



## *Embassy of the United States of America*

Bul. Ilinden b.b.  
Skopje, Macedonia  
Tel: (02) 311-6180  
Fax: (02) 321-3767  
Email: [consularskopje@state.gov](mailto:consularskopje@state.gov)  
<http://skopje.usembassy.gov>

## **American Citizen Services Newsletter March 2006**

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### **SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION**

While the security situation in Macedonia today is stable, all travelers should be alert for unusual behavior and other possible indicators that something out of the ordinary might be happening. Americans should avoid demonstrations and other sites, such as roadblocks, where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers. Acts of intimidation and violence against American citizens have not occurred recently but remain possible.

While overall levels of crime throughout Macedonia remain low, there have been occasional incidents of home and vehicle break-ins. We remind all American citizens to lock their windows and doors at all times and not to leave any valuables in plain sight in their vehicle.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov> where up-to-date [Worldwide Caution Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

### **UPCOMING HOLIDAYS**

The Embassy will be closed for the following holidays in the next three months:

- Orthodox Easter – Sunday, April 23
- Labor Day-Monday and Tuesday, May 1 and 2
- Memorial Day – Monday, May 29

A full list of all of our holiday closings for 2006 is available online at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

## **EXTENSIONS OF TIME TO FILE**

Beginning with 2005 income tax returns due in 2006, individuals will be able to use a single IRS form (Form 4868) to get an automatic six-month extension of time to file. The due date without extension for individual income tax returns is April 15. Taxpayers residing overseas are allowed an automatic extension to June 15 without filing Form 4868. A tax-filing extension does not extend the tax-payment deadline. Visit the IRS website for more information at <http://www.irs.gov>.

## **FAKE IRS EMAIL – SCAM ALERT**

We have learned of a phishing email scam that attempts to convince the user that it is from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) by using a spoofed "From" address of "tax-refunds@irs.gov". Upon clicking on the link provided in the email, the user is taken to a fraudulent site that looks like a legitimate U.S. government site. The user is then asked to provide personal information, such as their social security, credit card and bank PIN numbers. Do not enter any data; do not respond to this fraudulent email.

The US Computer Emergency Response Team (US-CERT) encourages users to take the following measures to protect themselves from this type of phishing attack: Do not follow unsolicited web links received in email messages and be sure to contact your financial institution immediately if you believe your account/and or financial information has been compromised.

For additional information on ways to avoid phishing email attacks, US-CERT recommends that all users review "Avoiding Social Engineering and Phishing Attacks" at <http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/ST04-014.html>. Information is also available on Spoofed/Forged Emails at [http://www.cert.org/tech\\_tips/email\\_spoofing.html](http://www.cert.org/tech_tips/email_spoofing.html).

## **2006 ELECTIONS INFORMATION**

Did you know that the 2006 elections officially begin with the Texas State Primary on March 7 and that all States will hold primaries this year before the November 7 general election? Primary elections play an important role in the electoral process. Voters in state primaries select their party's candidates for state and federal offices such as Governor, U.S. Senator, and member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

You can find a wealth of information about voting, including State and monthly election calendars, links to on-line registration and an Absentee Ballot request form, and State by State Instructions at <http://www.fvap.gov>. This is the website of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). The program's three goals are to 1) inform and educate U.S. citizens

worldwide of their right to vote; 2) foster voting participation; and 3) protect the integrity of, and simultaneously enhance, the electoral process at the Federal, State and local levels.

Voting Assistance Officers at Embassies and Consulates assist U.S. citizens in obtaining and completing Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) requests for registration and ballots, witnessing or notarizing FPCA forms (if required by your State), and serving as a postage-free mailing point where FPCA forms and other election material may be mailed back to your local voting jurisdiction in the U.S.

## **RENEWING U.S. DRIVER'S LICENSES WHILE OVERSEAS**

If you find that your U.S. state driver's license is about to expire and you would like to have it renewed, you should contact the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office in the state where your current license was issued. Some states will allow you to renew your license while overseas, others will not.

A good place to start your search for information on this process is [www.dmv.org](http://www.dmv.org). From here you can link to your state's DMV office website which usually posts information on procedures for renewing your license. Although the U.S. Embassy has no role in the renewal process, we can notarize certain documents for you if required by your state for renewal.

As a reminder, you are not permitted to drive in Macedonia with your U.S. license alone; you should obtain an International Driver's Permit before arriving in Macedonia.

## **NEED MORE PASSPORT PAGES?**

If your full-validity U.S. passport has not expired yet, but has no blank pages left for visas, we can add additional pages for you free of charge. Barring any unusual circumstances, we can usually add pages to your passport in about 30 minutes, while you wait. You don't need to make an appointment for this service; you can follow the regular working hours for the U.S. citizens. Special rules apply to children's passports, where both parents need to sign the application form.

## **DESIGN OF THE NEW U.S. E-PASSPORTS**

The proposed U.S. Electronic Passport is the same as a regular passport with the addition of a small contactless **integrated circuit** (computer chip) embedded in the back cover. The chip will securely store the same data visually displayed on the photo page of the passport, and will additionally include a digital photograph. The inclusion of the digital photograph will enable biometric comparison, through the use of facial recognition technology at international borders. The U.S. "e-passport" will also have a new look, incorporating additional anti-fraud and security features. Passports without chips will still be valid for the full extent of their validity period.

### **Security and Privacy of the e-Passport**

The data stored on the chip is protected from alteration by the latest digital signature technology. As the Department of State implements this new technology, it will include passport features that will protect the security and privacy of passport bearers. We will share

