

AMERICAN Accent

DEPARTMENT OF STATE — U.S. CONSULATE — MUMBAI

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

MARCH 2007

HISTORY OF PRESIDENTS' DAY- FEBRUARY 19

Presidents' Day is the common name for the [United States federal holiday](#) officially designated as Washington's Birthday. It is celebrated on the third Monday of February.

As the official title of the federal holiday, Washington's Birthday was originally implemented by the federal government in [1880](#) in the [District of Columbia](#) and expanded in [1885](#) to include all federal offices. As the first federal holiday to honor an American citizen, the holiday was celebrated on Washington's actual birthday, [February 22](#). In [1971](#) the federal holiday was shifted to the third Monday in February.



In the late 1980s, with a push from advertisers, the term Presidents' Day began its public appearance. The theme has expanded the focus of the holiday to honor another February President, [Abraham Lincoln](#), and often other [Presidents of the United States](#) as well. Although Lincoln's birthday, [February 12](#), was never a federal holiday, approximately a dozen state governments have officially renamed their Washington's Birthday observances as "Presidents' Day", "Washington and Lincoln Day", or other such designations.

It is also interesting to note that "Presidents' Day" is not always an all-inclusive term. In [Massachusetts](#), while their state holiday honors "Washington's Birthday", there is also a Presidents' Day Proclamation honoring the Presidents that have come from the New England area. Alabama uniquely observes the day as "Washington and Jefferson Day," even though Jefferson's birthday was in April. In [Connecticut](#), while Presidents' Day is a federal holiday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday is still a state holiday, falling on February 12 regardless of the day of the week. In Washington's home state of [Virginia](#) the holiday is legally known as "George Washington Day."

Source: Wikipedia

UP AND COMING ITEMS OF INTEREST

An IRS representative will be visiting Mumbai on March 5 and 6, 2007 to provide consultations on IRS related concerns. The IRS representative is available on March 5 for phone consultations (between 9 and 12:30) or one on one, in-person meetings at the Consulate (between 2 and 4:30 p.m.). Appointments can be made by calling the Consulate ahead of time. The U.S. Consulate will also be organizing a Tax Seminar on March 6, 2007 at the Auditorium at the American Center from 9-12. Upon completion of the tax seminar, the IRS representative will be available for further consultations.

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IMMIGRANT VISAS – APPLYING FOR RESIDENCY IN THE U.S.

Last year, the U.S. Consulate in Mumbai approved more than 24,000 immigrant visas. These visas enable Indians and other foreign nationals to enter the United States and to establish themselves as Legal Permanent Residents (LPR's). While there are other ways to qualify for an immigrant visa, the majority of immigrants from India qualify for residency through their relation or marriage to an American citizen or LPR.

This article is meant to highlight a number of key issues that specifically affect the American citizen community here in India. It should be noted, however, that petitioning for a family-based residency visa can be a long and complicated process. For more complete information regarding these processes, you should visit: <http://www.uscis.gov> and http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Who is eligible for an immigrant visa?

All American citizens may petition for residency for their spouses, children, parents over the age of 55, and siblings. To apply for one's parents or siblings, the U.S. citizen must be over 21 years of age.

For immigration purposes, a "child" must be the biological child, step-child (only if the step-parent married the biological parents before the child turned 18), or legally adopted child of an American citizen.

A marriage that is entered into for the sole purpose of immigration, even if legal, cannot be used as the basis of an immigrant visa petition. American citizens also have the ability to apply for a "fiancé visa". While this visa is technically a non-immigrant visa (since it does not immediately confer residency upon entry into the U.S.), it is handled by the Immigrant Visa Section.

How long will it take?

Family-based immigrant visas fall into two general groups. For spouses, unmarried minor children (under 21 years of age), and parents there is no limit to the number of visas that can be issued. For adult children (married or unmarried) and siblings, there is a numerical limit for how many visas can be approved each year.

For the first group, the waiting time is the length of time it takes to process the petition, prepare for the interview, conduct the interview, and finalize the case. While the processing time is affected by many factors, currently such applications are taking an average of six to eight months to process and approve.

Applicants in the second group, in addition to processing times, must wait for visa numbers to be available in their category. Since demand for these visas is extremely high, waiting times for these applicants are considerably longer than for the first group. Currently the waiting time for applicants in this group is between five and ten years, depending on the visa category.

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Petitioners should also be aware that applicants that have previously resided illegally in or been deported from the United States usually require special waivers from the Department of Homeland Security to enter the U.S. again. There is no guarantee that a waiver of this sort will be granted, and the processing takes an additional 3-6 months.

How do I start the process?

American citizens who are legal residents in India may file their petitions with the Department of Homeland Security office at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. American citizens who still maintain their residency in the U.S. must apply through one of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices in the U.S. A list of USCIS offices can be found at the following website: <https://egov.immigration.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices>

Other important considerations:

The primary purpose of family-based immigrant visas is to reunite families. To that end, American citizens who are applying for residency for their family must either reside in the United States, or demonstrate that they are intending to immediately take up residency in the United States. An American citizen who will continue to reside in India may not qualify to petition for a family-based immigrant visa.

Additionally, all petitioners are required to sign forms that promise to financially support their family-members upon entry into the U.S. As evidence of their ability to comply with this promise, petitioners are asked to provide a copy of their most recent U.S. tax returns. Those who have not paid U.S. taxes in the past three years must be able to clearly explain why they have not done so, and may be asked to find a joint sponsor in the U.S. that can also promise to support the immigrants.

Immigration law does not permit the issuance of visas to American citizens. If one or both of the biological parents was an American citizen at the time of birth, the child may have automatically received U.S. citizenship at birth. Cases of this sort are referred to the American Citizen Services Section.

For more information visit:

<http://www.uscis.gov> and http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

INTRODUCTION TO *YOUR* ACS STAFF

Meet Matt Victor

Matt is the ACS Unit Chief and Deputy Consular Section Chief. He joined the Foreign Service in 1989 and has served in Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Warsaw, Berlin, twice in Washington, DC, and since August, 2006 in Mumbai. He is responsible for the Immigrant Visa Unit as well as ACS, but considers taking care of U.S. citizens his number one priority.

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Meet Christy Brown

Christy is the most recent addition to the American Citizen Services staff. She has been working at the US Consulate for one year, but she just joined ACS in January. Christy was born in Colorado, grew up in Oklahoma, and has lived in Washington, DC, South Carolina, Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia. She also lived in Armenia and South Africa before coming to Mumbai. She is in India with her husband, a dog, and a cat. She enjoys traveling, photography, and outdoor sports.

Meet Dolly Vimadlal

Dolly is the Senior Locally Employed Staff in the American Citizen Services Unit. She assumed leadership for the Unit effective August 2002. She joined the Consular Section in 1991. She has served with the Foreign Commercial Service since 1989 and has been with us for the past 18 years. While Dolly is familiar with most of the consular work, Providing services to American citizens is her prime responsibility.

Meet Katy Irani

Katy joined the Consular Section as a Fraud Clerk on December 1st, 1994. She later worked in the Non-Immigrant Visa Section for four years, then as a cashier for two years and in September of 2001 joined the American Citizen Services Unit. Renewing of American passports and preparing Emergency Passports, Consular Report of Birth and Deaths, Notary Services, Mailing of Social Security and Annuity Monthly checks and other counter services related to American citizens are some parts of the job which Katy enjoys the most.

USCIS NATURALIZATION TEST REDESIGN

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), an arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is revising the U.S. naturalization test to make the testing process more standardized, fair and meaningful. The naturalization test will include uniform testing protocols and procedures nationwide to ensure that there is no variation between offices and will encourage civic learning and patriotism among prospective citizens. A revised test, with an emphasis on the fundamental concepts of American democracy and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, will help to encourage citizenship applicants to learn and identify with the basic values that we all share as Americans.

As part of the test redesign, USCIS will conduct a pilot program in ten cities beginning in February 2007 to ensure the agency has all the information necessary before the new test is fully implemented nationwide in 2008. During this pilot phase, USCIS will carefully analyze the new test questions to make certain that the questions are fair and work as they were intended. USCIS will also collect information about testing procedures through a variety of avenues to help refine the testing procedures and facilitate the smooth transition to the new naturalization exam.

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USCIS has placed civic questions and answers, along with a study guide on the Internet and elsewhere in the public domain to help applicants prepare. For further detailed information regarding the pilot program and new naturalization test please visit <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> and read the fact sheet released January 2007 regarding the USCIS Naturalization Test Redesign.

AMERICAN *Accent* IS SEEKING READER INPUT

We hope that through this newsletter, Americans can stay in better contact with the U.S. Consulate and the rest of the American community throughout India. In our effort to improve this newsletter and make it more useful to our American community in India, the **AMERICAN *Accent*** staff is seeking your submissions of:

Letters to the Editor: In order to more adequately address the concerns that members of the American community have, we are looking to start a “Letters to the Editor” section of the newsletter. Any American who has questions or concerns that they think could also benefit the American community as a whole, are encouraged to submit letters. The **AMERICAN *Accent*** staff will try to print and respond to those letters that deal with issues affecting the entire American community.

Organizational Profiles: We would like to make it a normal practice of highlighting charity and non-profit organizations through which Americans are working to assist India. We welcome organizations to submit a short (150-300 word) description of their group to the newsletter. If and when possible, in each future edition, we will highlight a different group.

Other Articles: If you have another topic that you believe would be of interest to the American community, feel free to submit your ideas to the **AMERICAN *Accent*** staff. Articles should be between 150 to 300 words in length.

Contact info:

Our office is open to American citizens for routine services from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on all weekdays except for official holidays. (The most immediate official American and Indian holidays are March 19 for Gudi Padwa, and April 6 for Good Friday) Please see our website for a complete list of official holidays.

If visiting during office hours, you do not require an appointment unless you are applying for a Consular Report of Birth. Please remember that the Consulate’s number one priority is to provide service to American citizens. If you need emergency assistance outside of regular business hours, please see the left panel of the newsletter for contact information.

If you believe you have missed a recent “warden message” sent to American citizens in India, please visit http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov/warden_information.html to see all recent warden messages issued by the U.S. Consulate in Mumbai.

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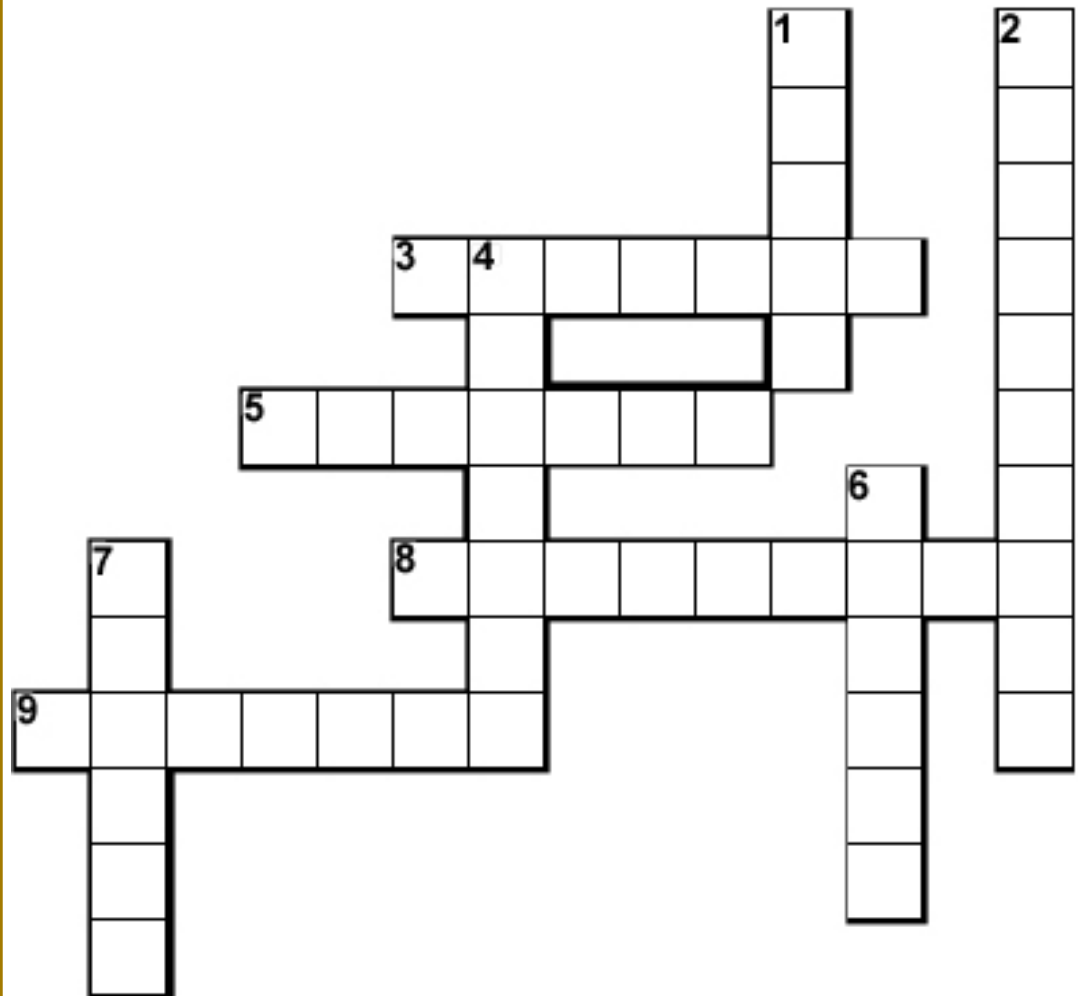
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**KIDS CORNER: PRESIDENTS' DAY
CROSSWORD PUZZLE**



ACROSS:

3. Our last President
5. Was the youngest U.S. President and was shot in Dallas, TX
8. This president loved nature and most children in the U.S. have a toy bear named after him.
9. His wife was known as Lady Bird

DOWN:

1. Was forced to resign because of the Watergate scandal
2. The first United States President
4. Was shot by John Wilkes Booth
6. Former actor
7. Had a large dam named after him

ANSWERS: 1. Nixon; 2. Washington; 3. Clinton; 4. Lincoln; 5. Kennedy; 6. Reagan; 7. Hoover; 8. (Teddy) Roosevelt; 9. Johnson