



May 2008 News

Information Resource Center (IRC)

Public Affairs Section - U.S. Embassy
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<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/irc.html>

A look at the Information Resource Center (IRC):

The Information Resource Center is a specialized reference and research facility located in the American Cultural Center.

Through a wide variety of online databases, we provide you with free, comprehensive and authoritative information on all aspects of the U.S. We have access to documents on domestic and foreign policies, media issues, legislative developments, as well as social, economic and political issues.

The IRC is the place to access research and reference materials. The staff responds to inquiries for in-depth information from a diverse group of people including journalists, professors, authors, scientists, and business people.

IRC staff can also provide individualized instruction for researchers, scholars and journalists, using the IRC's traditional and electronic resources.

IRC service:

Outreach Program: Our outreach program includes:

1. The creation of specialized information packages in response to institutional or individual inquiries.
2. Daily electronic distribution of news, articles and research papers on a wide range of topics such as political, economic, social and cultural issues. Interested Syrian professionals can join this service by contacting the IRC staff to enroll and start receiving materials in their chosen field of interest.
3. **E-Docs alert service:** provides an annotation and URL for reports, studies and papers. It includes documents from: (1) U.S. executive agencies and the Congressional branch; (2) think tanks; (3) professional associations; and (4) international organization. IRC will send you these annotations classified by themes, with the URL to access the full report. If it is inconvenient for you to print out long reports, IRC invites you to visit us and get the full text report in hard copy free of charge.

Internet Café: The IRC Internet Café has eleven computers with free Internet. The computers are available to the public from 12:00 - 4:30 pm Sunday through Thursday. If you are unfamiliar with the Internet, IRC staff can help with individualized training.

The IRC staff provides quick assistance and research using our resources. Queries are accepted by phone at 3391-4118/3391-4195, email at ircdamas@state.gov, or by appointment during working hours.

All IRC services are free of charge. A nominal fee per page is charged for printing from the IRC computers and for photocopying. The IRC is open to anyone age 18 and older. Entry to the Center requires a valid identification card for Syrians or a valid passport for non-Syrians.

Service Hours:

Sunday–Thursday
12:00pm – 04:30pm

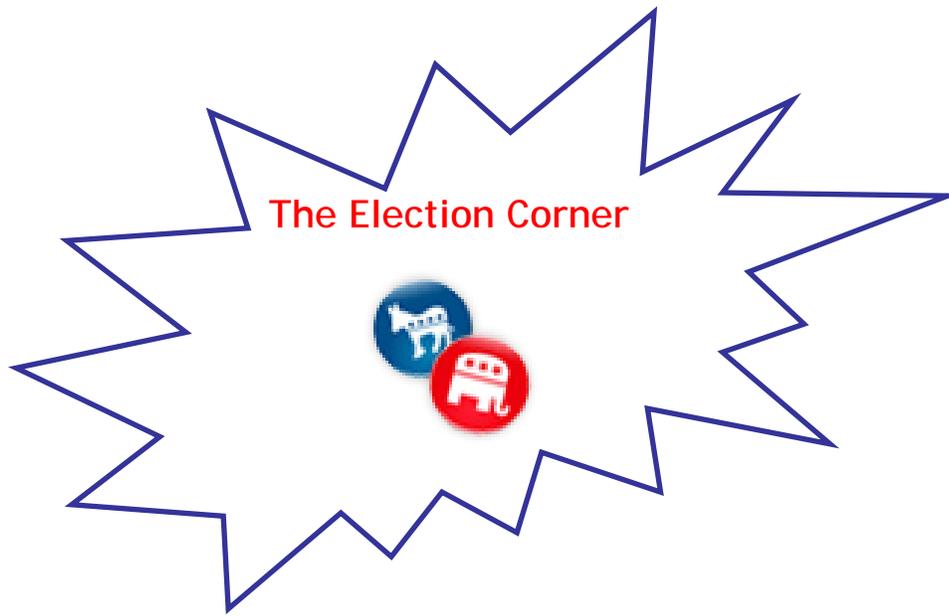
Become an IRC Fan!

Visit our Facebook page and become one of our Fans!
Be the first to invite to our cultural events, learn more about studying in USA, read our news and announcements, join our discussion board, send us questions and queries, and write on our wall.

IRC Damascus on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Damascus-Syria/IRC-Damascus/19451965179>

See you there!



The Election Corner

This feature will allow those of you interested in U.S. Elections to get updated information, look at related governmental and non-governmental websites, get statistical resources, and help you learn more about the U.S. Elections process.

Election's Glossary:

Absentee voting

Absentee voting allows voters who cannot come to polling places a means to cast a ballot. A variety of circumstances, including residency abroad, illness, travel or military service, could prevent voters from coming to the polls on Election Day. Absentee ballots permit registered voters to mail in their votes. The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, a federal law, governs absentee voting in presidential elections. Absentee voting rules for all other elections are set by the states, and vary. In Oregon, all elections are conducted by mail, but voters have the option of voting in person at county polling stations.

Ballot initiative

Ballot initiatives are an example of direct democracy in the United States, in which citizens may propose legislative measures or amendments to state constitutions. Some initiatives propose the repeal of existing state laws. States vary in the number of signatures they require to place an initiative on the ballot. These initiatives (also called "propositions" in some states) are subject to approval, by a simple majority in most, but not all cases.

Blog

Short for weblog, a blog is an unedited online journal. Candidates use blogs to tell users of their Web sites about their activities. Others use blogs to follow the development of campaign issues or events. Political blogs are created by "bloggers," individuals who post commentary and news from their own perspective. Political blogs, like blogs in general, reflect a broad spectrum of opinion.

Religion in 2008 Presidential Campaign:

Public Opinion & Analysis



April 25, 2008

[Does Obama Have a Problem Among Catholic Voters?](#)

Senior Fellow John Green and Associate Director Mark O'Keefe discuss Barack Obama's limited success with Catholic voters in Pennsylvania and look ahead to the primaries in Indiana and North Carolina.



April 11, 2008

[A Primer on the Primary: Religious Voters in Pa.](#)

The April 22 Pennsylvania primary looms large in the tight contest for the Democratic nomination. In an interview with Pew Forum Associate Director Mark O'Keefe, Senior Fellow John Green explains the connections Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John McCain are trying to make with the state's religious voters.



April 3, 2008

[Courting Catholics in 2008](#)

Senior Fellow John Green discusses Catholic voting trends in past elections, the challenges facing the campaigns as they reach out to Catholics and how the church's growing Hispanic population may impact future elections.



March 13, 2008

[Is the 'God Gap' Closing?](#)

In new books, Amy Sullivan of *Time* magazine and E.J. Dionne of *The Washington Post* contend the "God gap" between Democratic and Republican Voters is closing, with implications for the 2008 election. They discussed their books with journalists at a recent Pew Forum event.



March 10, 2008

[Politics and the Pulpit 2008](#)

With news reports that the IRS is investigating the United Church of Christ over a speech Barack Obama gave at the church's national meeting last year, congregations are wondering what role, if any, they can play in the political process. The Forum asked a leading legal expert to write a set of guidelines explaining the IRS rules.



March 7, 2008

Religion and the Remaining Primaries

Pew Forum Senior Fellow John Green discusses how the candidates fared among religious voters in the March 4 primaries, the role that religious voters could play in upcoming Democratic contests and whether false rumors about Obama's faith could hurt his chances for the nomination.



February 8, 2008

Does McCain Need Evangelical Voters?

Senior Fellow John Green looks at the importance of the evangelical vote for the McCain campaign, the challenges posed by religious constituencies across the primary field and the impact of Mitt Romney's withdrawal on the race for the Republican nomination.



February 1, 2008

Personal Faith and Candidate Image in the 2008 Campaign

The personal faith of candidates has played a significant role in the 2008 campaign. Pew Forum Senior Fellow John Green answered questions about the history of faith in presidential politics, campaign efforts to religiously define candidates and how the faith factor might impact Super Tuesday.



January 24, 2008

Will Evangelical Voters Rally Around a Single Candidate in 2008?

With Super Tuesday fast approaching, the Pew Forum's John Green answered questions about evangelical voting patterns in the early primaries, evangelical response to the Romney campaign and Democratic efforts to reach out to evangelical voters.

Upcoming web chats

Web chats are online, text-based discussions that allow audiences outside the United States to interact with American citizens on a wide range of topics. U.S. government and private sector subject experts, academics, journalists, and everyday citizens are brought on as guests to do web chats on USINFO.

To participate, you only need a computer with Internet access and a browser. There is no special software to be downloaded.

For more information, please see the link below:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/Products/Webchats/faq.html>

Date: Tuesday, May 6, 2008

Time: 09:00 am EDT (1300 GMT)

Guest: Michelle Austein and George Burkes



U.S. Elections Your Questions

http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html#askamericagov_06_may_2008

Wondering about how delegates are counted or how the Electoral College works? Curious where the presidential candidates stand on issues that impact your country? Join *America.gov's* elections experts Michelle Austein and George Burkes on the first Tuesday of every month to discuss the people, processes and issues that shape the U.S. presidential race. They will answer your questions and talk about the latest events on the 2008 campaign trail.

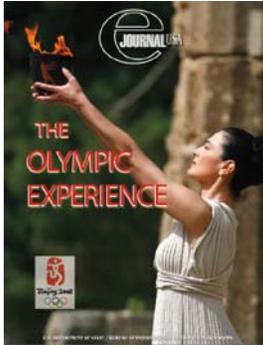
Like or don't like what you see on *America.gov's* 2008 Elections Web page? Readers' questions and comments will shape *America.gov's* elections coverage, so now it is your turn to tell the experts what elections topics you care about.

Past web chats

If you are looking for past web chats, please go to the below link where you can find them all:

http://www.america.gov/multimedia/askamerica.html#askamericagov_06_may_2008

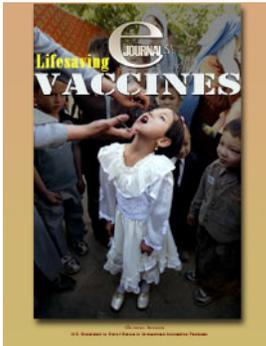
Electronic Journals



The Olympic Experience

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html>

The Olympic Games remind us of certain universal human values. Every Olympian has a story that echoes the shared human struggle for excellence and our devotion to pursue purpose in life. In this issue of *eJournal USA*, we celebrate the Olympics through the individual experiences and insights of athletes who share their memories of the Olympic Experience.



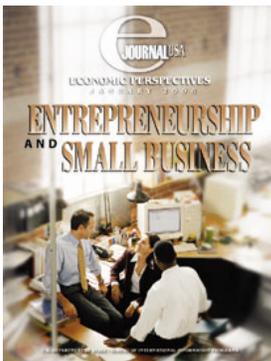
Lifesaving Vaccines

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/0307/ijge/ijge0307.htm>

Arabic version:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/0307/ijga/ijga0307.htm>

Vaccines can prevent disease, prolong life, and even eradicate scourges that have plagued people since prehistory. Knowledge of vaccine effectiveness is decades old, but children in developing nations are still dying from vaccine preventable diseases. The United States and international partners have been working together for more than 30 years to expand the benefits of vaccines to children everywhere. The story of their efforts is told in this edition of *eJournalUSA*.



Entrepreneurship and Small Business

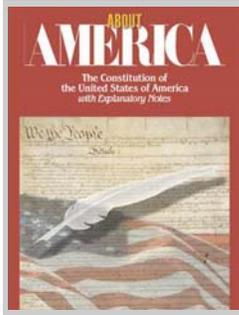
<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0106/ijee/ijee0106.htm>

Arabic version:

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/ites/0106/ijea/ijea0106.htm>

It is truly the innovation, resilience, and determination of small-business owners that centers them at the heart of the American economy. Small businesses broaden the base of participation in society, create jobs, decentralize economic power, and give people a stake in the future. Owning a small business is hard work, but it is not without its rewards. Small-business ownership encourages personal freedom and individual empowerment. It builds and perpetuates social and political stability. And it spurs the kind of innovation that creates gains in productivity, thereby increasing local, and even national, prosperity.

Publications

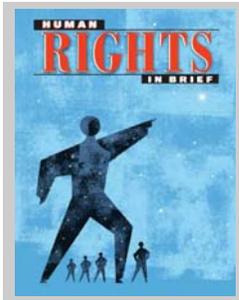


The Constitution of the United States

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/womenpolitics/>

This illustrated publication includes the complete text of the U.S. Constitution (preamble, seven articles, and 27 amendments), as well as an updated introduction and explanatory notes by J.W. Peltason, author of *Understanding the Constitution and Government by the People*. The introduction includes sections explaining how the Constitution set up the U.S. federal system, the background to the Constitutional Convention and how the participants arrived at a final version of the document, its ratification, and sections on the call for a Bill of Rights and the need for additional amendments over the years.

(Hard copies of this publication are available at the Information Resource Center. Please visit us to get a copy.)



Human Rights in Brief

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/journalism/index.htm>

In all civilized nations, attempts are made to define and buttress human rights. The core of the concept is the same everywhere: Human rights are the rights that one has simply because one is human. They are universal and equal. Human rights are also inalienable. They may be suspended, rightly or wrongly, at various places and times, but the idea of inherent rights cannot be taken away. One can no more lose these rights than one can stop being a human being.

Photo Gallery and Videos

Telling America's story with photos and videos.

Offering an audio-visual tour of the stories and issues shaping our world, the photo gallery and videos are two of many invaluable services "America.gov" site offers for its audience.

Both, the gallery and videos can be browsed by the following subjects:
Foreign Policy, U.S. Politics, American Life, Democracy, Science and Health.

Photo Gallery: Please visit the below galleries or go to the photo gallery direct link to see more photo collections.

<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/photogallery.html#7a78bf28-e356-4d21-a311-0c218ec8f6f8>

<p>Science & Health:</p> <p><u>Monitoring Infectious Disease</u></p> 	<p>Foreign Policy:</p> <p><u>U.S. Presidents and Middle East Peace</u></p> 	<p>American Life:</p> <p><u>Meet the Olympians</u></p> 	<p>American Life:</p> <p><u>A Market for Diversity</u></p> 
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Videos:

Please point the mouse on any picture then use "Ctrl" key and click on the link to take you the video you want to watch or go to the link below to see all the video collection.

<http://www.america.gov/multimedia/video.html?playerId=1475282956>

<p>No Risk, No Reward</p>  <p>3 min. 32 sec.</p>	<p>Midnight Basketball</p>  <p>2 min. 18 sec.</p>	<p>Olympic Training Center</p>  <p>2 min. 30 sec.</p>	<p>Green Business</p>  <p>2 min. 18 sec.</p>
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Websites of interest

How to Become a More Effective Researcher and Develop Critical Thinking Skills:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html>

This website helps you become a more effective Internet Searcher and learn how to evaluate what you find. It is an online course from the University of California at Berkeley. It includes handouts and power points to illustrate classes' sessions.

Scholarly Books Free from the University of California Press

<http://content.cdlib.org/escholarship/>

The eScholarship Editions collection includes almost 2000 free books from academic presses on a range of topics, including art, science, history, music, religion, and fiction. Extraordinary resource that lets you search, read, print full-texts of many high-quality scholarly books.

Global Edge: For International Business Research

<http://globaledge.msu.edu/ibrd/ibrd.asp>

An award winning Web site covering country studies, market potential indicators, global resources, comparative statistics, etc.





Monday, May 26

Memorial Day

The Memorial Day holiday celebrated by Americans on the last Monday of each May represents for many the unofficial beginning of summer. An estimated 37.6 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more over the long holiday weekend, as they seek out friends and family, beaches and amusement parks, while others relax and enjoy the warm weather. But most will pause at some point to recall the holiday's true purpose: honoring those who died defending their nation.

Memorial Day entertainments range from large sporting events to quintessentially small-town celebrations. The Indianapolis ("Indy") 500 motor race, by some measures the world's largest single-day sporting event, attracts an estimated global audience of more than 320 million.

Meanwhile, in Waterloo, New York, festivities include an arts and crafts show and a strawberry festival. Horse and wagon rides are available. An Abraham Lincoln impersonator recounts the life of the nation's 16th president, the man who preserved the Union. Those not too full from the pizza-eating contest can compete in a 5-kilometer race.

The tiny village of Waterloo, 280 miles (450 km) from New York City (2000 population 5,118) is where Memorial Day began. Its story, and that of the holiday itself, is woven deeply into the nation's history.

HISTORY OF MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day's origins lie in the American Civil War of 1861–1865. During that conflict, which claimed the lives of more than 550,000 Americans, many citizens began to place flowers on the graves of the war dead. A number of northern municipalities continued these "Decoration Days" after the war ended, but the decisive event occurred in 1866 in tiny Waterloo, New York (2000 population 5,118), 450 kilometers from New York City.

Waterloo resident Henry C. Welles, the town's druggist, hit on the idea of setting aside a day to honor the nation's Civil War dead. Among his customers was John B. Murray, who had risen to the rank of brigadier general in the Union (northern) Army and served as clerk of Seneca County. Murray adopted the idea as his own, and was instrumental in Waterloo's first Decoration Day, on May 5, 1866.

Murray's circle of friends included General John A. Logan, a commander of Union forces at the Battle of Atlanta in 1864 and head of large and influential fraternal organization of Union veterans. Convinced by Murray of the need for such a holiday,

Logan in 1868 designated May 30 of that year a day "for strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village, and hamlet churchyard in the land."

Among the ceremonies held that day was one at Arlington National Cemetery, in Virginia across the Potomac River from Washington. President Ulysses S. Grant presided. After the speeches and tributes, thousands of war orphans, veterans and others decorated the graves of the Civil War dead. There were more than 20,000 such graves at Arlington Cemetery alone.

By the turn of the century, nearly every state had declared Decoration Day an official holiday. After World War I, Decoration Day expanded to honor those killed in all of the nation's wars and after World War II become known as Memorial Day. Congress established the federal holiday in 1971, and fixed its observance on the last Monday in May.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson proclaimed Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day.

HONORING WAR VICTIMS

In the United States, the Veterans Day holiday recognizes all those who served in the armed forces, during times of peace and war. Memorial Day recognizes those who gave their lives for their nation.

The original Waterloo commemoration centered on the decoration of soldiers' graves, the lowering of flags to fly at half-staff, and the organization of veterans' parades. These ceremonies continue in cities and towns across the nation. The president or vice president typically presides at Arlington Cemetery, and solemn observances are held at Civil War battle sites, including Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Sharpsburg (Antietam), Maryland.

At 3 p.m., a National Moment of Remembrance unites Americans in prayer and thought as they contemplate the sacrifices made in their behalf.

Thus, even as Americans enjoy their long weekend and the prospect of summer, they also can be found in more somber moods. Wreaths will be laid, thanks given and heads bowed in recognition of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

For additional information on U.S. celebrations, see "Veterans Day" and "An Overview of American Holidays."

