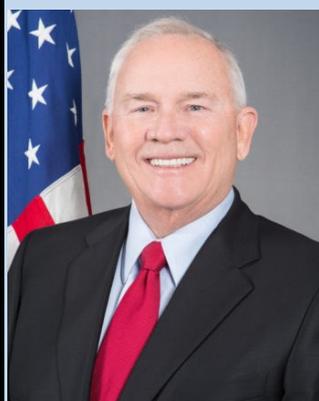




# U.S. EMBASSY HELSINKI AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

## Welcome Ambassador Pence



Ambassador Robert Pence

Robert “Bob” Frank Pence is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Finland.

Before serving as Ambassador, Bob Pence served as the founder and Chairman of the Board of the Pence Group, a full-service development company. He was also active as a board member of the Gary Sinise Foundation and served on the boards of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Wolf Trap Foundation, the World Affairs Council, George Mason University, and American University.

Ambassador Pence has also lectured at Georgetown University and was a Teaching Fellow at Yale University. Ambassador Pence earned a B.A. from the University of Maryland, a J.D. degree and two M.A. degrees from American University, and M.Phil. and M.A. degrees from Yale University. He has studied Italian, French, Latin, and Greek.

He is accompanied to Helsinki by his wife Suzy. They have three children and several grandchildren.

## Message from the Consul

Greetings from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, Finland.

It has been a busy, exciting, and at times rather warm (for Finland) summer. In May the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Finland, Ambassador Robert F. Pence, arrived in Helsinki, and in July President Donald J. Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, and Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo arrived in Finland to meet with their Finnish and Russian counterparts. The hospitality extended by the City of Helsinki and people of Finland in support of these historic meetings was absolutely extraordinary.

As the summer months come to an end, we would like to remind you of the U.S. general election coming up this fall. It is not too late to register for the November 6 election in which all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 35 of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate, and 39 state and territorial governorships will be contested. Visit [FVAP.gov](http://FVAP.gov) to register TODAY!

Kind regards,  
Jeremy R. Wisemiller  
Consul, U.S. Embassy Helsinki

## Inside this Issue

Summer Happenings	2
My Social Security Account	3
IRS International Services	3
LGBTI Travel Information	4
U.S. Citizen Local Resources	5
Immigrant Visas	6
B1/B2 Visa vs. Visa Waiver	6
Stay Connected	6
Voting Information	7
American Resource Center	8
Smart Traveler App	8
Embassy Closures	8



## Information on Upcoming Elections page 7

Planning to escape the cold this winter by taking a cruise someplace warm? If you are, check out our [cruise ship passenger information page](#) on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) for tips on how best to prepare for your vacation at sea.



## Summer Happenings

### Ambassador Pence Arrives in Helsinki

“We have a very strong bilateral relationship with Finland. It’s as good as any we have in the world, and I intend to do everything we can to strengthen it, preserve it, and enhance it as we move forward,” Ambassador Pence said Monday, May 21, 2018, during his first day on the job.



(Photo: Juhani Kandell/Office of the President of the Republic of Finland)

**Ambassador Pence presented his credentials to President Sauli Niinistö on May 24, 2018.**

### President Trump’s Visit to Finland

President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump visited Helsinki on July 15-16, 2018. They met with President Sauli Niinistö and Jenni Haukio at the Mäntyniemi Residence. President Trump also met with President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation at the Presidential Palace on July 16, 2018.

At the same time, Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo traveled to Helsinki to accompany President Trump for the President’s meeting with President Putin, and to meet with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The Secretary also met with his Finnish counterpart, Foreign Minister Timo Soini.

### Independence Day Celebration

On June 20, 2018, Ambassador and Mrs. Pence welcomed over 1,000 guests to celebrate the 242nd anniversary of American independence at the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki. The theme of the reception was “Iconic America” and highlighted American influence in art, entertainment, sports, and industry.

As the theme country of the 2018 Helsinki Book Fair, the reception also included quotes from icons of American literature, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, and others. See additional photos from the official Independence Day reception, [here](#).



**Ambassador and Mrs. Pence with Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mrs. Soini**



(Official White House Photo by Shealah Craighead)

For more images, please see the White House Flickr album “[President Trump & First Lady’s Trip to Europe](#)” and the U.S. Department of State’s Flickr album “[Helsinki, Finland: July 15-16](#).”



## Social Security Administration

### Opening a *my* Social Security Account

What does a *my* Social Security account let me do?

If you currently receive benefits or have Medicare, you can:

**New!** Request a replacement Social Security card if you meet [certain requirements](#);

**New!** [Report your wages if you work and receive Disability Insurance benefits](#);

Get your [benefit verification letter](#) (Check your benefit and payment information in addition to your earnings record;

Change your address and phone number;

Start or change direct deposit of your benefit payment;

Request a [replacement Medicare card](#); and

Get a [replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S](#) for tax season.

Go to [SSA.gov](#) to learn more about *my* Social Security and instructions on how to [open an account](#).

If you do not currently receive social security benefits, you can:

**New!** Request a replacement Social Security card if you meet [certain requirements](#);

**New!** Check the [status](#) of your application or appeal.

Get your [Social Security Statement](#), to review:

- Estimates of your future retirement, disability, and survivors benefits;
- Your earnings once a year to verify the amounts that we posted are correct; and
- The estimated Social Security and Medicare taxes you've paid.

Get a [benefit verification letter](#) stating that:

- You never received Social Security benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicare;
- You received benefits in the past, but do not currently receive them. (The letter will include the date your benefits stopped and how much you received that year.); or
- You applied for benefits but haven't received an answer yet.



## International Services

If you are a taxpayer with specific individual or business account questions you should contact the **International Taxpayer Service Call Center** by phone or fax. The International Call Center is operational Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. (Eastern Time):  
Tel: (267) 941-1000 (not toll-free)  
Fax: (267) 466-1055 (for international tax account issues only)

Taxpayer service, formerly offered at select locations abroad, is no longer available. Please send your tax forms and correspondence to the applicable address indicated below.

Individual taxpayers located outside the U.S. may also contact the IRS by mail at:

Internal Revenue Service  
International Accounts  
Philadelphia, PA 19255-0725

Business taxpayers located outside the U.S. may also contact the IRS by mail at:

Internal Revenue Service  
International Accounts  
Ogden, UT 84201-0038

### International Taxpayer Advocate:

To request Taxpayer Advocate assistance, call the Taxpayer Advocate Service toll-free numbers below or refer to [Contact a Local Taxpayer Advocate \(LTA\) in Caribbean U.S. Territories \(Puerto Rico & US Virgin Islands\) and International](#) or [Contact a Local Taxpayer Advocate \(LTA\) in Hawaii & Pacific US Territories \(Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands\)](#).

(787) 522-8601 - English  
(787) 522-8600 - Spanish  
(855) 818-5697 - Fax

Visit [IRS.gov](#) to learn more about their services for international taxpayers.

**Mike Pompeo**  
**Secretary of State**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**June 1, 2018**

The United States joins people around the world in celebrating Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Pride Month, and reaffirms its commitment to protecting and defending the human rights of all, including LGBTI persons.



In many parts of the world, LGBTI individuals and their supporters continue to face violence, arrest, harassment and intimidation for standing up for their human rights, participating in peaceful marches and rallies, expressing their views, and simply being who they are. LGBTI persons – like all persons – must be free to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, without fear of reprisal. As Americans, we place a high value on these rights and freedoms, which all persons deserve to enjoy fully and equally.

The United States stands firmly with you as you exercise your human rights and fundamental freedoms. We wish you a safe and happy Pride Month.



### **LGBTI Family Travel**

The State Department recognizes that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) travelers can face unique challenges when traveling abroad. For instance, laws and attitudes in some countries may affect safety and ease of travel, legal protections vary from country to country, and many nations do not legally recognize same-sex marriage. More than seventy countries consider consensual same-sex sexual relations a crime, sometimes carrying severe punishment.



[Travel.State.Gov](http://Travel.State.Gov) has specific travel information for LGBTI families. Check out our [LGTBI Travel.State.Gov website](http://LGTBI.Travel.State.Gov) for safety and travel recommendations for LGBTI families. Know before you go!

**#FamiliesTravelingwithPride**

**#PrideMonth**

**Ambassador and Mrs. Pence  
 lead members of the U.S.  
 Embassy Helsinki community  
 during Helsinki Pride on  
 June 30, 2018.**





## U.S. Citizen Services Local Resources



**Please note:** The Department of State assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by the entities or individuals whose names appear on the following links.

### Legal Assistance

The following link will direct you to the English-language pages of the Finnish Bar Association. This link will enable you, using the 'advocate finder' tool, to conduct your own search for Finnish attorneys based on location, area of specialization, and/or language abilities. Using the 'web advocates' or 'advonet advocates' tools, you may be able to find an attorney who will provide legal advice on-line.

The American Embassy in Helsinki, Finland, assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or the firms whose names appear in the information found via this link. Further, the Embassy may not recommend or otherwise endorse a specific attorney, nor can it provide any advice itself on legal matters.

See the [Finnish Bar Association](#) website.

**Please visit the following links to learn more about additional resources available to U.S. citizens.**

1. [Emergency Assistance](#)
2. [Marriage in Finland](#)
3. [Living in Finland](#)
4. [Driving in Finland](#)
5. [U.S. Criminal Records Check](#)
6. [Messages for U.S. Citizens](#)

Have a question?

Email [HelsinkiACS@state.gov](mailto:HelsinkiACS@state.gov)  
(include daytime number) or  
Call +358-40-140-5957 from 2 pm – 4 pm, on Monday and Wednesday, and from 3 pm – 4 pm on Tuesday.

### Medical Assistance

In Finland, medical facilities and their staff are generally excellent and are widely available for emergency services. English is commonly spoken by Finnish medical personnel and most establishments accept foreign credit cards.

If you are a **tourist or temporary visitor** to Finland and you require emergency medical assistance, you may visit a local medical center or clinic, called "*ensiapuusama*" (first-aid station). Stations are often located in the district hospital and are able to provide a full range of services. Patients should be prepared to present their passports.

If you are in urgent need of **emergency medical assistance** and cannot get to a hospital, **dial 112**. This is the equivalent to "911" in the United States.

Minor injuries can be addressed at most private clinics.

If you are **living permanently in Finland** and you require primary health care service, you should first contact your local health center. Residents of the municipalities can book appointments in a health center by themselves. Access to specialized medical care requires a referral from a health center physician or private practitioner for non-emergency cases.

Permanent residents also have the option to seek treatment at private clinics.

Travelers with special medical needs should consult with their personal physician and take appropriate precautions, including bringing adequate supplies of necessary medication. Medicines may be brought into the country as long as they are intended for the traveler's personal use. Medications categorized as narcotics may only be brought into the country to cover the traveler's personal use for a maximum of 14 days and must be accompanied by a medical certificate stating why the traveler needs them. There are special requirements referring to quantity of dose that can be brought into the country. For more detailed information, please contact the Finnish Embassy at Washington D.C. [sanomat.was@formin.fi](mailto:sanomat.was@formin.fi).

Visit the U.S. Embassy Website for a [list of medical facilities in Helsinki](#).



# Immigrant Visas

Immigrating to the United States is an important decision that requires a multistep process to complete. A foreign citizen seeking to immigrate to the United States generally must be sponsored by an immediate relative who is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, or a prospective U.S. employer.

The sponsor begins the process by filing a petition on the foreign citizen’s behalf with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Once USCIS has approved your petition, your case will move to the National Visa Center (NVC) for pre-interview processing and document collection. When your case is ready for interview, you will appear at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for your immigrant visa interview and issuance.

You may wish to review our [Directory of Visa Categories](#) on [usvisas.state.gov](http://usvisas.state.gov) to learn about the different types of immigrant visas to the United States, including our Diversity Visa Program. Then, follow the steps on the [Immigrant Visa Process](#), or on the [Diversity Visa Process](#).

**More Information on Immigrant Visas**

[Family-Based Immigration](#), [Fiancé\(e\) Visa](#), [Employment-Based Immigration](#), [Diversity Visa](#), and [Returning Resident Visa](#)

## B1/B2 Visa vs. Visa Waiver Program (VWP or ESTA) Travel

Visa:

- Permits travel for business & tourism
- Visa is valid for 10 years
- Eligible to remain in the United States for up to six months at a time
- Possible to apply for extension of stay
- Permitted to seek change in visa class

Visa Waiver Program (ESTA):

- Permits travel for business & tourism
- ESTA is valid for two years
- Eligible to stay for up to 90 days at a time
- Extension of stay is not permitted
- Unable to change visa class in the United States

Learn more about [nonimmigrant visas](#) and [VWP](#).



**Stay Connected with  
U.S. Embassy  
Helsinki**

Questions?  
Comments?  
[HelsinkiACS@state.gov](mailto:HelsinkiACS@state.gov)

	<a href="#">FACEBOOK</a>	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/finland.usembassy">http://www.facebook.com/finland.usembassy</a>
	<a href="#">TWITTER</a>	<a href="http://twitter.com/usembfinland">http://twitter.com/usembfinland</a>
	<a href="#">YOUTUBE</a>	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/USEmbassyHelsinki">http://www.youtube.com/USEmbassyHelsinki</a>
	<a href="#">INSTAGRAM</a>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/u.s.embassy_helsinki/">https://www.instagram.com/u.s.embassy_helsinki/</a>
	<a href="#">FLICKR</a>	<a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/usembfinland/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/usembfinland/</a>



## The U.S. General Election is Less Than 90 Days Away!

**Your Vote Counts!** Did you know that many U.S. elections for House and Senate seats have been decided by a margin smaller than the number of ballots cast by absentee voters? All states are required to count every absentee ballot as long as it is valid and reaches local election officials by the absentee ballot receipt deadline.

### Upcoming Primaries and General Election:

#### August - Within Next 30 Days:

August 21: Alaska, Wyoming

August 25: Guam

August 28: Arizona, Florida, Oklahoma

#### September - Within Next 60 Days:

September 4: Massachusetts

September 6: Delaware

September 11: New Hampshire

September 12: Rhode Island

September 13: New York

#### November - Within Next 90 Days:

November 6: U.S. GENERAL ELECTION



### Researching the Candidates and Issues:

**Online Resources.** Check out the [FVAP links page](#) for helpful resources that will aid your research of candidates and issues. Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues are widely available and easy to obtain online.

You can also read national and hometown newspapers online, or search the internet to locate articles and information. For information about election dates and deadlines, subscribe to FVAP's Voting Alerts ([vote@fvap.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.gov)). FVAP also shares Voting Alerts via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

### Questions about voting from overseas?

Email: [VoteHELSINKI@state.gov](mailto:VoteHELSINKI@state.gov)

**Follow a few simple steps to make sure that you can vote in the 2018 U.S. elections:**

**1. Request Your Ballot:** Complete a new Federal Post Card Application (FPCA). *You must complete a new FPCA after January 1, 2018, to ensure you receive your ballot for the 2018 elections.* The completion of the FPCA allows you to request absentee ballots for all **elections for federal offices** including primaries and special elections during the calendar year. The FPCA is accepted by all local election officials in all states and territories.

You can complete the FPCA **online** at [www.FVAP.gov](http://www.FVAP.gov). The online voting assistant will ask questions specific to your state. We encourage you to request electronic delivery of your ballots (email, internet download, or fax, depending on state). Include your email address on your FPCA to take advantage of the electronic ballot delivery option. Return the FPCA per instructions on the website. FVAP.gov will tell you if your state allows the FPCA to be returned electronically or if you must submit a paper copy with original signature. If you must return a paper version, please see below for mailing options.

**2. Receive and Complete Your Ballot:** States are required to send ballots 45 days before a regular federal election and generally send out ballots 30 days before primary elections. Registration and ballot delivery may be confirmed online for most states.

**3. Return Your Completed Ballot:** Some states allow you to return your completed ballot by email or fax. If your state requires you to return paper voting forms or ballots to local election officials, you can use international mail, a courier service such as FedEx or DHL, or you may also drop off completed voting materials during regular business hours at U.S. Embassy/Helsinki. Place your materials in a postage paid return envelope (available under "Downloadable Election Materials" on the FVAP homepage) or in an envelope bearing sufficient domestic U.S. postage, and address it to the relevant local election officials.

**4. Email to fax service by FVAP:** The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) will provide an email-to-fax conversion service for voters who have difficulty sending election materials to States that do not accept emailed documents. Get more information [here](#).



**Our number one priority is the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad.**

**We've redesigned our safety and security information with this commitment in mind.**

**Check out our new Travel Advisories at [travel.state.gov/destination](http://travel.state.gov/destination).**

**#TakeUsWithYou**

**Register with U.S. Embassy Helsinki  
Enroll in STEP at [step.state.gov](http://step.state.gov)**



**AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER**

**AT THE HELSINKI UNIVERSITY KAISA LIBRARY  
Fabianinkatu 30, 2nd floor**

Find us at

**AmericanResourceCenter**

**ARCHelsinki**

**ARCHelsinki**



**SMART TRAVELER APP**

Smart Traveler, the official State Department app for U.S. travelers, invites you to see the world with easy access to frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, U.S. embassy locations, and more.

**Embassy Holiday Closures**

U.S. Embassy Helsinki will be closed in observance of the following Finnish and U.S. holidays:

Monday, September 3, 2018	Labor Day	(U.S. Holiday)
Monday, October 8, 2018	Columbus Day	(U.S. Holiday)
Monday, November 12, 2018	Veterans' Day	(U.S. Holiday)
Thursday, November 22, 2018	Thanksgiving	(U.S. Holiday)

**U.S. Embassy Helsinki  
American Citizen Services  
Itäinen Puistotie 14 B**

**Email: [HelsinkiACS@state.gov](mailto:HelsinkiACS@state.gov)  
Web: <http://fi.usembassy.gov>  
<http://travel.state.gov>**