



ACS *newsletter*

February 2014

U.S. Embassy, Manila

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Philippines 1000

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Note from ACS

ACS Manila would like to encourage all Americans residing in or visiting the Philippines to register using the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). By connecting with us on STEP, we will be able to better assist you in the case of an emergency, such as if you lose your passport or it is stolen while you are abroad. We also assist U.S. citizens in other emergency situations, such as in natural disasters.

See page 3 of the newsletter for specific registration details.

For general travel information, go to:

<http://www.travel.state.gov>



News from the IRS



IRS Now Offers Download of Prior Year Tax Filings

As of today, the IRS allows USCITs to download their “tax transcripts,” which are all of their prior years’ tax filings. This is a useful service for applicants who need prior years’ tax filings for help in determining physical presence and gleaning other information. This can help speed things up a bit for applicants who have not kept their tax records from previous years.

<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Get-Transcript>

TAXATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS



Some people who get Social Security benefits will have to pay taxes on their benefits. They will be affected only if they have substantial income in addition to their Social Security benefits as follows.

Filing a federal tax return as an "individual":

If combined income* is between \$25,000 and \$34,000, 50 percent of Social Security benefits may be subject to income tax.

If combined income* is above \$34,000, up to 85 percent of Social Security benefits is subject to income tax.

Filing a joint tax return:

If combined income* is between \$32,000 and \$44,000, 50 percent of Social Security benefits may be subject to income tax.

If combined income* is more than \$44,000, up to 85 percent of Social Security benefits is subject to income tax.

*"Combined" income means adjusted gross income (as reported on Form 1040); plus nontaxable interest, plus one-half of Social Security benefits.

At the end of each year, the Social Security Administration (SSA) mails each beneficiary a Social Security Benefit Statement (Form SSA-1099) showing the amount of benefits received. This statement can be used when completing the federal income tax return.

In 2012, about 37% of current Social Security beneficiaries have incomes that exceed the thresholds, requiring them to pay taxes on a portion of their Social Security benefits.

A person can voluntarily elect to have federal taxes withheld from their Social Security benefits by completing and returning Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form W-4V (Voluntary Withholding Request) to SSA. The form and instructions for completing it can also be found on SSA's website at [http://www.ssa.gov/planners/taxwithold.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/planners/taxwithhold.htm).

NOTE: SSA is not an authority on tax matters. For additional information about taxation of Social Security benefits, a person should contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The website is located at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

manila.usembassy.gov

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)



The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens/nationals who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency.

STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

What can you do with STEP?

- * Enter information on your trip or overseas residence
- * Subscribe to receive updates on Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and other information for a particular country

<https://step.state.gov/step/>



In case of an Emergency outside business hours, U.S. citizens may reach the Embassy Duty officer through the Embassy operator at (63)(2) 301-2000.

Federal Voting Assistance Program Launches Redesigned FVAP.gov Website



The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) has released its newly redesigned website in an effort to provide the best voting assistance possible for absent Service members, their families and overseas citizens, and those that support them. Based on feedback from usability studies, the new site provides information tailored to the user, with improved navigation for clarity.

Frequent visitors should go to **FVAP.gov** and update bookmarks accordingly.

Key changes include:

- “Voters Start Here” and State drop-down menus to the online assistants for completing the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)
- Tab drop-down menus that include contact information for FVAP, election officials and Voting Assistance Officers
- A search feature to help navigation to any information previously utilize.

We recognize that Uniformed Service members, overseas citizens, Voting Assistance Officers and election officials rely on reference information found at FVAP.gov. We hope the changes prove helpful to those voting absentee or assisting others. Please let us know if there is more information we can provide, or if you have any issues or suggestions.

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

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Emergencies

For emergencies after office hours, please call (63) (2) 301-2000 and ask for the Duty Officer.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

| <u>HOLIDAY</u> | <u>LEGAL DATE</u> | <u>CLOSING DATE</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| U.S. President’s Day | Monday, Feb 17 | Monday, Feb 17 |
| Heroism Day | Wednesday, April 9 | Wednesday, April 9 |
| Maundy Thursday | Thursday, April 17 | Thursday, April 17 |
| Good Friday | Friday, April 18 | Friday, April 18 |
| Philippine Labor Day | Thursday, May 1 | Thursday, May 1 |
| U.S. Memorial Day | Monday, May 26 | Monday, May 26 |

AMERICA in 3D

A Road Show in Diplomacy,
Development,
& Defense

MARCH 1 & 2

**SM MALL OF ASIA
11AM - CLOSING**

- ★ **FOOD SAMPLINGS**
- ★ **THE VISA TALK**
- ★ **COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS**
- ★ **SPECIAL MUSICAL PERFORMANCES**
- ★ **STUDY IN THE U.S.A.**
- ★ **DANCE CLINIC**
- ★ **CLASSIC CAR SHOW**

SPECIAL MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

U.S. Navy's
7th Fleet Band
Jed Madela
Razorback
Flippin' Soul Stompers
The Crew
Luke Mejares
+ so much more!

EVERYTHING IS FREE!

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