

## Letter from Ambassador Michele Sison



The U.S. Embassy is very pleased to present this second issue of the ACS newsletter. We hope that it provides Americans in Lebanon with an additional source of information about issues that are important to citizens abroad, such as voting, filing taxes, and even preventing the flu.

In our second issue, we have expanded the focus to strengthen the lines of communication between the Embassy and the American community in Lebanon. We have included a new section called “Focus on the Embassy,” with articles that provide an insider’s view of the different areas of the Embassy and how they support the U.S. Government’s overall mission in Lebanon. This quarter we are highlighting the Public Diplomacy Section.

We will also be using the newsletter to showcase ways in which the American community is becoming involved in Lebanon. A great example of this integration is Jennifer William’s new radio show. Jennifer is the Embassy’s Cultural Affairs Officer. Every Thursday, she plays country music’s biggest hits and talks about issues that are important to both the Lebanese and American communities.

The newsletter is also an opportunity to share information on how Americans in Lebanon can be more involved in their community and with the Embassy. We have an extensive network of local wardens who work closely with the Embassy and other Americans in their areas to ensure that we are all prepared for any situation. This and other volunteer opportunities provide a valuable service to your community and a chance to meet other Americans in Lebanon.

I hope that you enjoy this quarter’s newsletter! For additional information about any of the topics discussed in this newsletter, please email the American Citizen Services Section at [BeirutACS@state.gov](mailto:BeirutACS@state.gov)

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**Focus on the Embassy – Public Diplomacy Section**

The Public Diplomacy (PD) section carries out a wide range of programs to strengthen the relationship between the Lebanese and American people. PD is the official point of contact for Lebanese and resident foreign media on matters of U.S. policy worldwide, but especially towards Lebanon.

Information from the various media sources is disseminated to the Embassy and Washington on a daily basis.

The eleven-person staff (two Foreign



Service Officers and nine Locally Engaged Staff members) actively engages the Lebanese public to

explain U.S. foreign policy, history, culture and the evolution of concepts and ideas.

Youth programming is a significant part of the PD section's work, particularly in traditionally underserved communities, as are outreach activities. All Embassy staff members participate in outreach activities, adding a face to the U.S. PD engages Lebanese about the United States and facilitates U.S. citizens' participation in the academic life of Lebanon. Cultural activities, including art, music and theater

are also part of the regular PD programming throughout the year. U.S. specialists and speakers are brought to Lebanon and cover a variety of subjects.



The Public Diplomacy section manages a variety of scholarships and advising services for students of all ages wishing to study in the U.S. While the Fulbright Scholar programs and the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship program are perhaps the best known U.S. programs, there are a variety of others that address specific learning objectives across a number of fields. The U.S. Embassy's support for education includes programs to strengthen English language learning and teaching which also integrate civic and environmental education, conflict resolution, and democratic values.

**Contact Information:**

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+961-4-543-600 (Extension  
4275) - Fax: +961-4-544-861 -  
E-Mail:[BeirutPD@state.gov](mailto:BeirutPD@state.gov)

## *Preparing for the Summer Travel Season*

It is that time of year again; time to start planning Spring Break and summer vacations. This is also a good time to make sure that your travel documents are up to date. Nothing ruins a vacation more than getting to the airport and realizing that you or someone in your family has an expired passport.



Don't waste money on ticket change fees! Before you book your ticket, be sure to check your and your family's passport to make sure they will get you through all your future travel plans.

For information on how to renew your passport, please visit our website at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov>. Passports applications are accepted Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. ***Remember*** that it takes approximately 7-10 business days to process a passport application so make sure to give yourself enough time.

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## *Honor the Past, Support the Future – Vote!*

### **New Law Makes Absentee Voting Easier for Overseas Americans**

On October 28, 2009, Congress enacted the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. This legislation amends existing law regarding overseas voting in federal elections, and should make voting easier for overseas Americans.

### **New Procedures for 2010 Elections**

Beginning with the November 2010 general election, and for all subsequent general,

special, and primary elections, states will be required to mail out ballots at least 45 days prior to an election for a federal office. This requirement may cause some states to select earlier primary dates in order to comply with the 45 day mailing deadline, or to request waivers due to special circumstances.



In addition to mailing ballots to overseas voters, the states will be required, at the voter's request, to provide registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and blank ballots via fax or email. However, each state's laws determine whether ballot requests or voted ballots can be returned via fax or email. The new law prohibits states from rejecting marked ballots based on notarization, paper size, or paper weight requirements. The witnessing requirements of individual states remain in place.

### **Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests**

Effective immediately, states will no longer be required by federal law to continue to mail election materials to overseas addresses (even when they are determined to be invalid) for two complete general election cycles on the basis of a single ballot request. It will now be up to each state to determine how long to continue to send out election materials before requiring overseas voters to submit new ballot requests. This change, sought by local election officials, should greatly decrease the volume of voting materials sent abroad to addresses where Americans no longer reside.

### **State Department Recommendations**

In light of these changes, the Department of State recommends that all U.S. voters residing abroad request absentee ballots from their local election officials at the start of each calendar year, and whenever there is a change of address, change of e-mail address, or change of name, by completing and sending in a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). To locate information on your specific state's requirements, and to obtain an on-line version of the FPCA, please visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). Voters may also pick up a hard copy of the FPCA from any U.S. embassy or consulate. FPCAs may be mailed to your local voting officials in the



United States via international mail or from any U.S. embassy or

consulate. Many states allow U.S. citizens overseas to submit the FPCA by e-mail or fax.

The Department of State strongly encourages all U.S. overseas voters to provide email addresses or fax numbers on their FPCAs to enable local election officials

to transmit election materials in the fastest manner available, which should then allow sufficient time for the return of voted ballots. For information regarding your specific state, please visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### **Emergency Ballots**

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for the November general elections for federal offices, although some states also permit its use for elections for state and local offices. Beginning in January 2011, the new law allows use of the FWAB for primary, special, and runoff elections for federal offices. Voters who request an absentee ballot in advance of their state's ballot request deadline, but who fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials in time to vote, should complete the Federal Write-In

Absentee Ballot and send it back to local election officials in time for it to be counted. An on-line version of the FWAB, together with instructions for its use, is available at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

### **Questions?**

The Voting Assistance Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, call 961-4-542600/543600 or send an e-mail to [BeirutACS@state.gov](mailto:BeirutACS@state.gov).



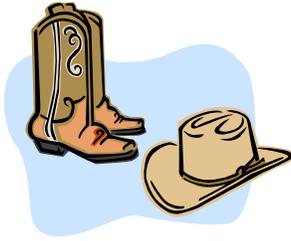
~ “Those who stay away from the election think that one vote will do no good: 'Tis but one step more to think one vote will do no harm”. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

~ “The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.” ~ Lyndon B. Johnson

~ “To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers. One who does not vote has no right to complain.” ~ Louis L'Amour



Want to be a **Facebook** Fan of the U.S. Embassy? Just search for “[U.S. Embassy Beirut](#)”.



Are you a **country** music fan? If the answer is yes - tune into Radio One (**105.5**) Thursday nights at 10:00 for "The Wild West". The hot new radio show where the Embassy's own Jennifer Williams plays the hottest country music hits and reviews the top 10 country songs on the Billboard charts.

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### **Don't Forget to File!**

**Tax returns** are due on April 15<sup>th</sup>. If you have questions on how to file taxes abroad or where to get forms, please visit the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

International tax assistance is also available at the IRS Office in Philadelphia. 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 (215) 516-2000 (not toll free)

Fax: 1 (215) 516-2555

Email: visit this webpage <http://www.irs.gov/help/page/0,,id=133197,00.html>

Mail: Internal Revenue Service

P.O. Box 920

Bensalem, PA 19020

United States of America



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**Reminder:** Don't forget to register yourself and your family with the Embassy if you are living in, or planning a trip to Lebanon. You can register at the Embassy Monday, Tuesday or Thursday 8:00 – 11:00, or online via our website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>. You can also send your registration form via fax to 04-544209.

## U.S. Embassy, Beirut – Quarterly Newsletter

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The **American Citizen Services Section** has recently made changes to service and phone call hours. Please check the website frequently for the most updated information on hours of operation and holidays.

Walk-In Services:	Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 8:00 – 11:00
Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA):	Wednesdays 8:00 – 11:00 <b>(By Appointment Only)</b>
Federal Benefit – Check Collection Only:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00
Federal Benefits:	Fridays 8:00 – 11:00 <b>(By Appointment Only)</b>
Phone Call Inquiries:	Monday through Friday 2:00 – 4:00

To make an appointment, please email your request, name and contact information to [BeirutACS@state.gov](mailto:BeirutACS@state.gov) or call Monday through Friday from 2:00 – 4:00.

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### Contact Information – American Citizen Services Unit

**Embassy Mainline:** 04-542600/543600 (Ask for American Citizen Services Section)  
**ACS Section Fax:** 04-544209  
**ACS E-mail:** [BeirutACS@state.gov](mailto:BeirutACS@state.gov)  
**Embassy Website:** <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov>

The U.S. Embassy is located in Awkar facing the municipality.

If you would like to receive the newsletter by **email**, please send a request to [BeirutACS@state.gov](mailto:BeirutACS@state.gov)

### Emergency Contact Information

In the event of a genuine emergency, American citizens may phone the Embassy at any time at 961-4-543600 and ask to speak to the American Citizen Services Section (during business hours) or the duty officer (after hours and weekends).



### Upcoming Holidays

March 25	Feast of Annunciation (L)
April 2	Good Friday (L)
April 5	Easter Monday (L)
May 31	Memorial Day (A)

**A:** American Holiday 

**L:** Lebanese Holiday 