

THE ANDZNAGIR

News for the American citizen community in Armenia



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Volume 2, ISSUE 2

All of us here at American Citizen Services, ACS Chief Frank Lavoie, Anahit, and me, Murwarid, would like to wish you all a Happy New Year! We hope you enjoyed the holidays and spent some time exploring all the festivities in and around Yerevan. Further north the mountains are a blanket of white. Winter has made itself known in Armenia.

As we reflect back, I can say 2018 was a busy year for us here at the American Citizen Service office, and we welcome all that 2019 will bring. Some folks may have no idea what we do. Well, when you're ready to report the birth of your child abroad, to renew your passport, or apply for one for the very first time, when you've got questions about voting or you've lost your passport and need to get home to the U.S, or in case of political or natural emergencies, we're here to help. Call us if you have any questions. And should it happen that we don't know the answer to your questions, we'll do our best to point you in the right direction. With that, let's get on with the latest news you need to know...

Keeping your travel documents up-to-date:

With an eye towards crisis preparedness, it is important to ensure that all of your travel documents are valid should you need to leave Armenia. Please check your passports; and if they have expired or are close to doing so, please make an appointment to see us about a renewal as soon as possible. Given that you cannot travel to some countries without a minimum of six months' validity, consider starting the renewal process as early as eight months before your passport expires.



States citizenship, issued to a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents who meet the requirements for transmitting citizenship under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

You need to obtain a CRBA for your child before you can apply for their passport. Keep in mind that it can take two-three weeks to obtain a CRBA and passport for your child. Please do not delay taking care of this and plan accordingly.

Recently, the daughter of an American citizen was denied a U.S. visa—because it is illegal to place a U.S. Visa

Newborn Babies? This reminder about passports, of course, presupposes that the births of any children who may qualify for American citizenship have been reported to the embassy and that Consular Reports of Birth Abroad have been issued. The Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) is evidence of United

in the foreign passport of a person believed to be a U.S. citizen. The family's travel plans were disrupted. The Lesson: If a child is born to a U.S. citizen in Armenia, please check-in with ACS about the CRBA process!

Remember: American citizens must travel to the U.S. on U.S. passports, and their American citizenship must be adjudicated first, before passports or a visa can be issued. (A Visa may be issued if it is determined that citizenship cannot be transmitted to a child).

Register to Vote

Register to vote early and get your ballots in on time. That's the big take-away from this past election cycle.

Many of you contacted our offices just days before election deadlines asking to send ballots or to fill out emergency ballots. Few folks were aware that to fill out an emergency ballot or an absentee ballot, you must still be registered in your home state.

Some of you called asking if you could come into the U.S. Embassy and vote. As an overseas citizen, you cannot vote in person at a U.S. Embassy, consulate or military installation. You can, however, drop your ballot off at the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan once filled out, and have it delivered via diplomatic mail services.



FVAP.GOV
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

When you register to vote, you must request your ballot by completing a **Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)** and sending it to your election office. Some states make registering easy by allowing you to send your FPCA and ballot electronically. But many do not and so registering and receiving your ballot can take several weeks. That's why we encourage you to register early.

Go to <http://www.FVAP.gov> and select your State of Voting Residence for information and help with the absentee voting process while you are living or traveling abroad.

Don't know your State of Voting Residence? It's generally the last state you resided in or paid taxes in. For additional help you can call **1-800-438-8683** or email vote@fvap.gov.

***States no longer require voting materials to be notarized for absent military service members, their families and overseas citizens. Some states still require a witness.**

Apostille Info

Lately American Citizen Services has been receiving many calls from American citizens requesting an *Apostille*. Despite incorrect information provided by local officials, they are often disappointed to hear that the embassy does not provide Apostilles. To obtain an Apostille on documents notarized in the U.S. (including civil records), you must apply to the Secretary of State of the state in which the document was notarized. The Secretary of State's office will verify the notary public's or other notarizing official's signature by placing an Apostille on the document.

To get an Apostille from the state of California, please visit:

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/notary/authentication/>

To obtain Vital Records, please visit:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/Vital-Records.aspx>

**To obtain an Apostille on Armenian civil documents and on documents notarized by Armenian notaries, take them to the Ministry of Justice of Armenia:*

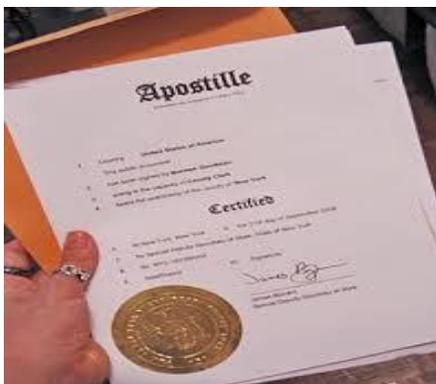
Ministry of Justice of Armenia Hotline:

[Person responsible for freedom of information](#)

1-17 (calls are free of charge)

+374 (10) 527-000 (for overseas calls)

hotline@gov.am



Frequently Asked (visa) Questions

I am an American citizen, and I have petitioned for my spouse or fiancé(e) (or relative) to get an immigration(or tourist) visa to the United States, but when I make an appointment at American Citizen Services (ACS) to talk about our case, they say they can't help me. Why?

While you, the petitioner, are an American citizen, the case is a visa matter, and visas are handled by a different office. ACS has no information about individual visa cases. Also, the process is transparent. All the details can be found online at travel.state.gov. Embassy Yerevan does not get involved until late in the visa process. Unless you have received a letter from the National Visa Center with an appointment here, the case has not yet been sent to Yerevan. The bottom line: don't expect assistance with visa matters at the ACS window or phone line. If the case is pending in Yerevan, contact the immigration visa unit by email at IVYerevan@state.gov

I'm getting married in Armenia to an Armenian citizen, and ZAGS has told me that I need a form from the U.S. embassy that I am free to get married. Is this correct?

This is correct. We provide this form for you. Make an appointment for a "notarial or other service" via our embassy website. Keep in mind, however, that this service is available at the embassy ONLY to U.S. citizens.

ZAGS requires this form from Green Card holders as well, but the embassy does not offer this service. So what are Green Card holders to do?

They must apply for a marriage record check BEFORE THEY LEAVE THE U.S. (from their county government offices) AND OBTAIN AN APOSTILLE on this document. Without an apostille, ZAGS will not accept it, and the embassy cannot affix an apostille in Yerevan to a document issued by a state.

My loved one/family member/fiancé is applying for a Visa and having payment issues; difficulty making an appointment; document delivery issues; or other visa related issues.

For these issues and others, including tracking the status of visa applications, we suggest visiting:

[https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-AM/niv/information/contact us](https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-AM/niv/information/contact-us)

Customer service agents are also able to assist you via telephone or Skype:

For service in English:

Open Monday - Friday, 8:00 to 18:00 **US Eastern Time.**

Open Monday - Friday, 7:00 to 19:00 **local time.**

For service in Farsi:

Open Monday - Friday, 7:00 to 19:00 **local time.**

For service in Armenian:

Open Monday - Friday, 7:00 to 19:00 **local time.**

Please Call +374 60 465 986 (local number)

Don't Forget Your Social Security Number!

This is a reminder that when applying for a passport or renewing a passport, the Department of State requires the applicant to provide us his or her SSN in order to receive a full validity passport. Often applicants forget to fill in their social security number and call American Citizen Services asking us to fill the information in on their behalf. By law, we cannot put the SSN on the passport application on your behalf, and what's more, we cannot approve your passport application without the SSN. So please come prepared to your appointment.

For those applying for a passport on behalf of a newborn child, or child who does not yet have a social security number, you will sign a statement acknowledging that no SSN exists. You'll do this at the time of your appointment and it will be included with your application.



Social Security for Americans Living in Armenia

The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan can't help you with Social Security issues. Primary responsibility for adjudication of Federal Benefits Claims lies with the Regional Federal Benefits Unit in Athens, Greece. They can be contacted at FBU.Athens@ssa.gov or via **telephone at +30 210-720-2426**. When contacting them via email, please remember to include your full name, telephone number, address and the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number. You can also visit https://athens.usembassy.gov/faqs_fbu2.html

The 2018 Tax Season is Upon Us

It's that time of year again! All U.S. citizens or resident aliens must report and pay tax on their worldwide income, even if they live abroad. For more information on paying taxes while abroad, please go to <http://www.irs.gov> and click **FILE** on the drop down menu, you'll see a link for **International Tax Payers**. Click that link and it will give you several options to choose from. You can also call International Taxpayer Assistance at (215) 516-2000 (note: not "toll-free") 6:00 am to 11:00pm (EST) M-F.

For Military Personnel, please go to <http://www.irs.gov> , find **INDIVIDUALS** on the home page, and then click on **MILITARY**. Special rules and deadlines may apply for combat zone service or if you're serving outside the U.S.

The STEP Program: What it is and Why You Should Register



STEP is short for *The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program*. It's a way for U.S. Citizen and nationals living and travelling abroad to register with the U.S. Embassy in any given country, and a way for the embassy to contact its citizens and nationals in the event of a political crisis or natural disaster, a mass evacuation, or even a family emergency. STEP is a way for family and friends to contact you during such events. STEP is also the way the U.S. Embassy in Armenia communicates important Travel Advisories and Alerts via text and SMS, as well conveying information through newsletters and emails. Though visitors and those living in Armenia and elsewhere are not required to register for STEP, we highly encourage it. Have your passport and itinerary handy when you register: <https://step.state.gov>

The Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT)

****LATE ADDITION TO THE
NEWSLETTER**



Think you've got what it takes to be a diplomat? The Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) will be offered to Americans living in Armenia on **Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. at the U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center (IRC).**

The test will also be offered on Friday, February 8, 2019 at 9:00 AM in the IRC.

If you are interested, you must sign up at <http://vue.com/fsot/> before January 30, 2019.

The FSOT is free. In order to take the FSOT, applicants must have U.S. citizenship, and be at least 20 years of age and no older than 59 years of age on the day the candidate submits the registration. Register as soon as possible. Candidates who have waited until the last minute have either missed deadlines or found that their preferred testing location was full.

For answers to General FSOT FAQs, see <http://vue.com/fsot/faqs.asp>.

Ask Not What Your Embassy Can Do for You....

Are you interested in helping the American Community in Armenia, particularly in times of crisis? Do you have special skills that may be beneficial in the event of a natural disaster? Do you speak more than one language? Are you the proprietor of a hotel, restaurant, or other social gathering space? Can you keep a cool head during stressful situations? If so, then the American Liaison Network (ALN) needs you!

The American Liaison Network was previously known as the Warden System. Wardens first became a feature at all consular posts in the years after World War II. They were thought of as a peacetime equivalent of the air raid wardens who stood ready during the war to raise the alarm in the event of attacks on U.S. soil. Consular wardens filled a similar role by sharing Alerts with citizens overseas, and, in particular, acting as an Alert dissemination mechanism during crises. Today many U.S. citizens overseas have access to near-instantaneous news and U.S. government messaging through email, social media, SMS texts (enroll in the STEP program to receive texts and emergency alerts from the U.S. Embassy!), and web pages, but that doesn't mean that volunteers aren't needed.

Today's volunteers are called Civilian Liaison Volunteers (or CLVs). They work with U.S. embassies and consulates to identify the needs of the U.S. citizen community so that we may more effectively work to address security, safety, and health issues that affect U.S. citizens abroad. CLVs also continue to serve as sources of information in addition to being conveyors of important information on behalf of the U.S. Embassy. This ongoing collaboration between the embassy and CLVs improves our awareness of the issues facing U.S. citizens and strengthens our capacity to assist them in the event of a crisis. CLVs meet regularly at the embassy and with the consular section, but must first undergo a background check and sign a Memorandum of Understanding which states that they understand and accept the duties of a Civilian Liaison Volunteer.

The Consular section is always looking to expand our network of volunteers, so if you, or any American citizen you know residing in Armenia is interested, please email American Citizen Services at ACSYerevan@state.gov.



About Us...

Frank Lavoie serves as our American Citizen Services Chief. Frank has been in the Foreign Service since 2011 and served his first tour in Kingston, Jamaica, before transferring to Brasilia, Brazil. Frank speaks Armenian and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Armenia from 1995 to 1997.

Anahit Movsesyan is an Armenian native and has worked at the U.S. Embassy for 11 years. She previously served as Protocol Assistant to the Ambassador. She speaks fluent Armenian and Russian.

Murwarid Abdiani previously served in Kyiv, Ukraine where she worked in Consular Service, and now joins the team in Armenia. Murwarid previously worked in the Los Angeles film and television industry.

....And we'd like to wish a warm welcome to our new Consular Chief **Elizabeth Kuhse!** She joins us from the United States where as an instructor she taught many of us about Consular services at the Foreign Service Institute. She speaks Russian and Dutch, and she's previously served in Moscow.

Fees for Services as of January 2019

Notaries--\$50
Marriage Letter Notary-\$50
Birth Abroad (CRBA) - \$100
Adult Passport Renewal-\$110
Child Passport/Renewal-\$115
First Time Adult/Lost or Stolen-\$145

All fees can be paid at the time of your appointment in either U.S. Dollars or Drams

For those who receive an email from our office indicating that your passport or CRBA is ready for pick up:

ACS Passport/CRBA Pick-Up Hours

2:00p.m. - 4:30p.m. M-F

(Excluding holidays)

As always, we welcome your comments, questions and feedback. Please write to us at ACSyerevan@state.gov

U.S. Embassy, Yerevan
Consular Section/ACS
1 American Ave, Yerevan 0082,
Armenia

Phone (M-F 9:00a-5:00p):
(374-10) 49-45-85

Emergency Phone (after hours):
(374-10) 49-44-44