

**CONSULAR NEWS
SENEGAL & GUINEA BISSAU**

**U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal
July 2007**

U.S. Embassy Closure on 04 July 2007

Please be advised that the U.S. Embassy in Dakar will be closed on Wednesday, July 4th, 2007 in observance of the Independence of the United States.

July Frequently Asked Question

Q. There was an article in the New York Times about the difficulty of voting overseas (June 12). What can the embassy do to help me vote in a U.S. election while I'm living in Senegal?

A. Approximately five million Americans live overseas, and an important role of the U.S. Embassy is to help them vote in elections back home. While it is true that different rules in the 50 states and even in counties or townships vary, we have a number of tools here to help you register to vote, receive your absentee ballot, and to get it back in time to be counted in elections back home. This election cycle some states have moved their presidential primaries to as early as January 2008, so it is even more important to register early.

In some states absentee ballots must be received before Election Day, in others the ballot must be postmarked by Election Day, and some states have other rules. It is up to you as the voter to know your state's rules, and there are ways we can help you with that. In the past slow mail service has made it difficult, if not impossible, to receive absentee ballots while living overseas, particularly in Africa. Fortunately, some states will now allow you to receive a blank ballot by fax or email. Again, it's important to know the rules in the jurisdiction where you vote.

Here are some tips to help you make sure your vote is counted:

- (1) Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website at www.fvap.gov for information on the absentee registration and voting process. It has a state-by-state guide that will show you how to register in your home state: <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>
- (2) Register to vote and request your ballot in a timely manner - not later than September.
- (3) If you are not already registered at home as an absentee voter, ensure that you have applied for your absentee ballot using the hard copy or on-line versions of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to request an absentee ballot. Hard copies are available from the American Citizen Services unit during our regular hours. You can find the online version at: <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinefpga.html>
- (4) Make sure your local election official has your current mailing address.
- (5) VOTE - mail your ballot not later than October 15th of the election year.
- (6) Sign and date all election materials.
- (7) Fulfill your state's witness/notary requirements (if required). The Embassy will perform notarials free of charge when they are needed for voting. However, embassy staff cannot serve

as witnesses. If you cannot bring someone to serve as a witness, you may ask someone else in the waiting room.

(8) Ensure that your ballot or FPCA is postmarked. The Embassy can mail your ballot for you; we will mark it with the date you submit it to us. The Embassy does not have stamps available for you to purchase; however, there is an on-line postage-paid envelope available for returning the FPCA and ballot: <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/returnenvelope.html>

(9) Use the Federal Write In Absentee Ballot if you are overseas and your State absentee ballot does not arrive in time to be mailed back by the state's deadline. This is an option only for those who have already registered to vote.

(10) Contact the Embassy for help: consulardakar@state.gov

International Adoption Information

We are happy to announce that the State Department's Office of Children's Issues recently published a flyer outlining international adoption procedures for Americans wishing to adopt in Senegal. The Adoption flyer is located at:

http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_3249.html. If you are interested in adopting a Senegalese orphan, please read the flyer carefully and/or contact consulardakar@state.gov if you have further questions.

Flyers on adoption procedures for other countries can be found on the State Department website: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_369.html#s.

Crime Watch

An American citizen reported on June 14 that several hundred dollars was stolen from a bag that she left with a manager of the Hotel Provencal in downtown Dakar on two separate occasions between June 10 and June 12. She reported this to the police and filed a complaint. The police questioned the hotel manager, who denied removing the money. The American also stated that the police informed her that other foreigners have lost their money when they stayed in the same hotel.

An American woman was driving slowly through traffic on Airport Road near the Shell station at Ngor with her windows down at approximately 6pm on Saturday June 23. A group of approximately 5 young men walked around her car, as if crossing the street, and one attempted to open the locked rear driver's side door while another young man reached through the open passenger window and grabbed her purse. She turned and yelled at the purse snatcher; he dropped the purse in the seat, and they all ran off. The incident occurred in broad daylight with many passersby present.

Hours for American Citizen Services

Routine American citizen services are available 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 383-9566.

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

Have You Left Senegal or Guinea-Bissau?

If you are no longer resident in either 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.