

Town halls and Citizen Services offered in Aleppo and Latakia



Town hall in Aleppo, June 1, 2010

Consul General, M. Andre' Goodfriend and ACS Chief, Karen Wiebelhaus, offered off-site citizen services to Americans residing in Aleppo and Latakia and the nearby cities last month. Over 70 passport applications were accepted, and the Consuls provided assistance with social security applications, additional visa pages, and notary services. Two Town halls were also held in these same locations in order to facilitate a dialogue between Americans residing in these districts about what they expect from their Embassy. The main topics of concern raised by the American community in Syria centered around educational concerns for their children, the hope for an improved bilateral relationship between Syria and the U.S. as well as how to seek assistance with federal benefit issues.



Town hall in Latakia, June 2, 2010

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EDUCATION is the theme for June

As requested in all three of our Town halls, and in order to address the educational concerns of the parents of American children overseas, we have put together a broad list of resources to assist your search in locating online expertise for particular subjects, finding a test site, understanding more about home schooling options, and receiving high school equivalency credit for a child's overseas schooling. We hope this information is helpful to you and if you have further questions, please feel free to contact us at acsdamascus@state.gov.

HOME SCHOOLING AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

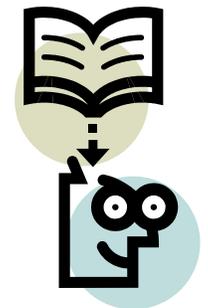
The United States has a broad range of home schooling materials available online. However, citizens of Syria must still attend a Syrian accredited school while living in Syria. So, home schooling, on its own, may not be possible. However, If you are an American living overseas, you can use one of the many American independent study programs available online to help your children while you are away. And, even for those with Syrian citizenship, home schooling materials may be used to supplement a child's education. The Blue titled headings below are all hyperlinks to useful websites:

- [About Home schooling](#)
- [Calvert School](#)
- [EduHound](#) - This website offers all kinds of education information for grades K-12, including links to homeschooling sites, standards by state, safety and health, ESL and foreign language, state and federal government information on education issues, and a host of other education topics.
- [ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education](#) - Homeschooling resources for gifted students
- [Family Education](#)
- [Florida Virtual School](#) - At Stetson University Center, offers online courses through 12th grade, serving students around the world.
- [Global Student Network](#) - A provider of a Virtual Curriculum for grades 2-12. Every course is delivered entirely over the internet.
- [Home Education Magazine](#)
- [Homeschooling Information](#) from all 50 states in the U.S.
- [Homeschooling and Special Educational Needs](#)
- [LD On Line Information on Homeschooling](#) is a parent resource with numerous articles about specific learning disabilities and links to more information on disabilities and parent support groups. The website is designed for parents, teachers, and other professionals.
- [Power-Glide Foreign Language Courses for Homeschooling](#)
- [Teacher Stores](#) - Check out their free resources!
- [Technology - Weekly Tips for Teachers](#) - This free online newsletter provides online resources for teachers, which may be useful to homeschooling families. Topics covered include Start Your Week, Printable Activity of the Week, eWorkbook of the Week, On-line Activity of the Week, Weekly Teacher Resources, The Latest on Our Teacher Message Board, On-line Teacher Poll of the Week, and Best on the Web for Teachers.
- [The Independent Study Catalog](#) - This guide to over 10,000 correspondence courses, including high school, college, and graduate programs, plus external degree and certificate programs is available from: Peterson's Guides
- [USDA Graduate Correspondence Program](#)
- [World Wide Learn](#) - This website offers links to numerous online courses and diploma programs that can be used for high school age students.

LOCAL resources for Test Preparation Classes

Sharif Consulting Center- 331-6499 or 0933-535377

Test preparation and registration services for TOFEL, GED, SAT, GRE CAT, GMAT CAT.



Some Home Schooling Programs Accredited in the U.S. for High School

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tel: 402-472-4422 / Toll free: 877-243-4747

<http://extended.unl.edu>

University of Missouri-Columbia High School

Tel: 800-609-3727 or 573-882-2491

<http://cdis.missouri.edu>

cdis@missouri.edu

University of Miami Online High School

Toll Free: 877-871-8163 / 954-922-1621

<http://www.UMOHS.org>

Texas Tech University Distance Education

Tel: 806-742-7200

<http://www.ode.ttu.edu>

National High School

<http://nationalhighschool.com/>

info@nationalhighschool.com

Phone: 1-866 550 0210 or 1-404 214 6014 / Fax: 1-678-387 5289

National High School-Gulf Region

Gulf Center for University Services

Jumeirah Emirates Towers 41st Floor

Sheikh Zayed Road

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

dubai@nationalhighschool.com

Phone: +011-866 550 0210

Government Websites for Kids

The White House for Kids - <http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Kid's and Youth Educational Page - <http://www.fbi.gov/fbikids.htm>

The United States Air Force - <http://www.af.mil/aflinkjr/entrance.htm>

The US Department of State, Foreign Affairs for Young People - <http://www.future.state.gov>

The United States Department of Energy Kids Zone - <http://www.energy.gov/kidz/kidzone.html>

The United States Treasury's Page for Kids - <http://www.ustreas.gov/kids/index.html>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Page for Kids - <http://www.fema.gov/kids>

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Welcome to Kids -

<http://www.nasa.gov/home/index.html?skipIntro=1>

Kid's Page from FedStats - These statistical agencies provide special webpages for kids in elementary through high school. The webpages include fun facts, games, project ideas, and career information.

<http://www.fedstats.gov/kids.html>

Virginia Department of Education - <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/ForStudents>

Homework Helpers

General Homework Helpers

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids - <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>

Tekmom.com at <http://www.tekmom.com/search> - This site was started by a northern Virginia computer teacher with children at home. It contains favorite research tools on the web for kids. URL addresses are provided for kid search engines, general search engines, science, history, images, encyclopedias, dictionaries, biographies, authors, and maps.

B.J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helpers at <http://school.discovery.com/homeworkhelp/bjpinchbeck/index.html> - This site includes hundreds of links to information to help kids with their homework.

Free e-newsletter by Barbara Feldman that pre-screens web sites suitable for kids and bundles them by subject. Topics have included space, dinosaurs, the Civil War, spelling helpers, math flashcards, crossword puzzles, reference materials, etc. Subscribe to this free HTML newsletter at their site.

<http://www.surfnetkids.com/emailedition.htm>

An Internet tutoring service offering "jump in anywhere" course content and flexible "build a lesson plan" toolset that can align courses with virtually any curriculum. A student can brush up on prior course study before returning to the States, study at their own pace, enrich their learning by "looking a grade ahead," or simply stay current on the properly aligned course of study from anywhere with an Internet connection. <http://www.clickatutor.com>

Discovery School provides a number of links to homework helpers, as well as fun and games -

<http://school.discovery.com/students/index.html>

At Ask Jeeves, kids can type in a question and have it answered. This site also lists a multitude of other reference materials that are useful study tools. <http://www.ajkids.com>

Puzzlemaker - <http://www.puzzlemaker.com> - Teachers, students, and parents can use the puzzlemaker tool to create and print customized word search, crossword and math puzzles using your word lists. This site is published by DiscoverySchool.com, part of the Discovery Channel.

Resources for Help with Math

U.S. Department of Education - <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/hyc.html>. This site offers a wealth of information for parents on helping their children succeed in school as well as learning and planning resources for students.

AAAMath - <http://www.aaamath.com>. This interactive math instruction site presents exercises and games for practicing math objectives for students in grades K-8.

Academic Education Learning Resources - <http://www.dcn.davis.ca.us/~vctinney/referen.htm> This site offers lists of links to helpful web sites, organized by topics such as reference and homework help; science, technology and how things work; English, literature, art and music; foreign languages, mathematics and more. **A Plus Math** - <http://www.aplusmath.com> - This is an interactive web site to help elementary students develop their math skills interactively through games, puzzles, flashcards, worksheets, word finds, and homework helpers.

Ask Dr. Math - <http://mathforum.org/dr.math/> Dr. Math is a question and answer service for math students. A searchable archive is available by level and topic as well as a summary of frequently asked questions.

Astronomy.com - <http://www.astronomy.com/>. This site, sponsored by the publishers of Astronomy magazine, offers educational articles and information on astronomy for kids and adults.

Figure This! - <http://www.figurethis.org/>. Figure This! provides interesting math challenges that middle school students can do at home with their families. Additionally, it offers a Family Corner that provides support for parents to help them work with their child.

Kid Info - <http://www.kidinfo.com/>. A well organized, homework resource site offering homework help, reference resources, search engines and other fun websites for kids.

The Math League - <http://www.mathleague.com/help/help.htm>. The Math League is a helpful resource for students in grades four through eight. It specializes in math contests, books and computer software designed to stimulate interest and confidence in mathematics

SOS Mathematics - <http://www.sosmath.com/SOS>. SOS Mathematics is a study site for high school students. It focuses on advanced math, offering explanations, review, practice exams and homework help.



GED EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

U.S. High School Diplomas

[The General Educational Development \(GED\) testing program](#) was developed to give U.S. and Canadian citizens who have not graduated from high school the opportunity to demonstrate the level of achievement normally acquired through the completion of a traditional U.S./Canadian high school course of study. The five GED comprehensive examinations cover writing, social studies, science, interpreting literature and arts, and math. Emphasis is on intellectual ability such as evaluating, analyzing, drawing conclusions, and the ability to understand and apply information and concepts. The tests are administered in all 50 states, the U.S. territories, and the 10 Canadian provinces. The GED practice tests are available in English, Spanish, French, Braille, large print, and audiocassette. They can be ordered from the [Steck-Vaughn Company](#), P.O. Box 26015, Austin, TX 78755. Tel: 1-800-531-5015 or visit their website. Many GED preparation books and software programs are also available in libraries and bookstores.

The GED tests may also be taken overseas on a limited basis by U.S. and Canadian citizens. They can only be administered through a U.S. Embassy or a military installation that is approved by the General Educational Development Testing Service (GEDTS). The GED is no longer offered in Syria. However students can take the test in Beirut or Amman. For further information on exam registration, go to www.prometric.com.

The Chief Examiner designated by the GEDTS monitors testing and verifies eligibility. The requirements are that you:

- provide birth certificate or passport as proof of citizenship with your application;
- have not graduated from an accredited high school, been awarded a high school equivalency credential, or achieved GED test scores sufficient to qualify for an equivalency credential or diploma;
- are not currently enrolled in an accredited high school program;
- are unable to verify achievement level or to obtain scores;
- meet the minimum age requirement. (If you are a legal resident of a state or province, you must meet the minimum age requirement of that state or province.)



For information on eligibility requirements, and to arrange to take the GED, contact the appropriate school system. If you do not have legal residence in the U.S. or Canada, you must be at least 18 years of age if you are a U.S. citizen and at least 19 years of age if you are a Canadian citizen. You must provide proof of age in the form of an official photo identification, and if you claim legal residence in a state or province, you must provide proof of residence.

If you meet the requirements, contact the Chief Examiner to arrange a test date and time. Submit the application with proof of age, citizenship, and legal residence to the Chief Examiner for signature before mailing it with the fee to GEDTS. Testing materials will be sent to the Chief Examiner at the Embassy or military testing center. The GED Examiner must return the completed test materials to the GED Testing Service Office for marking. If you pass the GED overseas, you may request a diploma from a state or province that does not require residence: Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, Vermont, plus Alberta, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia.

American Language Center Test Dates

Test	July 2010	August 2010	September 2010	October 2010	November 2010	December 2010
ITP	Wednesday, July 7 Tuesday, July 27	Monday, August 9 Thursday, August 26	Monday, September 13 Thursday, September 30	Thursday, October 14 Thursday, October 28	Wednesday, November 10 Tuesday, November 23	Thursday, December 9 Tuesday, December 28
GRE	N/A	N/A	N/A	Subject Test Saturday, October 9 General Test Saturday, October 23	Subject Test Saturday, November 13 General Test Saturday, November 20	N/A
SAT	N/A	N/A	N/A	Saturday, October 9	Saturday, November 6	Saturday, December 4
TOEFL	N/A	Saturday, August 14	N/A	Saturday, October 16	Saturday, November 13	N/A
TSE	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered	No longer offered
TOEIC	Wednesday, July 28	Wednesday, August 25	Wednesday, September 29	Wednesday, October 27	Wednesday, November 24	Wednesday, December 29

ITP: Institutional TOEFL

TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication

Know someone interested in studying in the U.S.?

If you are thinking about studying in the U.S., the American Cultural Center at the U.S. Embassy is the best place to help you as you and your parents try to navigate what can be a confusing process. Currently, we are providing virtual advising services and you can ask any questions to: educationusa.syria@gmail.com. In August we will have a full time educational advisor- an American who has studied in the U.S., has been trained by EducationUSA to advise students and who speaks Arabic!

During the summer there are some things you can do to get ready, no matter what grade you are in; it is never too early to start:

Visit our global website to learn more about studying in the U.S. www.educationusa.info

READ, READ, READ. Make a reading list for yourself. Need some help? Contact educationusa.syria@gmail.com or do a web search of Summer Reading Lists for High School students- there are a lot! Universities are looking for students who are well informed about the world around them, who have critical thinking skills and can synthesize lots of information.

Prepare for the SAT. Most of the very good universities require SAT I and II to show them that you can hit the ground running academically. Use this as an opportunity and don't be scared of the exams. If you are an 11th grader as of September 2010, you could start by taking the SAT I in January as schools will take your best scores. This will get you familiar with the test and give you plenty of time to work on your weak areas. If you are a 12th grader as of September 2010, you should plan on taking the October SAT I, the November Subject tests and then December you can take the SAT I again.

To practice for the SAT, you have many options: www.collegeboard.com has a free practice test as well as word of the day emails. They also have an on line course which costs about 70 USD. www.number2.com, www.testprepreview are also some good sites that are free. YouTube also has loads of SAT help for both critical reading and math.

Start to surf the Internet to learn more about the different schools. www.petersons.com is a great search engine to start with. www.collegeconfidential.com is a good place to learn more about the admissions process from other students going through the same thing! You really need to learn about the culture of each school so when you find a school that interests you, go to their home page and look at their mission statement and what their students are interested in and committed to. Be an educated consumer and look for a place that fits your needs: academically, socially and financially.

Extracurricular activities: U.S. Universities are interested in the student outside the classroom and they want to see how you spend your free time. Do you have hobbies you are committed to? (FYI Facebook and video games are not hobbies). Are you a writer? Do you do any volunteer work? Scholarship students have demonstrated that they are outward looking and interested in being an engaged member of their community.

Talk to your parents about how much the family can pay each year. This is not what the family *wants* to pay, but *can* pay. The economy has resulted in smaller endowments, which means fewer scholarships. The more you can pay, the better chance you have at finding a school that can help meet your financial need. If you can, you should visit universities in the U.S. to see how they "feel" and to meet the admissions office. If you have the opportunity to participate in a summer program sponsored by the Embassy or an NGO or if your parents can send you to a summer program in the U.S., then do it. Start building your application now so that when you start to fill it out, you have something to say and can give the universities a better picture of who you really are and how you would be a great addition to their community.

It's never too late to start!



CBP, TSA Provide Reminders and Travel Tips to Summer Travelers

Washington – In anticipation of the summer travel season, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Transportation Security Administration joined efforts to provide travel tips to summer travelers. CBP and TSA recently implemented initiatives to facilitate travel while protecting the homeland against various threats. With the summer travel season rapidly approaching, the two agencies want to educate travelers about these initiatives in order to make their travel experience a more enjoyable one.

CBP reminds travelers:

- U.S. citizens traveling abroad must have approved travel documents when returning home.
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- The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative requires U.S. and Canadian citizens, age 16 and older to present a valid, acceptable travel document that denotes both identity and citizenship when entering the U.S. by land or sea. U.S. and Canadian citizens under age 16 may present a birth certificate or alternative proof of citizenship when entering by land or sea.
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- A radio frequency identification (RFID)-enabled travel document such as a U.S. Passport Card, Enhanced Driver's License/Enhanced Identification Card or Trusted Traveler Program card expedites entry and makes crossing the border more efficient.
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- All nationals or citizens of VWP countries are now required to have an approved Electronic System for Travel Authorization prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the U.S. under the VWP. CBP continues to facilitate the entry process for Visa Waiver Program travelers into the U.S. by implementing the Electronic System for Travel Authorization requirement on January 12, 2009.
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- Other programs that facilitate the entry process for international travelers coming into the country to visit, study or conduct legitimate business include "Trusted Traveler Programs" such as SENTRI, NEXUS and Global Entry. For more information about these programs, please visit the CBP Web site. ([Trusted Traveler Programs](#))

Additionally, CBP offers the following travel tips:

- Tip #1 – To avoid fines and penalties associated with importing prohibited items, travelers should familiarize themselves with the "Know Before You Go" section of the CBP Web site. ([Know Before You Go](#))
- Tip #2 – Be prepared to declare all items acquired abroad. Travelers should prepare for the inspection process before arriving at the inspection booth and have their approved travel documents available for the inspection.
- Tip #3 – Monitor border wait times for various ports of entry. Travelers should consult the CBP website site for hourly updates when planning trips and identifying periods of light use/short waits. During periods of heavy travel, border crossers may wish to consider alternative, less heavily traveled entry routes.
- Tip #4 – Build extra time into the trip in the event of crossing during periods of exceptionally heavy traffic.
- Tip #5 – Know the difference between goods for personal use versus commercial use. For more details, visit the CBP Travel page. ([Travel](#))
- Tip #6 – Do not attempt to bring fruits, meats, dairy/poultry products and firewood into the U.S. from Canada without first checking whether they are permitted.
- Tip #7 – During the holiday travel season, international border crossers should continue to expect a thorough inspection process when entering the U.S. from Canada. Understand that CBP officers have the authority to conduct enforcement examinations without a warrant, ranging from a single luggage examination up to and possibly including a personal search.

(continued from Page 8)

·TSA reminds travelers

As the busy summer travel season approaches, TSA reminds travelers to be prepared and plan ahead for security. Passengers who are prepared for the security process can streamline the process overall at the checkpoint.

- Since the attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day, TSA has accelerated its deployment of Advanced Imaging Technology and expanded the use of Explosive Trace Detection technology.
- Passengers should be prepared to encounter security measures that could occur on a random basis at various locations in the airport environment. This could include the use of ETD to screen carry-on items and hands-as well as explosives detection canine teams, bottled liquid screening technology, behavior detection officers, and AIT.
- Our highly trained security officers are prepared for the increase in passenger volumes and are dedicated to ensuring safe travels. TSA will be fully staffed and prepared to address the needs of the traveling public this summer.



Additionally, TSA offers the following travel tips:

- Tip #1- Passengers can help speed up the screening process by packing their carry-ons in an organized manner. This helps our officers efficiently see what's inside to quickly process it through screening.
- Tip #2 - Existing procedures like 3-1-1 and removing shoes and laptops for screening remain in place.
- Tip #3 - TSA has Family Lanes at every security checkpoint which are designed for passengers with special needs of those who may need more time to process through the security checkpoint.
- Tip #4 - Remember these three simple steps for security:
 - o Have your ID and boarding pass out and ready
 - o Take off shoes and jackets
 - o Take out liquids (have in a clear plastic bag) and laptops

For more information please visit the CBP and TSA Web sites. ([CBP HomePage](#)) ([Transportation Security Administration](#)) *U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.*



TIPS ON WHAT A CONSUL CAN DO AND CANNOT DO FOR AMERICAN CITIZENS

CONSULAR OFFICERS CAN:

- HELP TO GET MONEY FROM FAMILY OR FRIENDS AT HOME.
- PROVIDE A LIST OF LOCAL ATTORNEYS AND PHYSICIANS.
- VISIT IN JAIL TO ASSURE THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS.
- ASSIST IN CONTACTING PARENTS OR GUARDIANS AND HAVE THEM COMMUNICATE WITH THE AMERICAN IN SYRIA.
- ASSIST FAMILY IN CASE OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN IN SYRIA. ACTING AS PROTECTOR OF PROPERTY OF THE DECEASED, PROVIDING INFORMATION OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR BURIAL OF SHIPMENT OF THE DECEASED TO THE U.S.
- ASSIST DESTITUTE AMERICANS WITH REPATRIATION IF THE AMERICAN HAS NO ONE IN THE U.S. TO HELP HIM/HER OUT FINANCIALLY.
- REGISTER U.S. CITIZENS RESIDING ABROAD.
- ISSUE A PASSPORT.
- PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IF YOUR PASSPORT IS LOST OR STOLEN.
- REGISTER THE BIRTH ABROAD OF U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN.
- NOTARIZE DOCUMENTS AND SIGNATURES FOR USE IN THE U.S.
- PROVIDE INFORMATION ON INCOME TAX, VOTING MATTERS, AND REGISTRATION FOR THE DRAFT.

CONSULAR OFFICERS CANNOT:

- CASH CHECKS, PAY BILLS OR LEND MONEY.
 - PAY FOR TELEPHONE CALLS.
 - HELP TO GET YOU OUT OF JAIL.
 - ACT AS YOUR ATTORNEY (AMERICANS IN JAIL SHOULD BE REPRESENTED BY A SYRIAN LAWYER.)
 - INTERVENE IN DISPUTES WITH TRAVEL AGENTS, HOTELS, SHOPS, LANDLORDS, BANKS, BUSINESS ASSOCIATES, HOSPITALS, ETC.
 - MAKE TRAVEL, PLANE OR HOTEL RESERVATIONS.
 - SAFEGUARD VALUABLES, MONEY, LUGGAGE, AUTOMOBILES, OR ACT AS A POST OFFICE.
 - FILL OUT INCOME TAX OR GIVE INFORMATION ON PERSONAL INCOME TAX PROBLEMS.
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Changes in the Federal Benefits Unit

The U.S. Embassy was recently notified that regional responsibility for American citizen residents of Syria for Federal Benefits was shifted in order to offer greater Arabic speaking capability. The Athens Federal Benefit Unit (FBU) will continue to process SS-5 applications for Social Security numbers, however initial claims for benefits, as well as post entitlement issues, i.e., change-of-address, death reports, non-receipt of benefits etc are now under the jurisdiction of another office. If there are concerns about contacting the new FBU directly, please contact American Citizen Services at the numbers listed below, and we will contact the FBU on your behalf.

For further information on federal benefits, we refer you to our updated website at http://damascus.usembassy.gov/federal_benefits.html and www.ssa.gov



American Citizen Services Hours and Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Damascus
American Citizen Services
Consular Section
2, Al-Mansour Street, Abu Roumaneh
PO Box 29
Damascus, Syria
Phone: +963-11-3391-3333
Fax: 331-9678

For appointments, please go to our website at :
<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/service.html>

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSURES

June 24, Thursday	Section Closed
July 4, Sunday	Independence Day
July 29, Thursday	Section Closed
August 26, Thursday	Section Closed
September 05, Sunday	Labor Day
September 12, Sunday	Al-Fitr Holiday
September 30, Thursday	Section Closed

“Assisting approximately 4 million Americans who reside overseas and nearly 60 million who travel abroad remains a top priority for the U.S. Government.

Though consular work is punctuated by extraordinary acts to help U.S. citizens during times of crisis or urgent need, it is built upon a foundation of services provided to an American public that increasingly lives, works, and learns in the global community.”

-- Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan.