

March/April 2010

Special points of interest:

- Are you registered with the US Embassy
- What can the consular section do for you?
- Voting information
- New Embassy Compound Tour

## Letter from the Consul

Well, this will be my last ACS newsletter as Consul in Madagascar. I will be departing in early May for my next assignment as Refugee Coordinator in Baghdad.

I've truly enjoyed working with the Americans in Madagascar and Comoros during the last two years. I strived to provide the best service I could—especially during the tense months at the height of the political crisis. I appreciate all the support I received from wardens throughout the countries in helping disseminate information and

update me on specific happenings in their areas.

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Laura Rumpf, our consular assistant, has been busy contacting many of you to update your registration information and be sure we have all the current contact information and a Privacy Act Waiver on file. Please be sure to update us at [antwarden@state.gov](mailto:antwarden@state.gov) if your contact information ever changes. Also please be sure to notify us when you permanently leave so that we can close your registration.

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If you were wondering if/how you would be counted for the 2010 census I have learned that, unfortunately, private citizens overseas are not included in census information. As overseas counts are used only to reapportion seats in the US House of Representatives, non-federal employees and their families are not included in the counts.

## Consular Section Hours

Non-immigrant visa interviews:

Monday & Wednesday

7:45—10:45am

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Non-immigrant visa pass back:

Tuesday & Thursday

4pm

Immigrant visa interviews:

Thursday

9am

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American citizen services:

Monday—Friday

7:45—11:30am

Afternoons by appointment

## Proposed ACS and IV Fee Changes



The mission of the Bureau of Consular Affairs is to protect the lives and interests of American citizens overseas and to strengthen U.S. border security.

On February 9, 2010 the Department of State published a proposed rule in the Federal Register to change certain consular fees, including those related to U.S. passport and passport card applications, immigrant visas, and other services provided to U.S. and foreign citizens.

The proposed rule to change fees is based on a comprehensive cost of service study completed in June 2009. As demand for passports increased to an average of 15 million per year, the increase in certain fees will help cover actual operating expenses for the Department of State's 301 consular posts abroad, 23 domestic passport agencies, and other centers that provide consular services to both U.S. and foreign citizens. However, improvements in automated systems have also decreased some fees, such as the application

fee for determining returning resident status.

Consular services include assistance to American citizens who are victims of crime abroad or citizens who require evacuation during natural disasters overseas, such as those in the recent earthquake in Haiti. The cost of providing such services in fiscal year 2009 was almost 300 million dollars.

This proposed rule to change fees is distinct from the proposed rule to increase non-immigrant visa application fees published on December 14, 2009. The comment period on that proposed rule will end February 12, 2010.

The Department will not begin collecting either of these new proposed fees until it fully considers public comments and publishes a final rule. In order to view both proposed rules

and to submit comments, please go to <http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#documentDetail?R=0900006480a8ffe8>

Comments may be submitted any of the following ways:

Internet: On the regulations.gov website linked above

Mail (paper, disk, or CD-ROM):

U.S. Department of State,  
Office of the Executive Director, Bureau of Consular Affairs,

U.S. Department of State,  
Suite H1001, 2401 E Street NW

Washington, DC 20520

E-mail: [fees@state.gov](mailto:fees@state.gov).

You must include the RIN (1400-AC58) in the subject line of your message.

## Living in Madagascar?

If you are moving away from Madagascar and need to have a letter of attestation for customs purposes, the Consular Office can assist you with an affidavit.

The letter states the duration of your residence in the country and your forwarding address. You may write your own letter or we can provide you with a template. Once completed,

bring the letter to the Consular Officer for attestation. You may request this form at: [antanwarden@state.gov](mailto:antanwarden@state.gov)

The fee for the affidavit is \$30.

## New Law Makes Absentee Voting Easier for Overseas Americans

On October 28, 2009, Congress enacted the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. This legislation amends existing law regarding overseas voting in federal elections, and should make voting easier for overseas Americans.

### New Procedures for 2010 Elections

Beginning with the November 2010 general election, and for all subsequent general, special, and primary elections, states will be required to mail out ballots at least 45 days prior to an election for a federal office. This requirement may cause some states to select earlier primary dates in order to comply with the 45 day mailing deadline, or to request waivers due to special circumstances.

In addition to mailing ballots to overseas voters, the states will be required, at the voter's request, to provide registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and blank ballots via fax or email. However, each state's laws determine whether ballot requests or voted ballots can be returned via fax or email. The new law prohibits states from rejecting marked ballots based on notarization, paper size, or paper weight requirements. The witnessing requirements of individual states remain in place.

### Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests

Effective immediately, states will no longer be required by federal law to continue to mail election materials to overseas addresses (even when they are determined to be invalid) for two complete general election cycles on the basis of a single ballot request. It will now be up to each state to determine how long to continue to send out election materials before requiring overseas voters to submit new ballot requests. This change, sought by local election officials, should greatly decrease the volume of voting materials sent abroad to addresses where Americans no longer reside.

### State Department Recommendations

In light of these changes, the Department of State recommends that all U.S. voters residing abroad request absentee ballots from their local election offi-

cial at the start of each calendar year, and whenever there is a change of address, change of e-mail address, or change of name, by completing and sending in a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). To locate information on your specific state's requirements, and to obtain an on-line version of the FPCA, please visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). Voters may also pick up a hard copy of the FPCA from any U.S. embassy or consulate. FPCAs may be mailed to your local voting officials in the United States via international mail or from any U.S. embassy or consulate. Many states allow U.S. citizens overseas to submit the FPCA by e-mail or fax. The Department of State strongly encourages all U.S. overseas voters to provide email addresses or fax numbers on their FPCAs to enable local election officials to transmit election materials in the fastest manner available, which should then allow sufficient time for the return of voted ballots. For information regarding your specific state, please visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for the November general elections for federal offices, although some states also permit its use for elections for state and local offices. Beginning in January 2011, the new law allows use of the FWAB for primary, special, and runoff elections for federal offices. Voters who request an absentee ballot in advance of their state's ballot request deadline, but who fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials in time to vote, should complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot and send it back to local election officials in time for it to be counted. An on-line version of the FWAB, together with instructions for its use, is available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### Questions?

The Voting Assistance Officer at the American Embassy in Antananarivo is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, call [261] (20) 22-212-57 or send an e-mail to [Voteantananarivo@state.gov](mailto:Voteantananarivo@state.gov).

US Embassy  
Antananarivo

14-16 rue Rainitovo  
BP 620  
Antsahavola  
Antananarivo 101

Phone: 20.22.212.57  
Fax: 20.22.345.39

antanwarden@state.gov  
consantan@state.gov



#### Useful Websites

[Madagascar Country Specific Information](#)

[Comoros Country Specific Information](#)

[General Information About Travel Abroad](#)

[www.antananarivo.usembassy.gov](http://www.antananarivo.usembassy.gov)

## Tour of the New Embassy Compound

A tour of the new US embassy will take place on **Wednesday, March 31st at 4pm** for American adult and teen citizens. Because of safety and control issues, young children are discouraged from attending. Those interested in going on the tour ***MUST RSVP*** so that they can get on an entry list. Only those who have signed up and are on the list will be permitted into the embassy. If you are interested, please RSVP to the following email address:

[antanwarden@state.gov](mailto:antanwarden@state.gov)

Please include in the RSVP your name, ID number (preferably your passport number) and date of birth. You will need to bring a picture ID (preferably your US passport) with you on the day of the tour.

Because there may still be work going on, please do not wear open-toed shoes.

The tour will be in lieu of the regularly scheduled March Town Hall. There will be time for questions and answers with the Ambassador at 5pm. The Town Hall meeting on March 24 has been cancelled.

Parking for the tour will be available at the main (south) entrance of the embassy.

Consular Section closures for routine ACS services:

March 19—28

April 6—11

The section will remain open for emergency ACS services