

THE ANDZNAGIR

News for the American citizen community in Armenia

ISSUE 7: MAY 2017



The Warden Network

Did you know, when you register your presence in Armenia through the online STEP system, that you are assigned to a geographical or functional zone, according to your affiliation or where you live? Below are the zones and the private American citizens who have volunteered to serve as warden(s) in each one. Note the name of yours: in case of a crisis, this person might be reaching out to you to ascertain whether you are safe since the embassy does not have the resources to call personally every American citizen in Armenia. If the name for the warden of your zone is blank, the position is vacant, and we would love to hear from you if you would like to volunteer to fill that role!

ZONE	NAME OF WARDEN
Ajapniak/Davtashen	Lucineh Kassarjian, Arpi Vartanian
Arabkir	Artashes Hovanessian
Erebuni/Shengavit/Nubarashen	VACANT
Kanaker-Zeytun/Avan	VACANT
Kentron Northeast	VACANT
Kentron Northwest	Steven Movsesian
Kentron Southeast	VACANT
Kentron Southwest	Arina Zohrabian
Kotayk Marz	VACANT
Malatia-Sebastia	VACANT
Nor Nork	Christopher Brown

For further information:

- See the [State Department's travel website](#) for the [Worldwide Caution](#), [Travel Warnings](#), [Travel Alerts](#), and [Country Information for Armenia](#).
- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, Armenia, located at 1 American Avenue, at tel. (374-10) 46-47-00 and fax (374 10) 46-47-42, Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. After-hours emergency number for U.S. citizens is (374-10) 49-44-44. Our email address is ACSYerevan@state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy will be closed for the following upcoming holidays—May 9 (Armenian Victory and Peace Day), May 29 (American Memorial Day), July 4 (American Independence Day), July 5 (Armenian Constitution Day).

If the Marz where you live is not listed to the right as a geographical zone, the reason is that we do not have enough registrants in that area to merit a warden.

If you know of another cluster of American citizens, or another place where American citizens congregate, that should be a functional zone, please let us know!

Nork Marash	Niery Bardakjian
Vahagni	Nina Hovnanian
American University of Armenia	Arpie Balian
Green Bean Café	David Bequette
LDS Church	Allen Bostrom
Marriott Hotel	VACANT
QSI	Robbie Reno

ACS insight of the quarter

Two-parent consent for passports for children under 16.

Until a child is 16 years old, U.S. law requires that BOTH parents sign the application to grant permission for a passport. If one parent cannot attend the passport appointment, he/she may give permission through a notarized letter or a notarized DS-3053 form. If there is only one parent on the birth certificate, or if the applying parent has sole custody as demonstrated by a court order, this requirement is waived. It is also waived if a parent is deceased, but the applying parent must present the death certificate. All other cases of “missing” parents must be sent to the State Department for approval, which is granted only in narrow circumstances, so be prepared for delays if both living, custodial parents do not attend the appointment and/or provide notarized consent. NB: You must provide a birth certificate or a consular report of birth abroad so that we can see who the parents are before we can proceed with any passport application for a minor.



Visa question of the quarter

I’m an American citizen, and I have petitioned for my children to receive immigration visas. However, at the interview, the officer told me that he/she couldn’t approve the visas because the children might already be U.S. citizens. What’s going on?

The short answer is that U.S. law prohibits the issuance of visas to American citizens and requires that they enter the U.S. on American passports. If you are a U.S. citizen, and you have lived in the U.S. for at least five years, then chances are you can transmit your American citizenship to your children, making an immigration visa impossible. Instead, the officer will send you to the American Citizen Services unit, either to make your children citizens, or to get a letter from us that they are not, in fact, citizens, in which case the immigration can proceed. The delays are significant when families in this situation are Iranian because all Iranian-American citizenship cases must be sent to Bern, Switzerland for adjudication. Apart from the time delay, there is also the cost: the hefty fee you paid for each immigration petition cannot be refunded if the visas are not issued. So take our advice: BEFORE you petition for your children, come to see us in ACS and make sure your children are not already entitled to U.S. passports. And keep in mind that only children who are citizens by birth can become president one day!



BUYING OR RE-FINANCING A PROPERTY IN THE UNITED STATES?

If you will be bringing a large packet of mortgage documents to ACS for notarization, please remember that the burden is on YOU to vet the documents thoroughly and find all the places where notarizations are necessary BEFORE you come for your appointment. It is also your responsibility to complete any information blanks and to place any necessary initials before the documents are notarized. By the same token, it is wise to review the packet after the notarizations are finished to ensure that nothing has been missed.



Another thing to keep in mind: you pay a notarial fee of \$50 each time the notarial officer signs and affixes a seal to a document. In some states—California comes to mind—there can be more than ten notarizations required in a mortgage packet, which adds up to hefty notarial costs. You might ask your mortgage company before they send the packet to format documents for notarization only when absolutely necessary.

Please note that new restrictions have been imposed on electronic devices in the cabin for passengers traveling by air to the U.S. from Qatar, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi, among other places. Put your phones, laptops, etc. into your checked luggage before you check in, and be sure to have a good book with you!

TRANSITION TIME: LET'S WELCOME FRANK LAVOIE!

At the end of June, our current American Citizen Services chief, Adam Colvin, is departing Yerevan for his next post, Prague, via a year of Czech language instruction in Washington. He will be replaced by Frank Lavoie starting in early July. Frank has been in the Foreign Service since 2011 and served his first tour in Kingston, Jamaica, before transferring to Brasilia, Brazil. He is now in Yerevan until 2019. He has extensive American Citizen Service experience, having served in ACS in both prior posts for a year each. Frank speaks Armenian and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Armenia from 1995 to 1997. He grew up in Massachusetts and resided in Hawaii, where he was an elected local official and business owner prior to joining the State Department. When you have the chance to meet him, please welcome him to our ACS team!



Renew passports early!!

Needless to say, an American citizen overseas should never be without a valid U.S. passport. If your passport will be expiring in 2017, you should think about renewing it. Although we always tell passport applicants that their new passports will arrive in 7-10 business days, it is not a good idea to wait until the last minute to renew: systems problems do arise that can cause significant delays. Plus, we are expecting a surge in demand this year. Keep in mind also that there are many countries that require six months' validity for admission, so if you plan to travel to countries other than the U.S. and Armenia, you should check on this at travel.state.gov and renew at least seven months before your current passport's expiration date if it is an issue.