kiều, Tp. Cần Thơ)

Time: from 09:00am to 12:00pm

Da Nang

Date: Thursday, 30 March 2017 (Thứ Năm, ngày 30 tháng 3 năm 2017)

Place: Bread Of Life, 4 Dong Da, Thuan Phuoc, Hai Chau, Da Nang. (4 Đống Đa, Thuận Phước, Hải Châu, Đà Nẵng)

Time: from 9:00am to 12:00pm

No appointments are necessary. Consulate officials will offer notarial services, deliver federal benefits checks, and U.S. citizens will be able to apply for U.S. passports.

Federal benefits annuitants who have not been contacted by SSA or consulate for the stop of quarterly physical presence please come to finalize the paperwork.

At this time, officials will not be interviewing for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. Visa and immigration services will not be provided. Only the services listed will be available during the visits.

For additional information concerning applying for U.S. passports and notary services please see our Website at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/

The ACS unit also has a planned services trip to Da Lat and Vung Tau in the next month. Please check our website for more information as it becomes available.

Upcoming Holiday Closures

The Embassy and Consulate will be closed on the following days:

* April 6– National Anniversary of Hung Kings

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2016 is available on -line at http://vn.usembassy.gov/holiday-calendar/

*Vietnamese Holiday
+American Holiday

This newsletter is also available on the U.S. Consulate's website at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/

Please pass this newsletter on to any other U.S. citizens in Vietnam and encourage them to enroll in STEP (https://step.state.gov/step/) to receive the newsletters in the future.

For Your Information

The Federal Voting Assistance Program

Just voted in November? Still traveling or living overseas? You should register and request your absentee ballot to vote again in 2017 to ensure your election office knows where to send your ballot for any upcoming special elections for federal office. Some states are also holding gubernatorial or other statewide elections this year.

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) recommends all overseas U.S. citizens send in a completed Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) early every year. The FPCA is the registration and ballot request form accepted by all states and territories.

You can use the FPCA online assistant, complete the fillable PDF version, or pick up a hardcopy version from your nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Be sure your contact information is accurate in case your election office needs to reach you.

If you'd like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process please go to FVAP.gov or call FVAP at 703-588-1584 (toll free 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584) or email vote@fvap.gov.

Attention U.S. citizens!

Beginning January 1, 2017, the IRS will require that all (Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) not used on a federal tax return at least once in the last three years will no longer be valid for use on a tax return. Find more information, please visit our website https://vn.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/internal-revenue-service-u-s-taxes/ or at IRS.gov.

For the info in Vietnamese, please go to: vn.usembassy.gov/vi/u-s-citizen-services-vi/internal-revenue-service-u-s-taxes-vi/

Glasses are no longer accepted in passport or visa photos. For more info, visit: Nonimmigrant Visa, Immigrant Visa, and Passport pages on U.S. Mission Vietnam's website.

Special Elections

California Special Primary Election Scheduled for April 4

The State of California will conduct a special primary election on Tuesday, April 4, 2017, for the 34th Congressional District to replace Xavier Becerra who was confirmed as Attorney General of California. This district consists of part of Los Angeles County.

If no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, a special general election will be held on June 6.

Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), the registration and ballot request form accepted by all States and territories. Complete, sign and send the FPCA to your election office. If you are a California resident from the 34th Congressional District, register and request an absentee ballot today starting at FVAP.gov.

If you are not currently registered, your FPCA needs to be received by March 20; if you are currently registered, your FPCA ballot request must be received by March 28.

Detailed instructions and county contact information is available at (fvap.gov/california).

Kansas Special Election Scheduled for April 11

The State of Kansas will conduct a special election on Tuesday, April 11, 2017, for the 4th Congressional District to replace Mike Pompeo who resigned from the U.S. House of Representatives when he was confirmed and formally sworn in as the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. This district consists of all or part of Barber, Butler, Chautauqua, Comanche, Cowley, Edwards, Elk, Greenwood, Harper, Harvey, Kingman, Kiowa, Pawnee, Pratt, Sedgwick, Stafford and Sumner Counties.

If you are a Kansas resident from the 4th Congressional District, register and request an absentee ballot today starting at FVAP.gov. Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), the registration and ballot request form accepted by all States and territories. Complete, sign and send the FPCA to your election office.

If you are not currently registered, your FPCA needs to be received by March 21; if you are currently registered, your FPCA ballot request must be received by April 11.

Detailed instructions and county contact information is available at (fvap.gov/kansas).

If you'd like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process please go to FVAP.gov or call FVAP at 703-588-1584 (toll free 1-800-438-VOTE or DSN 425-1584) or email (vote@fvap.gov).

Georgia Special Election Scheduled for April 18

The State of Georgia will conduct a special election on Tuesday, April 18, 2017, for the 6th Congressional District to replace Tom Price who was confirmed as the U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary. This district consists of parts of northern Atlanta and parts of surrounding counties such as Cobb, Fulton, and Dekalb.

Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), the registration and ballot request form accepted by all States and territories. Complete, sign and send the FPCA to your election office. If you are a Georgia resident from the 6th Congressional District, register and request an absentee ballot today starting at FVAP.gov.

If you are not currently registered, your FPCA needs to be received by March 20; if you are currently registered, your FPCA ballot request must be received by April 14.

Detailed instructions and county contact information is available at (fvap.gov/georgia).

Vietnam Extends Visa Validity for U.S. Citizens Traveling For Business and Tourism

On April 9, the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam approved a plan to issue 12-month, multiple-entry visas to American citizens who travel temporarily for business or tourism. The new reciprocity arrangement, entered into force on 29 May 2016, will benefit American and Vietnamese tourists and business travelers, generating new opportunities for trade, investment and tourism. The successful conclusion of the arrangement underscores the commitment of the U.S. and Vietnam to improve the bilateral relationship by expanding existing trade and economic opportunities and developing people-to-people ties.

Although the agreement officially took effect on May 29, 2016, Vietnam has not yet completed full routine implementation. As a result, currently visa fees and length of validity of visas for U.S. citizens vary from place to place. Vietnamese embassies and consulates are currently issuing 12-month multiple-entry visas to U.S. citizens, but visa fees vary. Shorter-term visas are available at some Vietnamese embassies and consulates.

We welcome feedback from American citizens applying for 12-month visas. Information about their experience with the application process will help us to better work with the GVN towards full implementation of the arrangement.

To share your experience, please contact us at ACShanoi@state.gov .

E– Visa Information

As of February 1, 2017, U.S. citizens will be able to apply for a 30-day single-entry e-visa. The Vietnamese government has announced a two-year pilot plan to launch an electronic visa system for foreign tourists visiting the country.

Applicants are required to complete a form available on two separate websites (one in Vietnamese and the other in English) run by the Ministry of Public Security. They will receive an application code and will be asked to pay a non-refundable fee online. It will take three working days for tourists to find out if their applications have been approved or not, according to the directive. Successful applicants will be able to print off their e-visas to present when they arrive.

Visitors can enter at any of Vietnam's eight international airports, including Tan Son Nhat in Ho Chi Minh City, Noi Bai in Hanoi and Da Nang in the central region. They can also arrive via land borders at 13 international border gates, and via sea at seven ports across the country. For more details, please visit the following website:

https://evisa.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn/en_US/web/guest/trang-chu-ttdt.

Zika Virus Information

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam informs U.S. citizens that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued Travel Guidance for Vietnam regarding the risk of Zika virus infection. Zika virus is **endemic**. The risk of Zika to travelers, especially pregnant women, in endemic countries is likely lower (but not zero) than in areas where Zika is newly introduced and spreading widely. Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should discuss their travel plans with their medical provider and consider postponing nonessential travel to Vietnam. Men whose partners are pregnant or are considering pregnancy should talk to their medical provider about **CDC's recommendations** on how to avoid sexual transmission of Zika infection to their partners.

The CDC has concluded that the Zika virus is a cause of **microcephaly** and other severe fetal brain defects in some fetuses and babies born to some infected mothers. Zika also rarely may lead to the **Guillain-Barré syndrome** or other neurological conditions, which can affect individuals of any age or sex.

Zika virus is typically transmitted by the day biting Aedes aegypti mosquito, but there have been confirmed cases of transmission through sexual contact and blood transfusion. CDC reports that travel to elevations higher than 2,000 m (6,500 ft) above sea level is considered to have minimal likelihood for mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission, even within countries reporting active transmission.

For general information and the latest updates about Zika and steps to prevent mosquito bites and sexual exposure to the virus, please visit the **CDC website**.

For further information:

- See the **State Department's travel website** for the **Worldwide Caution**, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and ***Vietnam Country Specific Information.***

- Enroll in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** (**STEP**)to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. Please remember to complete the privacy waiver located in the **STEP**registration as well; should the need arise, the Embassy can then contact the persons or offices that you designate.

- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Vietnam, located at 7 Lang Ha Street, Hanoi, Vietnam, at (84) (4) 3850 5000 from Vietnam or (+84) (4) 3850 5000 internationally, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After hours emergency telephone (84) (4) 3850 5000/3850 5105 from Vietnam or (+84) 4 3850 5000/3850 5105 internationally

- Contact the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, located at 4 Le Duan Blvd, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, at (84) (8) 3520-4200 from Vietnam or (+84) (8) 3520 4200 internationally, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 1:00p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens, please call the U.S. Consulate General 24/7 at (08) 3520-4200 within Vietnam, or (011) (84) (8) 3520-4200 internationally

- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

- Follow us on **Twitter** and **Facebook**.

United States Embassy Hanoi

United States Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City

Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens

October 11, 2016

The State Department alerts U.S. citizens to the South Pacific Tropical Cyclone Season, which begins November 1, 2016, and ends April 30, 2017. This Travel Alert expires on April 30, 2017.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommends that people living or traveling in regions prone to tropical storms and tropical cyclones be prepared. Minor tropical cyclones can develop into typhoons very quickly, limiting the time available for a safe evacuation. Inform family and friends of your whereabouts and remain in close contact with your tour operator, hotel staff, transportation providers (airlines, cruise lines, etc.), and local officials for evacuation instructions during a weather emergency. For further information about tropical cyclone preparedness, please visit our Tropical Season – Know Before You Go and Natural Disaster webpages, and NOAA's Tropical Cyclones Preparedness Guide.

While we do our best to assist U.S. citizens in a crisis, local authorities bear primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of people living or traveling in their countries. For more information, please visit our What the State Department Can and Can't Do in a Crisis page.

For further information on tropical cyclone warnings in the South Pacific region, consult the Joint Typhoon Warning Center, the National Weather Service's Central Pacific Hurricane Center, the Government of Fiji's Regional Specialized Meteorological Center, or the Government of Australia's Bureau of Meteorology.

For further information:

- See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Country Specific Information for your destination.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (**STEP**)to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Check the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate with consular responsibilities for the territory you will be visiting.
- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).
- Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Air Quality Monitors in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulate have installed air quality monitors to measure PM 2.5 particulates as an indication of the air quality. You can read more information and check the current reading for Hanoi and for Ho Chi Minh City at: https://vn.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/embassy/air-quality-monitor/ for Hanoi, and https://vn.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/ho-chi-minh-city/air-quality-monitor/ for Ho Chi Minh City.

For more details on air quality index, please follow the link to the Environmental Protection Agency's ***Air Now*** website. The AQI can be observed either by clicking on the location on the map, or by selecting Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City in the "Select a City" option on the upper right part of the page. The page provides AQI over the last 24 hour period as well as pollutant concentration and a downloadable historical document.

Please note that citywide analysis cannot be done with data from a single monitor. This data provides an accurate measure of the air quality in the section of each city close to the location of the monitor. The Vietnamese Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment also provides air quality data for Hanoi. You can view this information at http://www.cem.gov.vn/.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed a formula to convert PM 2.5 readings into an air quality index (AQI) value that can help inform health-related decisions. Meanings of AQI numerical values can be seen in the chart below. For more information on AQI and how it is

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numeri-cal Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be af-fected.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.

Travel Alerts and Warnings

The U.S. Department of State regularly issues travel alerts or travel warnings for various countries and regions. For information regarding all travel alerts and warnings, please go to this site: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness.

Travelling with pets?

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service launched a new web site to help international travelers determine travel requirements for pets. For more info, please visit the site here.

How to Subscribe/Unsubscribe to this Newsletter

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City are sending this monthly newsletter via the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) as a public service to U.S. citizens in Vietnam.

If you are departing Vietnam after a long stay, please be sure to update your status in STEP: https://step.state.gov/step/

Updating your status if you move away from Vietnam will remove you from the mailing list for this newsletter and other Embassy and Consulate Messages for U.S. citizens in Vietnam.

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about the travel registration website, please send an e-mail to CASTEP@state.gov

Please note: Inclusion of Non-U.S. Government links or information does not imply endorsement of contents.

Services for U.S. Citizens

Ho Chi Minh City

The Consulate General in **Ho Chi Minh City** uses a service-by-appointment system. Please visit our Website at : https://vn.usembassy.gov/ to make an appointment to apply for a U.S. passport, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, and for notary services and authentications.

Those with genuine emergencies, such as the death, arrest, or life threatening illness of a U.S. citizen, can appear on a walk-in basis from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (except Vietnamese and American public holidays) or call us any time at (84-8) 3520-4200.

Every day we have a number of no-shows for routine services. If you make an appointment and find you cannot keep it, please log back into the appointment system and cancel the appointment so that the appointment slot will be available to another client.
If you are *picking up passports* or *Federal Benefits checks/correspondence* you do not need to make an appointment and can walk in for assistance between the hours of 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays. If you are submitting additional information related to a *Consular Report of Birth Abroad* case you can walk in for assistance between the hours of 1:15 – 2:00 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays.

Hanoi

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi uses a service-by-appointment system. Please visit our website at https://evisaforms.state.gov/Instructions/ACSSchedulingSystem.asp to make an appointment to apply for a U.S. passport, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, as well as for notary services.

Those with genuine emergencies, such as the death, arrest, or life threatening illness of a U.S. citizen, can appear on a walk-in basis from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday (except Vietnamese and American public holidays) or call us any time at (84-4) 3850-5000.

Every day we have a number of no-shows for routine services. If you make an appointment and find you cannot keep it, please log back into the appointment system and cancel the appointment so that the appointment slot will be available to another client.

If you are *picking up passports* or *Federal Benefits checks/correspondence* you do not need to make an appointment and can walk in for assistance between the hours of 8:30 – 16:30 p.m., Monday to Thursday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays. If you are submitting additional information related to a *Consular Report of Birth Abroad* case you can walk in for assistance between the hours of 1:15 – 2:00 p.m., Monday to Thursday, excluding Vietnamese and American holidays.

ALL APPOINTMENTS ARE FREE (no cost) FOR U.S. CITIZEN SERVICES, including passports, notary services, and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad. The website also has detailed instructions about service costs and required documents/procedures for each service. WE ARE DEDICATED TO FIGHTING FRAUD. If you wish to report fraudulent activity related to any of the Consular services we provide, please contact our Consular Fraud Prevention Unit at HCMCFPU@state.gov for Ho Chi Minh City or HanoiFPU@state.gov for Hanoi.