

OVERALL GOALS

Overseas Americans are estimated to be similar in number to the population of Minnesota – the 21st most populous state. Easily forgotten because they are scattered across the globe, they face a number of obstacles in what to their counterparts in the U.S. appear to be normal activities like transmitting their nationality and voting. Today, they are increasingly confronted with major challenges in simply earning a living and maintaining a bank account. We urge Congress and the Administration to rethink certain policies that restrict their effectiveness as ambassadors for American services and business abroad.

Our most important issues this year are

- ◆ **Taxation:** If the President's National Export Initiative is to succeed in doubling exports in 5 years, American citizens must be deployed abroad to secure export sales. A true export policy dictates that tax policy should allow Americans to be fully competitive in business overseas. Today, US tax policy makes U.S. citizens abroad too expensive. It unfairly penalizes Americans living abroad and discourages American companies from sending their top marketing people overseas. Section 911 of the Tax Code must be amended to correspond to economic reality.
- ◆ **Banking services:** FBAR reporting, new QI regulations and the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act are making overseas Americans pariahs in the banking world. Existing U.S. accounts are being closed and new ones refused. U.S. banks are citing the Patriot Act Know Your Customer rules as justification. Due to the QI regulations, some banks overseas refuse to open new accounts for American citizens. This seriously hampers the ability of Americans to live and do business overseas, and is contrary to U.S. national interests.
- ◆ **Voting:** Legislation to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) must continue to streamline voting procedures and ensure that no U.S. citizen abroad is disenfranchised. The implementation of UOCAVA should make broader use of technology and provide equal benefit to civilians and military personnel overseas. Timely ballot delivery and transparent vote counting procedures should be given priority.

Other issues

- ◆ **Citizenship:** All Americans should enjoy an equal right to transmit U.S. citizenship to their children at birth, including children born to or adopted by a U.S. citizen abroad. Children born abroad should be defined as "natural-born" U.S. citizens.
- ◆ **Medicare:** Eligible American civilians who retire abroad cannot receive Medicare benefits where they reside. They must return to America where medical costs are much higher. Military Veterans who retire abroad receive coverage comparable to Medicare through the Tricare for Life program. A similar program should be crafted to deliver health care benefits to civilian retirees abroad. This could ultimately save money for the Medicare program.
- ◆ **Representation:** The Executive Branch should establish an *Office of Overseas Americans* to provide communication channels and to actively seek solutions to obstacles facing Americans abroad. Overseas Americans thank the *Americans Abroad Caucus* for its support in Congress, and look forward to continued fruitful collaboration, and to expanding the Caucus membership.
- ◆ **Social Security:** The Windfall Elimination Provision, which unfairly reduces Social Security pension benefits to Americans who have worked abroad during their careers, should be repealed. Self-employed overseas Americans should not be required to contribute to U.S. Social Security and Medicare in addition to social security programs where they reside. Americans working overseas should be allowed to contribute voluntarily to U.S. Social Security. Overseas Americans support the Social Security Fairness Act of 2009 (H.R. 236 and S. 484).

Our coalition supports the following:

- ◆ **CEDAW:** The US Senate should finally ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and ratification should proceed without “Reservations, Declarations and Understandings” (RDUs) that would undermine CEDAW’s meaning and effectiveness.
- ◆ **VAWA:** The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 was the first comprehensive federal legislation addressing violence against women in the United States. It continues to provide much-needed funding to help agencies serving victims of domestic violence in the USA. While we support and applaud VAWA legislation, to date, no funding has been allocated to serve the population of Americans living overseas. We urge Congress to support and champion the inclusion of Americans overseas within the current reauthorization of VAWA.

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Overseas Americans Week (OAW): For several years now, **AARO**, **ACA** and **FAWCO** have come together for one week in Washington D.C. to present our issues to Congress and the Administration. Thanks to this concentrated effort, overseas Americans have gained new visibility in Washington. OAW and its participating organizations were instrumental in the founding of the recently created Americans Abroad Caucus. (www.overseasamericansweek.com)

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AARO (Association of Americans Resident Overseas): Founded in 1973 and headquartered in Paris, is an international, non-partisan advocacy group working on behalf of Americans living overseas on a broad range of issues. AARO represents Americans abroad through its advocacy efforts in Washington and keeps its members informed about U.S. laws and regulations affecting them. (www.aaro.org)

ACA (American Citizens Abroad) – The voice of Americans overseas

Founded in 1978, is a non-profit, non-partisan volunteer organization with membership worldwide, that represents the interests of Americans living and working outside the U.S. to the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government, the U.S. Congress, and the U.S. Federal Judiciary to insure that Americans overseas are treated with equality and fairness on issues such as banking, taxation, voting, citizenship, social security, Medicare and representation in Washington. (www.americansabroad.org)

FAWCO (Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas, Inc.) is the oldest and largest organization serving private sector Americans abroad. Founded in 1931, FAWCO is a non-partisan, not-for-profit U.S. corporation that serves as an umbrella network linking over 75 independent American and international volunteer organizations in 39 countries worldwide. A recognized Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) since 1995, FAWCO was granted special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the UN in 1997. (www.fawco.org)

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