

A Message from Ambassador Wilkins



Greetings!

As Susan and I say goodbye to our last summer here with you in Canada, we hope it has been one filled with relaxation and many precious memories for you and your families.

The lazy days of summer are quickly giving way to the urgent days of autumn, and there is much happening in both our countries as we prepare for elections and changes at our border.

American Citizens living in Canada are encouraged to vote this November. You can find Absentee ballot information for every state is available online at www.fvap.gov. Remember, you must register to vote in your last state of legal residence by completing a Federal Post Card Application.

You can also apply for your Passport Card!

The Passport Card is a wallet-sized document for land and sea travel between the United States and Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, as well as to the Caribbean, and Bermuda. It is not valid for international travel by air. I already have mine and it's a real convenience!

As always, the U.S. Mission across Canada is here to serve you. We are particularly concerned about crimes committed against Americans' in Canada and can provide practical help if you have been a victim of crime. Please do not hesitate to call on us and use our resources. You are part of our family and we are here to help.

May God bless you and God bless America.

Until Next Time,

Ambassador David H. Wilkins

U.S. Passport Card in Full Production

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that the new U.S. Passport Card is in full production and is now being distributed. The Passport Card is a convenient, wallet-sized document for land and sea travel between the United States and Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. It is not valid for international travel by air.

Beginning in June 2009, travelers will be required to present a single Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative-compliant document denoting both citizenship and identity when entering the United States through a land or sea border. More than 350,000 Americans pre-ordered the U.S. Passport Cards since the State Department began taking orders on February 1. Over 7,600 cards have already been mailed to advance customers, and all pre-orders are expected to be filled by September 30, 2008. After that initial distribution, the processing time for passport cards should be the same as for passport books – less than four weeks.

The passport card will facilitate the frequent travel of Americans living in border communities by utilizing a vicinity-read radio frequency identification (RFID) chip. With this technology, DHS' U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will be able to access photographs and other biographical information stored in secure government databases before the traveler reaches the inspection booth so that inspection can be facilitated. For privacy protection, no personal information is stored on the electronic chip itself. The chip will have only a unique number pointing to a stored record contained in secure government databases.

"We are pleased to offer Americans a choice of documents, the traditional passport book, and now the passport card, to meet their personal needs for international travel," said Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Janice L. Jacobs. "The passport card is the newest addition to the Department's long history of providing secure, reliable services to the American traveling public."

The Passport Card is available for \$45 for first-time adult applicants and \$35 for children under 16. Adults who currently have valid passports can apply for the passport card by mail for \$20.



**Information on how to
apply for a U.S.
Passport Card or the
traditional passport
book is at
travel.state.gov.**



New Website for Overseas Voters



We encourage you to visit the newly redesigned Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov, the official U.S. government website for overseas voters. The updated website features an automated Voter Registration and Ballot Delivery tool that will greatly improve the vote-by-mail process.

There are two options for overseas voters using the FVAP website:

- (1) Visit www.fvap.gov and click “Get Started” to be directed to an online Federal Postcard Application and instructions for your state; or
- (2) Visit www.fvap.gov and click “Use our New Automated Tool to Register/Request a Ballot” under Quick Links in the lower right-hand corner of the home page. You will be redirected to www.fvap.com, a fully automated site that requires you to create a user account and password.

Voter Registration & Requesting an Absentee Ballot

Voters who have not yet registered to vote and requested an absentee ballot should do so now using the FVAP website. You may also pick up a hard copy of the Federal Postcard Application (FPCA) from any U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

You should also complete a new Federal Postcard Application if you have moved or changed your name since the last time you voted.

Voting

Your local voting officials should mail your absentee ballot 30 to 45 days before the November 4 general election. Return your voted ballot as early as possible.

Be aware of your state’s ballot receipt deadline, as well as any postmarking requirements.

Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for voters who registered in time but fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials. You can access the FWAB using www.fvap.gov as well.

Questions?

The **Voting Assistance Officer** at the U.S. Embassy - Ottawa is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting.

To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, send an e-mail to OttawaAmCits@state.gov

Help for American Victims of Crime in Canada

Being the victim of a crime in a foreign country can be a devastating and traumatic experience. While no one can undo the emotional trauma, physical injury, or financial loss you may have experienced, the United States Embassy in Ottawa, as well as its other posts in Calgary, Quebec, Halifax, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, are ready to help.

We will assist you in managing the practical consequences of being a crime victim and provide you with information about accessing the local criminal justice system, as well as other resources for crime victims abroad and the United States. This office can assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family or friends on your behalf and explain how funds can be transferred. We can also help you to better understand the criminal justice system in Canada, which is very different from the system in the United States.

Questions involving interpretation of Canadian laws should be addressed to legal counsel licensed to practice law in Canada. The investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) may assist local authorities in certain cases of kidnapping, hostage-taking and terrorism.

Canada has four types of victims' services programs: The first are police-based victim services, which usually consist of victim crisis units to help victims in the aftermath immediately following a crime. The second are Crown/court-based services such as Victim/Witness Assistance Programs. Such programs are designed to help enhance the understanding and participation of victims and witnesses in the process. The third type of service is community-based and includes sexual assault centers, distress centers, and safe homes. The fourth type of service involves a system-based approach and provides a broad range of services from one location. You should ask the police at the earliest opportunity if they have a victim services unit.

Canadian Resource Center for Victims of Crime (CRVCC)

www.crcvc.ca

Toll Free: 1-877-232-2610

Ottawa: (613) 233-7614

Victim Assistance Online

www.vaonline.org

In Quebec victims of crime may contact:

Indemnisation des Victimes d'Actes Criminels (IVAC)

www.ivac.qc.ca

Toll Free: 1-800-561-4822

Montreal: (514) 906-3019



SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

For victims who suffered or are suffering from domestic violence please contact:

National Clearing House on Family violence: 1-800-267-1291

National Office for Victims of Offenders: 1-866-525-0554

For general inquiries in the province of Ontario relating to domestic violence you can also contact:

Service Ontario at: 1-800-267-8097

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF CHILD ABUSE:

Provincial measures and their jurisdiction relating to cases of child abuse vary from province to province. For assistance with cases of child abuse please contact:

METRAC: 1-877-558-5570. This serves as a child abuse information and education resource center. They also have services dealing with violence prevention and providing support for victims of child abuse.

BOOST: (416) 515-1100. This is a service centre specializing in child abuse prevention and intervention.

SPECIAL INFORMATION FOR CASES OF KIDNAPPING:

Family victims can contact the RCMP's 24-hour Operational Communication Centre: (519) 640-7267.

EMBASSY LOCATION:

Americans living or traveling in Canada are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the [State Department's travel registration website](#) so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Canada. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at:

490 Sussex Drive

Ottawa, ON

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CANADA

Tel: (613) 238-5335

