

**CONSULAR NEWS
SENEGAL & GUINEA BISSAU**

**U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal
January 2008**

State Dept. Travel Information Name Changes

As of January 2, 2008, the Department of State changed the names of certain types of travel information that it provides for American citizens. However, although the names have changed, the content, timeliness and location of this information remains the same.

Here is a brief summary of the changes:

- “Consular Information Sheets” are now called “Country Specific Information.” Country Specific Information are issued by the Department of State for every country in the world and are updated every six months. They provide useful information including entry requirements, how to obtain a visa, and information on crime, security, medical facilities, traffic, as well as other important topics. We strongly encourage all travelers to check their destination’s CSI when planning a trip. Country Specific Information for Senegal can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1013.html, and for Guinea-Bissau at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1131.html.
- “Public Announcements” have now become “Travel Alerts.” Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. Because a Travel Alert describes short-term conditions, its information is generally valid for the duration of the Alert, normally 90 days or less.
- The “Worldwide Caution,” formerly a type of Public Announcement, will become a separate document, updated semi-annually. The Worldwide Caution reminds Americans to maintain a high level of vigilance and to bolster their personal security while overseas. It contains information about ongoing security concerns, including the continual threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and American interests overseas. The Worldwide Caution pays particular attention to regions of concern where there is a continued threat of terrorism. The current Worldwide Caution can be found online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1161.html.
- The State Department also issues “Travel Warnings,” whose name has not changed. Travel Warnings differ from Travel Alerts in that they describe longer-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued

when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. Travel Warnings and the Worldwide Caution are reviewed continually and are updated every six months or earlier, as needed. They do not expire automatically.

These terms have changed because the State Department determined that the previous terms were often ambiguous to the general public. The new terms - Travel Alert and Country Specific Information – more effectively describe their purpose.

Links to the Country Specific Information for both Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, as well as recent warden messages and consular newsletters are available on the Embassy's Registration and Travel Information page at http://dakar.usembassy.gov/information_for_travelers.html. In addition, worldwide travel information for American citizens is always available at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Changes in Passport Regulations for Minors

Effective February 1, 2008, U.S. law will extend the two parent consent and personal appearance requirements to minors under the age of 16. Beginning that date, for American citizen children under the age of 16 requiring a passport, both parents will need to appear at the Embassy at the time of application, together with the child. In the past, this was required only for children of age 14 and under. This rule applies to both new passport applications and passport renewals.

If only one parent is able to appear, the second parent must submit an original notarized statement of consent authorizing passport issuance for the child (this can be either an original notarized Form DS-3053 or an original notarized written statement with the same information on a sheet of paper from the non-appearing parent) or primary evidence of sole authority to apply for the passport. A list of acceptable evidence, as well as an explanation of the passport application process for minors, can be found on our Embassy website at <http://dakar.usembassy.gov/passports/passports-for-children-under-age-14.html>. Please note that although the information on this site currently applies to children under 14, after February 1st, these same rules will apply to all applicants under age 16.

Raising the age requirement from 14 to 16 is intended to address the troubling issue of abducted and runaway children. The change is also consistent with the age requirements in the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. U.S. passport application forms are now in the process of being revised, and should be available in February 2008.

Increase in NIV and IV Fees

Effective January 1, 2008, the application fee for a U.S. nonimmigrant visa (NIV) increased from US\$100 to US\$131. In addition, fees for U.S. immigrant visas (IV) also increased from US\$335 to US\$355 on that same date. The Diversity Visa (DV) Lottery surcharge and all other visa procedures and policies remain unchanged.

These fee increases allow the U.S. Department of State to recover the costs of security and other enhancements to its non-immigrant and immigrant visa application processes. New security-related measures have caused the cost of providing NIVs and IVs to rise significantly. The fees for U.S. consular services are based on the actual costs of providing services to individuals. These costs have risen since the visa application fee was last increased, in 2002.

Additional information on both U.S. nonimmigrant and immigrant visas is available on the U.S. Embassy Dakar website at <http://dakar.usembassy.gov>.

Crime Watch

An elderly American couple was attacked by two men while going for an afternoon walk at about 5:00 PM near the Clinique de la Madeleine in downtown Dakar. During the scuffle, the couple was slightly injured, but the woman's purse and both of their passports were stolen. The assailants ran off after the attack and their belongings were not recovered.

REMINDER: There's Still Time to Register to Vote!

The U.S. presidential and state primary season has already begun, but there's still time to ensure your voice is heard before the General Election on November 4, 2008! 20 primaries are scheduled for February, and the rest will take place from early March through early October. The official U.S. Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website at <http://www.fvap.gov>. In recent years, many states have revised their absentee ballot procedures. Some states will even email you the ballot and allow you to mail or fax it back to them. Each state's rules are different, but it is now easier than ever for overseas voters to cast their ballots back home.

Generally, all U.S. citizens 18 years or older who are or will be residing outside the United States during an election period are eligible to vote absentee in any election for Federal office. This includes primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general election in November. Some states allow overseas voters to vote in elections for state and local offices, and for state and local referendums.

Voting eligibility and residency requirements are determined by the various U.S. states, and are available on-line at <http://fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html>. Your "legal state of residence" for voting purposes is the state where you last resided immediately prior to departure from the United States. Voting rights extend to overseas citizens even though they may no longer own property or have other ties to their last state of residence, and even if their intent to return to that state may be uncertain. For those who have never resided in the U.S., sixteen states, to date, allow eligible U.S. citizens to register where a parent would be eligible to vote.

To register to vote and/or apply for an absentee ballot, you can use the Federal Post Card Application ([FPCA](#)). The on-line version, the OFPCA, is accepted by all states and territories

except American Samoa and Guam. Voters from American Samoa and Guam must use the standard form of the FPCA, available at the Embassy. The on-line OFPCA form must be completed legibly, printed, signed, dated, and mailed to your local election officials. Your state may allow faxing to speed the process, but you will still need to send in the original by mail. Use an envelope and affix proper postage. The official U.S. Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance, <http://www.fvap.gov>, has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including state-specific instructions for completing the FPCA form, links to state and local officials, and a downloadable emergency ballot for use by those who register in time but fail to receive an official ballot. The Embassy's Consular Section is happy to mail your FPCA and absentee ballot to the U.S. for you; however, we do not have postage available. While the FPCA is a postage-paid card, many state absentee ballots require you to pay for postage. Please check your absentee ballot envelope before forwarding your ballot to the Embassy for mailing. We cannot mail any absentee ballots to the U.S. that have insufficient postage.

As a general rule, you should try to send in the FPCA so that it reaches your local election officials at least forty-five days before the first election in which you are eligible to vote --- ample time for them to process the request and send you a blank ballot. If applying for both registration and an absentee ballot, you may want to mail the FPCA earlier. One FPCA will qualify you to receive all ballots for Federal offices for the next two regular Federal elections (through 2010). However, we recommend that you submit a new FPCA in January of every year, and whenever you move, to ensure that your most recent mailing and e-mail addresses are on file with your local election officials.

Under normal circumstances, most states and territories begin sending ballots to overseas citizens 30-45 days before an election. However, if you haven't received your ballot within three weeks of your state's ballot receipt deadline, and you are required to return your voted ballot by mail, you should download, complete, sign, date, and send in a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB), available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefwab.html>. **Make sure it is witnessed if required by your state.** If you subsequently receive your regular absentee ballot, execute it and return it regardless of when you receive it. Court decisions sometimes require late counting of ballots voted by Election Day, but received by local election officials for a specified period of time following Election Day.

Be an Educated Voter

Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via the Internet. Use the links appearing on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/otherlinks.html>, read your hometown newspaper on-line, or search the Internet to locate articles and information.

The **Voting Assistance Officer** at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, send an e-mail to VoteDakar@state.gov or ConsularDakar@state.gov.

January/February Holidays

We will be closed for the following holidays:

January 21 - Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday

February 18 - Washington's Birthday / President's Day

Hours for American Citizen Services

We are open for routine American citizen services Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. When you arrive at the embassy, please show your U.S. passport or proof of American citizenship to the guard and go directly to the Consular Receptionist window. You do not have to wait in line with visa applicants.

Emergency American citizen services are available during U.S. Embassy normal working hours which are Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For an after-hours emergency involving an American citizen, please call 76-383-9566.

We are also available by e-mail at consulardakar@state.gov.

Have You Left Senegal or Guinea-Bissau?

If you have left Senegal or Guinea-Bissau, please e-mail us at consulardakar@state.gov so we can remove your name from the warden registration database. If you would like to remain on the newsletter mailing list, please let us know in your e-mail.