ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM

JUNE 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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Upcoming U.S. Citizens Services Visits and Holiday 1

Zika Virus Info 2

For Your Information 3

Special Elections 4

Visa Validity/ E–Visa Information 5

Air Quality Monitors 6

Typhoon Season Tips 7

Travel Alerts and Warnings/ Subscribe/ Unsubscribe Info 8

U.S. Citizens Services 9

Upcoming U.S. Citizens Services Visits

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

Da Nang

Date: Thursday, 15 June 2017

Place: Bread Of Life, 4 Dong Da, Thuan Phuoc, Hai Chau, Da Nang

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 Nha Trang in August. 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:

+ July 4– Independence Day

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.

Updated Zika Virus Information

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam informs U.S. citizens that on March 10, 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated Travel Guidance for Vietnam regarding the risk of Zika virus infection. The CDC and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have simultaneously made recommendations that pregnant women should not travel to areas with risk of Zika virus infection. The updated guidance covers travel to areas previously in CDC Travel Alerts and Considerations but also to additional areas that were added based on epidemiologic data regarding Zika transmission.

CDC and WHO Guidance

a. WHO Interim guidance with new Zika virus country classification scheme: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/254619/1/WHO-ZIKV-SUR-17.1-eng.pdf?ua=1

b. CDC Zika Travel Information and pregnancy recommendations: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information

c. CDC website with an overview of Zika virus is found at: Zika Virus | CDC.

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 trans-mission, even within countries reporting active transmission.

For general information and the latest updates about Zika and steps to prevent mosquito bites and sexual expo-sure 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 lo-cate 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.

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 General Election Scheduled for June 6

The State of California will conduct a special general election on Tuesday, June 6, 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. A primary election was held on April 4, 2017, with no candidate receiving more than 50% of the vote.

Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is 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.

Utah Special Primary Election Scheduled for August 15

The State of Utah will conduct a special primary election on Tuesday, August 15, 2017, for the 3rd Congressional District to replace Jason Chaffetz who announced he will resign from Congress on June 30. This district consists of Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan and Wasatch counties as well as portions of Salt Lake and Utah counties.

The special general election will be held on November 7, 2017.

Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is 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 Utah resident from the 3rd Congressional District, register and request an absentee ballot today starting at FVAP.gov.

Alabama Special Primary Election Scheduled for August 15

The State of Alabama will conduct a special primary election on Tuesday, August 15, 2017, for the office of U.S. Senator to replace Jeff Sessions.

The special runoff election will be held on September 26, 2017.

The special general election will be held on December 12, 2017.

Service members, eligible family members and overseas citizens may use the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is 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 resident of Alabama, register and request an absentee ballot today starting at FVAP.gov.

If you are not currently registered, your FPCA needs to be received by July 31; if you are currently registered, your FPCA ballot request must be received by August 10.

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

The new reciprocity arrangement entered into force on 29 May 2016 and will benefit American and Vietnamese tourists and business travelers. 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, and single-entry visas are available online at https://www.immigration.gov.vn/. We welcome feedback from American citizens applying for 12-month visas to 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 .

U.S. Citizens Eligible for E-Visa Program

In February 2017, Vietnam launched a pilot e-visa program for citizens of 40 countries, including the United States. The program uses an online application process to issue 30-day, one-entry visas for $25, payable via bank transfer. E-visa holders may enter and exit Vietnam through 28 designated international border gates, including all international airports. The pilot program will continue through January 31, 2019 subject to review and extension. The Vietnamese e-visa instructions and application are available online. The correct Vietnamese government websites for e-visas are https://www.immigration.gov.vn/ and https://www.xuatnhapcanh.gov.vn.

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
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be af-
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.

Typhoon Season Tips

The typhoon and severe storm season in Vietnam runs from approximately May through November. We would like to pass along some severe weather preparation tips to U.S. citizens residing or traveling in Vietnam.

During the approach of a typhoon or severe storm U.S. citizens are encouraged to monitor the storm's path by listening to the radio, watching television, or monitoring the following websites:

- U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center
- Vietnam National Center for Hydro-Meteorological Forecasting (Tiếng Việt)
- Tropical Storm Risk

If you are in the path of a typhoon or severe tropical storm, please take the following precautionary measures to ensure minimal disruption or damage. You should also contact friends and family in the United States with updates on your whereabouts.

- Locate shelter and follow all official instructions, including evacuation if ordered.
- Carry your travel documents at all times (i.e., copies of your U.S. passport, birth certificate, picture ID's, etc.) or secure them in a safe, waterproof location.
- Secure loose outdoor items (limbs, roofing material, windows (coverings), doors, debris (trash), etc.).
- Fill vehicle, generator, and water tanks.
- Check and charge radios.
- Charge cell phones and carry your charger, including portable chargers available for most cell phone models at many convenience stores and electronic shops.
- Have bottled water; make ice.
- Gather flashlights, tools, and first aid supplies.
- Have fresh batteries, candles, matches, water, groceries (canned and/or dry foods), and pet supplies.
- Assure an adequate supply of first aid materials and prescription medications.
- Stay home and let your family and office know how you plan to weather the storm, especially those family members in the United States.

Additional information on natural disasters including hurricanes/typhoons and storm preparedness may be found on the following disaster preparedness websites.

General Disaster Preparedness Websites

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Emergencies Abroad website - general information and resources for U.S. citizens experiencing an emergency outside of the United States.

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Natural Disasters website - general information and resources pertaining to natural disasters.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Ready website - general information and resources for emergency preparedness

American Red Cross - Member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

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.