



OVERSEAS AMERICANS WEEK 2010

Overseas Americans Week (OAW) will take place April 19-23, with delegations from three organizations representing overseas Americans converging in Washington, D.C.

While living outside of the United States—as students, military service personnel, diplomats, business professionals, missionaries and other “unofficial ambassadors” for our country—brings with it many surprises, American citizens should never face unequal and unfair treatment by the United States government when they live abroad.

During OAW, representatives of the Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), American Citizens Abroad (ACA), and the Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO) visit Washington to raise awareness of overseas Americans’ concerns. FAWCO, ACA and AARO are all non-profit organizations dedicated to defending the rights of U.S. citizens living outside of the United States.

The most urgent priorities are taxation, banking services, and voting. To draw official attention to these areas, the group will meet with over 150 Executive branch officials, members of Congress and their staff, including those involved with key Congressional committees and the Americans Abroad Caucus.

U.S. citizens living and working overseas are subject to tax liability both in their countries of residence and in the U.S., creating a unique tax burden and discouraging American companies from sending Americans overseas to develop export markets. According to Andy Coyne, Vice President of AARO, “Congress must act urgently to allow Americans to compete fairly overseas.” On the heels of President Obama’s recently announced National Export Initiative, this is an ideal time for Congress to bring U.S. tax policy in line with 21st century economic realities. “Removing the cap on the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion would put Americans on an equal footing with our competitors overseas.”

Absentee voting by Americans living abroad is still hampered too often by cumbersome state regulations. The MOVE Act that was signed into law in October has had a definite impact, but further reform is needed. “I hope that this week we can sow - or maybe water - the seeds to get further legislation passed,” said Lucy Laederich, U.S. Liaison for FAWCO. “We need to enfranchise even more overseas voters, particularly by expanding the use of the internet to register and receive our ballots so that we physically have time to vote!”

Banking for overseas Americans is an especially sensitive topic this year. Increasingly burdensome reporting requirements imposed on foreign financial institutions have the unintended result of depriving law-abiding overseas Americans of ordinary bank and investment account services. “Many current and proposed financial measures from Congress and the Treasury Department are having a devastating impact on Americans abroad, since foreign banks are refusing to open or maintain accounts for U.S. citizens living overseas because U.S. government compliance requirements are too complex and onerous,” said Jackie Bugnion, Director of ACA. “We want to make sure the Obama Administration and Congress are fully aware of the highly negative effect these measures would have on the U.S. economy overall,” she emphasized.

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