

## Greetings from Ambassador John R. Bass



Dear Fellow American Citizens:

Over the past several months we have witnessed dramatic civil unrest in North Africa and the Middle East, resulting in the evacuation of thousands of American citizens from countries throughout the region.

Hundreds of consular officers from around the world have been supporting the repatriation of Americans from countries throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Among those hundreds were our Consul, Patrick Wingate, and our Vice Consul, Andrew Partin. Patrick and Andrew volunteered to help American citizens and their family members evacuate from Egypt and Libya at the height of those crises.

Then on March 11, 2011 the most powerful earthquake for more than 150 years hit Japan followed by a devastating tsunami. Thousands of people perished in the earthquake/tsunami disaster, and thousands more are still missing. Our consular teams continue to assist U.S. citizens and their family members in Japan.

Events such as those in the Middle East, North Africa, and Japan highlight the importance of utilizing the *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)* when traveling and/or residing overseas. Enrolling in STEP allows the Department of State to provide you with information and assistance in case of an emergency wherever you may be. Enrolling in STEP is voluntary, but you should make it a necessary part of your overseas travel planning and security.

Please enjoy this second issue of Consular Corner, and we look forward to seeing you here at the Embassy.

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES



American citizens who enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) and who provide a cell phone number are automatically included in our SMS text messaging system for Warden messages.

Warden messages are disseminated through email notification and via SMS text. Warden messages may include emergency messages regarding safety and security issues, as well as routine information relevant to American citizens in Georgia .

If you do not wish to not receive SMS messages from the Consular Section, please email us at [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov).

If you enrolled in STEP, but failed to provide a cell phone number, please email us at [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov) with your name and cell phone number so that we may include you in our SMS text messaging system.

Sincerely,

American Citizen Services  
Consular Section  
United States Embassy - Tbilisi

## *ACS highlights*

The United States Embassy Consular Section, in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), organized the second American Citizens' Information Night at the U.S. Embassy on November 17, 2010.

The Consular Section and AMCHAM brought together experts from the Georgian Government, the business community, and the Embassy to answer questions on consular services, private business services, residency requirements, U.S. immigration, tourism in Georgia, and other services in Georgia. Over 200 U.S. citizens participated in what is now an annual event.

U.S. citizens and their family members also enjoyed American style food provided by Texas Chicken, The Tbilisi Marriott, Betsy's, McDonald's, the Sheraton, and Radisson Blu. A variety of fine Georgian wines was supplied by the Georgian Wine Association, and soft drinks and beer were provided by Pepsi, Borjomi, and Naktakhtari. Special thanks go to these organizations that generously agreed to provide food and beverages to our U.S. citizens.

We look forward to seeing you at our next American Citizens' Information Night in Fall 2011.

# American Citizens' Information Night 2010





## ARE YOU A SMART TRAVELER?



Smart  
Traveler  
Enrollment  
Program

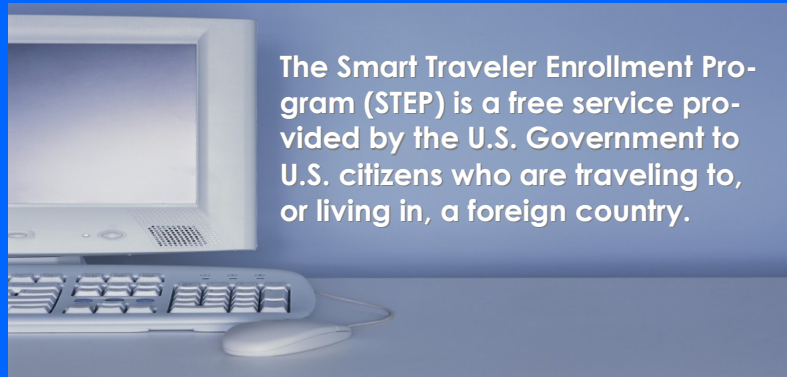
STEP allows you to enter information about your trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strike during your travel, we can be your source of assistance and information.

It was formerly known as the Internet Based Registration System (IBRS), and provides the same great services. Enrolling is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security.

By informing us about your trip or residence abroad, you help us locate you when you might need us the most.

In addition to emergency communication, enrolling with Embassy Tbilisi through STEP puts you on our Warden e-mail list. Through Warden Messages we notify American citizens of important information on safety and security as well as routine information relevant to U.S. citizens in Georgia. You will also receive the ACS Newsletter that contains articles of interest to U.S. citizens in Georgia.

To enroll, visit <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. You must first create an account by clicking on the "Create an Account" link and following the instructions provided. This allows you to select a username and password so that you can access your travel data at any time. The account will also contain your personal information so that it can be saved and used again whenever you travel abroad, not just to Georgia. Once you have created an account, you can view your profile and add trips or overseas residences, to notify a specific U.S. embassy.



The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

# What is the WARDEN NETWORK?

**In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts will not be released without your written authorization.**

## Warden System

The Warden System allows the U.S. Embassy to contact U.S. citizens in the event of an emergency, disaster or threat, and to distribute other information of interest to the private U.S. community. Wardens are U.S. citizens who volunteer their assistance to pass on information from the Embassy to other U.S. citizens in-country in case of an emergency.

## Become a Warden

If you would like to serve as a warden in Georgia or have any other questions about our Warden System, please contact the U.S. Embassy Consular Section in Tbilisi via email [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov) or telephone: (995 32) 27 77 24

## Emails and Text Messages

The U.S. Embassy Tbilisi Consular Section disseminates information to U.S. citizens in Georgia via email and text messages. Complete warden messages will still be posted on our website at:

<http://georgia.usembassy.gov/warden-messages.html>

If you have not already provided us with your e-mail address and cell phone number, please do so by enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) by visiting us at <https://travelregistrastion.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

For general information on traveling overseas, please see the Department of State's [Tips for Traveling Abroad](#). You can also find other information useful for travelers as well as country specific information at <http://www.travel.state.gov>





## OVERSEAS TAXPAYERS CAN USE IRS FREE FILE TO PREPARE AND E-FILE TAX RETURNS

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) advises that U.S. citizens and resident aliens living outside the United States can use IRS Free File to prepare and file their federal tax returns electronically.

IRS Free File is brand-name software that is offered exclusively at IRS.gov, through a partnership with the tax software industry.

There are five companies that accept foreign addresses. Taxpayers should review the list of tax forms supported by the company to ensure it meets their needs, especially Form 1116, Foreign Tax Credit, and/or Form 2555, Foreign Earned Income.

To be eligible, taxpayers' adjusted gross income in 2010 must be \$58,000 or less.

Free File software generally asks questions and taxpayers supply the answers. The software completes the proper tax forms, does the math, and allows for free electronic filing through IRS e-file. By filing electronically, taxpayers due refunds and who have U.S. bank accounts can opt for direct deposit and get their refunds in as few as 10 days.

To get started with IRS Free File, go to [www.irs.gov/freefile](http://www.irs.gov/freefile) and select "Pick a Free File Company."

Taxpayers with an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) over \$58,000 can efile their returns by purchasing online software. Check the software provider's information to ensure that it can accommodate a foreign address.

### How to Get Tax Help

The IRS Office in Philadelphia provides international tax assistance. This office is open Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. EST and can be contacted by:

Phone: 1 (267) 941-1000 (not toll-free)

FAX: 1 (267) 941-1055

Email: [Email the IRS](mailto:Email the IRS)

Mail: Internal Revenue Service Philadelphia, Pa 19255-0725

*Regional Internal  
Revenue Service  
Office*

Giessener Str. 30  
60435 Frankfurt/Main  
Tel: 49 69 7535-3834  
or 3823  
Fax: 49 69 7535-3803  
Email:  
[IRS.Frankfurt@irs.gov](mailto:IRS.Frankfurt@irs.gov)

**IRS  
ANNOUNCEMENT:  
OVDI**

## IRS ANNOUNCES 2011 OFFSHORE VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE INITIATIVE

On February 8, 2011, the Internal Revenue Service announced a special voluntary disclosure initiative designed to bring offshore money back into the U.S. tax system and help people with undisclosed income from hidden offshore accounts get current with their taxes. The new voluntary disclosure initiative will be available through August 31, 2011.

The 2011 initiative has a higher penalty rate than the IRS's previous voluntary disclosure program, which ended on Oct. 15, 2009, but offers clear benefits to encourage taxpayers to disclose foreign accounts now rather than risk IRS detection and possible criminal prosecution. In addition, the 2011 initiative includes new guidelines to provide fairness to people with smaller amounts of undisclosed assets or unusual situations.

[Click here](#) to view the full news release about the 2011 OVDI.

Taxpayers and tax practitioners interested in the new voluntary disclosure initiative can get complete details in the [questions and answers](#) and [How to Make a Voluntary Disclosure](#)

**Did You Know That....**

- There are two types of tourist passports available (28 and 52 page passports). You can obtain a 52-page passport for the same price as the 28-page passport.
- Only one passport photo is required for each passport application
- It takes 5 to 7 business days from the date your application is approved until receive a new passport.



- You can get two sets of extra pages for the price of one (\$82) if you request both sets at the same time. Mark the checkbox for 48 pages on the application form.

- Provided your passport is in good condition, you may get up to 2 sets of extra pages in your passport book. If you already have two sets of pages, you should apply for a new passport.

**FAQ: Do I have to provide my Social Security Number on the application?**

Failure to provide your Social Security Number may result in significant processing delays and/or the denial of your application. Section 6039E of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 6039E) requires you to provide your Social Security Number (SSN), if you have one, when you apply for a U.S. passport or renewal of a U.S. passport. If you have not been issued a SSN, enter zeros in box #5 of the passport application form you are completing. Contact the Social Security Administration to request a Number.

**If you fail to provide your Social Security Number, you are subject to a \$500 penalty enforced by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).**

# Make Sure Your Vote Counts

**Follow the FVAP**

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website <http://www.fvap.gov/>, provides information on voting for U.S. citizens living outside of the U.S. as well as uniformed service members and families.

[Click here to view the FVAP NEWS RELEASES and ARCHIVE](#)



**FVAP is currently seeking public input on the redesign of forms used in registration, ballot request and voting. If you would like more information go to [www.fvap.gov/global/news/nr6-2011.html](http://www.fvap.gov/global/news/nr6-2011.html)**

**FVAP can be contacted via 1-800-438-8683. Citizens may reach FVAP toll-free from 67 countries by using the toll-free numbers listed on the FVAP website [www.fvap.gov/contact/toll-freephone.html](http://www.fvap.gov/contact/toll-freephone.html)**

## **FVAP RELEASES 2011 LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES TO BENEFIT MILITARY AND OVERSEAS VOTERS**

Bob Carey, Director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), unveiled the 2011 Legislative Initiatives, wherein he urged States to “simplify their existing complex patchwork of regulations and procedures governing the uniformed services and overseas voters, by adopting a uniform voting process for all States and territories, in federal, state and local elections.”

Foremost this year is the recommendation by the Uniformed Law Commission for more uniformity and standardization of state voting laws for Uniformed Services, their spouses, and overseas voters, which would substantially ease the burden of compliance, improve voter success, and help reduce the variation in terms and procedures between States. FVAP joined the National Association of Secretaries of State, the National Association of State Election Directors, and many other military and overseas voting stakeholders in advising the Uniform Law Commission’s drafting committee on the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA).

In addition, despite improvements in military and overseas voting successes brought about by changes in States’ laws, 2010 preliminary data shows that military and overseas voters still face greater difficulties in successfully casting a ballot than does the general population. Late delivery and the non- return of ballots continue to be the leading causes of failure for a good part of that population.

FVAP continues to make recommendations for legislative changes to ensure that these citizens can vote at the same rate of success as local absentee voters. Yesterday, Mr. Carey announced the Legislative Initiatives in letters sent to each of the 55 chief State or territory election officers, as well as to the State’s legislative leadership.

Federal law requires that ballots be sent to absentee voters 45 days prior to an election to provide adequate time for voters to receive, vote and return ballots. FVAP recommends States allow for the expanded use of email and online transmission for all election materials throughout the entire absentee voting process, thereby supplementing fax and postal mail, where possible.

FVAP further recommends that State law permit uniformed services and overseas voters be authorized to use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) to vote in general, primary, special and runoff elections for Federal, State and local offices. Moreover, it recommends that the FWAB be accepted simultaneously as a voter registration application, an absentee ballot request and as an absentee ballot, so as to allow this highly mobile population to participate in elections far in advance of deployment, reassignment or a move.

Many U.S. citizens, who have never resided in a U.S. State or territory, are voting age children of U.S. citizens and not entitled to vote under many current State laws. FVAP urges that these U.S. citizens, who pay taxes and apply for selective service, be allowed to vote in elections for Federal offices in the State in which either parent is eligible to vote, under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

All letters and recommendations can be found on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/reference/laws/state-initiatives.html>.

FVAP looks forward to working with State election officials and legislators to ensure that every UOCAVA citizen is able to successfully exercise their right to vote.



## Help for American Victims of Crime

To contact the  
Consular section  
during business  
hours call  
(995 32) 27-77-24

For after-hours  
emergencies  
(995 32) 27-71-33

To contact the  
Department of  
State in the U.S.  
call  
1-888-407-4747  
during business  
hours, and  
202-647-5225 after  
hours

More information  
available at  
[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

The State Department is committed to assisting American citizens who become victims of crime while abroad. Assistance can be provided in two ways:

- Overseas: Consular officers and Consular staff work with crime victims.
- In the United States: office of Overseas Citizens Services will stay in touch with family members in the United States, and help provide U.S.-based resources for the victim when possible.

### **If you become a victim of a crime overseas:**

- We strongly encourage the victims of crime to contact the local police to report the incident and get immediate help. Request a copy of the police report.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy Consular section. Consular officers are available for emergency assistance 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

### **Consular Assistance to American Crime Victims:**

When an American is the victim of a crime overseas, he or she may suffer from physical, emotional or financial injuries. It can be more difficult because the victim may be in unfamiliar surroundings, and may not know the local language or regulations.

### **Consular can help:**

- Replace a stolen passport
- Contact family, friends, or employers
- Obtain the list of appropriate medical care
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
- Explain the local criminal justice process
- Obtain information about U.S. victim compensation programs
- Provide a list of local lawyers who speak English

### **Consular cannot:**


- Investigate crimes
- Provide legal advice or represent you in court
- Interfere in the legal proceedings
- Pay legal, medical, or other fees for you

All U.S. states have victim compensation programs, and many offer benefits to residents who are victims of violent crime overseas. Most programs require the victim to file a report at the time of the incident and to provide a copy with the application. Information about each state's compensation program and how to apply for benefits is available from the [National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards](http://www.nacvcb.org).

**Hours of Operation & Contact Information**  
American citizen services are available by appointment only. To make an appointment for citizen services please visit <http://georgia.usembassy.gov/service.html>  
Address: # 11 George Balanchine Street 0131 Tbilisi  
Telephone: (995-32) 27-77-24  
After hours emergency number: (995 32) 27-71-33  
E-mail: [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov)

The ACS Unit is unable to answer questions concerning U.S. visas. Any question concerning non-immigrant or immigrant US visa should be directed to the visa unit.  
For non-immigrant visa related issues e-mail: [tbilisivisa@state.gov](mailto:tbilisivisa@state.gov)  
For immigrant visa related issues email: [tbilisiimmigrant@state.gov](mailto:tbilisiimmigrant@state.gov)

**Important Security Announcement**



When visiting the Embassy, please remember not to bring mobile phones or any electronic devices (such as Blackberries, iPods, or PDAs), food/drinks, medicine or cosmetic products, as they are not allowed within the Embassy. We also strongly advise that you do not bring large bags, such as backpacks, suitcases or packages to the interview as there are no storage facilities on Embassy grounds.

## USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

**Patrol Police**  
Tel: +995 32 022  
**Emergency**  
Tel: +995 32 033  
**Fire Dept**  
Tel: +995 32 01, 011  
**Information Centre**  
Tel: +995 32 08; +995 32 09  
**Airport Hotline**  
Tel: +995 32 43 31 41  
**Tbilisi Tourism Information Centre**  
Tel: +995 32 43 67 67

[LIST OF DOCTORS](#)  
[LIST OF ATTORNEYS](#)  
  
[CIVIL REGISTRY AGENCY](#)  
Issues residency permits, Georgian passports, civil documents, Apostilles on Georgian documents.  
  
[DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM](#)  
Information on Tourism activities, entertainment, cultural events.

**NEWS:**  
The Travel Warning for Georgia was rescinded in January 2011  
  
[View the updated Country Specific Information on Georgia](#)



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR U.S. CITIZENS !!!

In case of a crisis and/or natural disaster American citizens in Georgia may tune in to the following FM radio stations for updated U.S. Embassy warden messages and information for U.S. citizens:

All of our services are by appointment only. To schedule an appointment please visit our website:

<http://georgia.usembassy.gov/service.html>

In case you need an emergency appointment please contact us via phone or email and we will try to accommodate your request at the earliest convenience.

Radio Syndicate- 104.3 FM (Tbilisi and Gori)

Radio GIPA — 94.3 FM (Tbilisi)

Radio Atinati — 105.9 FM (Zugdidi)

Radio Hereti - 102.8 FM (Lagodekhi and Kakheti)

Radio Dzveli Kalaki — 107.9 FM (Kutaisi)

Radio Harmonia — 100.5 FM (Poti)

# 2011 HOLIDAY CALENDAR



May 9	Mon	Georgian	Victory Day
May 26	Thu	Georgian	Independence Day
May 30	Mon	US	Memorial Day
July 4	Mon	US	Independence Day
September 5	Mon	US	Labor Day
October 10	Mon	US	Columbus Day
October 14	Fri	Georgian	Svetitskhovloba
November 11	Fri	US	Veteran's Day
November 23	Wed	Georgian	St. George's Day
November 24	Thu	US	Thanksgiving Day
December 26	Mon	US	Christmas Day