



# ACS Newsletter

VIETNAM

MARCH 2016

*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 location:

### Can Tho

**Date:** Thursday, 17 March 2016  
**Place:** Victoria Can Tho Resort at Cai Khe Ward, Ninh Kieu District, Can Tho City.  
**Time:** from 09:00am to 12:00pm

### Da Nang

**Date:** Thursday, 24 March 2016  
**Place:** Bread of Life Restaurant, 4 Dong Da Street, Thuan Phuoc, Hai Chau, Da Nang.  
**Time:** from 10:00am to 1:00pm

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: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/service.html>

The ACS unit also has a planned services trips to Vung Tau, Nha Trang and Da Lat in the next few months. Please check our website for more information as it becomes available.

*This newsletter is also available on the U.S. Consulate's website at: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/service/monthly-newsletters.html>*

*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.*

## March Holiday Closures

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

**None**

A complete list of all of our holiday closings for 2016 is available on-line at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

\*Vietnamese Holiday  
+American Holiday

## Social Security Administration Town Hall

### March 10, 2016 at 6pm

Darrin Morgan, the Social Security Administration's Regional Federal Benefits Officer from the US Embassy in Manila, will conduct a town hall meeting at the American Center on **Thursday, March 10, from 6:00 pm to 7:00pm**. He will address all aspects of the U.S. Social Security Administration's programs, including entitlement to retirement, disability, and survivors benefits. He will also cover topics specific to both American and non-American citizens who are residing in Vietnam, including how to file for benefits, online services, direct deposit, and Medicare usage outside the US. A question and answer session will follow his presentation. Please bring a photo ID for entrance into the American Center.

## Zika Virus Information

In May 2015, the World Health Organization reported the first local transmission of Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere, with locally acquired cases identified in Brazil. As of January 15, 2016, local transmission had been identified in at least 14 countries or territories in the Americas, including Puerto Rico (See Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] link below for countries and territories in the Americas with Zika virus transmission). Further spread to other countries in the region is likely.

Zika virus is spread to people through mosquito bites. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. Severe disease requiring hospitalization is uncommon. However, Zika virus has been linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome and to pregnant women giving birth to babies with birth defects and poor pregnancy outcomes.

In response to the Zika virus outbreak in Latin America, CDC has issued a [travel alert \(Level 2-Practice Enhanced Precautions\)](#) for people traveling to regions and certain countries where Zika virus transmission is ongoing.

For information on Zika virus, including transmission, prevention and a list of areas where the virus has been found, please see the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>. You can also see more information at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/Zika.html>.

# 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 : <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/service.html> 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](mailto:HCMCFPU@state.gov) for Ho Chi Minh City or [HanoiFPU@state.gov](mailto:HanoiFPU@state.gov) for Hanoi.

# U.S. Embassy Hanoi Air Quality Monitor

The U.S. Embassy has installed an air quality monitor to measure PM 2.5 particulates as an indication of the air quality at the Embassy's Chancery building at 7 Lang Ha street in Ba Dinh District, Hanoi. You can read more information and check the current reading [here](#).

For more details on air quality index, please follow the link to the Environmental Protection Agency's [Air Now](#) website. Hanoi AQI can be observed either by clicking on the Hanoi location on the map, or by selecting Hanoi 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 Hanoi close to the U.S. Embassy. 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 calculated, please click [here](#).



## New Smart Traveler App Available in Google Store / iTunes

**Description of app:** *Smart Traveler*, the official State Department app for U.S. travelers, invites you to see the world with easy access to frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, U.S. embassy locations, and more.

With Smart Traveler, you can create personal itineraries, add notes, and organize your trips.

Smart Traveler also provides access to the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Free STEP enrollment enables the State Department to better assist you in emergencies such as natural disasters, unrest in foreign countries, or lost/stolen passport overseas. During your travels, STEP can help your family and friends reach you in an emergency.

Smart Traveler also provides quick access to the Department's Consular Affairs Facebook and Twitter pages.

# Absentee Voting Information for U.S. Citizens Abroad

## *Voting Is Now Easier Than Ever Before*

All U.S. citizens can now receive their blank ballots electronically. Depending on the state in which you are eligible to vote, you may get your ballot by email, fax, or internet download. To start, go to [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov) to complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), print and sign the form then return it to your local election office in the United States. We recommend overseas U.S. citizens get in the habit of completing FPCAs each January. You should include your email address on the form so it's easier for your election officials to reach you if there is a problem. If your state delivers ballots electronically by fax only, be sure to include your fax number. If you request electronic delivery and include your email address or fax number, you'll receive your blank ballot 45 days before general and mid-term elections and generally 30 days before special, primary, and run-off elections for federal offices. Most states now have voter registration verification websites, and many offer a means of tracking the status of your registration and ballot.

### **Absentee Voting Basics**

Absentee voting is a simple 2 step process.

1. Every year, you send in a completed Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to your local election officials.
  - They confirm your eligibility to vote, and put your name on a list to receive absentee ballots for any elections held that calendar year.
  - They send you a blank absentee ballot electronically or by mail.
- 2(a). You complete the ballot and send it back so it arrives before your state's ballot return deadline.
- 2(b). Or, if you haven't received your blank ballot 30 days before an election, don't wait any longer; [use the emergency Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot](#) to vote.

### **Overseas voters have a number of options for returning voted ballots:**

- *Local mail* If you have good mail service to the United States, put your ballot in the mail with appropriate international postage.
- *U.S. Embassy Pouch/APO/FPO* You can drop off your ballot request or voted ballot at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for return to the United States, or you can have someone drop it off for you. It must be addressed to your local election officials and have sufficient postage or be in a postage-paid envelope. A postage-paid envelope is available on the [FVAP web site](#). Click [here](#) for more information for Ho Chi Minh City and [here](#) for more information for Hanoi.
- *Fax, Email, or Internet* A number of states now allow the electronic return of voted ballots. Consult the [Federal Voting Assistance Program's Voting Assistance Guide](#) for electronic transmission options for your state.
- *Express Courier Service* If time is short or local mail is unreliable, you can use professional courier services such as FedEx, DHL, or UPS. NOTE: FedEx does not deliver to P.O. boxes.

**For more information about overseas voting, visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/abroad/legal-matters/benefits/voting.html>.**

# Travel Alerts and Warnings

The U.S. Department of State regularly issues travel alerts or travel warnings for various countries and regions. Travel warnings and alerts issued in the last month or so include Iran, Turkey, Nigeria, Laos, Bangladesh, Niger, Mauritania.

For information regarding all travel alerts and warnings, please go to this site: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

A Worldwide Travel Alert was released on November 23, 2015 regarding the possible risks for travel due to increased terrorist threats. See the whole alert [here](#).

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

For the current advisory please visit <http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/worldwide-caution.html>

Additionally, a travel alert was recently issued regarding the tropical cyclone season in the South Pacific, which began on 1 November 2015 and ends on 30 April 2016. To read the entire travel alert, please click [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](mailto:CASTEP@state.gov)

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

## Contact Us

### Hanoi

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170 Ngoc Khanh, Ba Dinh District  
Hanoi, Vietnam

Email: [acshanoi@state.gov](mailto:acshanoi@state.gov)  
Telephone: (84-4) 3850-5000  
Fax: (84-4) 3850-5010

### Ho Chi Minh City

American Citizen Services  
U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City  
4 Le Duan, District 1  
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

For routine inquiries, submit your question via: [http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/contact\\_acs.html](http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/contact_acs.html)  
Telephone: (84-8) 3520-4200 (for urgent assistance involving an arrest, death or life threatening illness)  
Fax: (84-8) 3520-4244