



### Upcoming Events

**February 8:** Deadline for Applications for the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship Initiative (see below)

**February 18:** Embassy Closed for Presidents' Day

**February 28:** Deadline for The Doors to Diplomacy Award Competition 2008 (see below)

#### SUMMER INSTITUTES FOR YOUTH

The U.S. Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria is accepting applications for the 2008 Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship Initiative: Summer Institutes for Youth, <http://blogs.bfff.org> (see Embassy website for more information)

#### THE DOORS TO DIPLOMACY AWARD COMPETITION 2008

The U. S. Department of State is sponsoring the "Doors to Diplomacy" educational challenge - to encourage middle school and high school students around the world to produce web projects that teach others about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy. (see [Embassy website for more information](#))

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## Letter from Ambassador John Beyrle



First, I want to wish you all a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2008. I hope for you that the Holiday Season was a time for renewing relationships with close friends and family.

The period following the Christmas and New Year holidays is normally a quieter time in the U.S.-Bulgarian bilateral relationship. This new year of 2008, however, began almost immediately with the visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin to the United States, January 3 – 8. The highlight of the visit in substantive terms was the meeting between Mr. Kalfin and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on January 4, which I attended in Washington. The wide-ranging discussion focused in depth on the status of Kosovo and the common desire of Bulgaria and the United States for stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans with a clear perspective for membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions. Minister Kalfin and Secretary Rice signed the Bulgarian-American Science and Technology Agreement following the meeting; you'll find details of that agreement on the next page.

But for me personally, the highlight of the visit occurred when I joined Minister Kalfin and Ambassador Elena Poptodorova in Los Angeles at a reception hosted by the Bulgarian-American community of Southern California. I always enjoy talking to Bulgarians who are working, studying, and living in the United States. These conversations invariably leave me impressed that they are most effective Ambassadors for the strong bilateral relationship we are building between our two nations.

On January 24, our Embassy launched the 2008 cycle of one of our most successful and popular exchange programs, the Summer Work-Travel Exchange, often referred to in Bulgarian as the "summer student brigades." Last year, over twelve-thousand Bulgarian university students traveled to the United States under this program and worked in hotels, resorts, shops, summer camps, and restaurants all across the United States. They improved their English, made new friends, traveled in the U.S., and were able to learn first-hand some of what our country is all about.

The young Bulgarians who travel to the United States are excellent diplomats for Bulgaria – thanks to them, Americans get to know face-to-face what Bulgaria and Bulgarians are like. It's a great way to encourage more tourism and greater interest in Bulgarian culture. And the students earn money for savings, travel, and their continuing education. They return to Bulgaria at the end of the summer, in time to begin their next academic year without missing classes or exams. So to all students interested in work, adventure, and broadened perspectives, I say – come visit America this year! Our doors are open to you.

As usual, in this newsletter you'll find some of the things that we have been doing in the past few weeks. I hope you enjoy reading them.

Sincerely,

*John Beyrle*

*Ambassador of the United States*

## In the News

### United States and Bulgaria Sign Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin shake hands after signing the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement.

On January 4, the United States and the Republic of Bulgaria signed a bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement during a ceremony at the U.S. Department of State. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signed on behalf of the United States and Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin signed on behalf of Bulgaria.

The new agreement provides a mechanism through which the United States and

Bulgaria can broaden cooperation in all science and technology fields, and move forward in several areas of collaboration.

[United States and Bulgaria Sign Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement \(Media Note\)](#)

[Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivailo Kalfin at the Signing of the Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement \(view video\)](#)

[Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation](#)

### U.S. and Bulgarian National Institute of Justice Team Up Against Organized Crime



Ambassador Beyrle speaks at the joint prosecutorial training announcement, while Bulgarian Prosecutor General Boris Velchev and National Institute of Justice Director Pencho Penev look on.

U.S. Ambassador John Beyrle, Bulgarian Prosecutor General Boris Velchev, and National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Director Pencho Penev signed a Memorandum of Understanding for joint training of prosecutors on December 20, 2007, in order to strengthen Bulgaria's effectiveness in the fight against organized crime.

The NIJ was originally launched with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

[\(Remarks by Ambassador John Beyrle - Signing Ceremony for Memorandum of Understanding between the NIJ, Prosecution Service, and US DoJ /OPDAT\)](#)

### Bulgaria Launches the New Business Registry, a U.S.-Supported Reform

On January 2, Bulgaria launched its new business registry, a reform supported by USAID for the past four years. As of January 28, an average of 500 businesses a day are re-registering or registering for the first time. The new electronic, centralized and administrative registry replaced twenty-nine paper-based and court-run registries, thus helping Bulgaria ease market entry, enhance transparency in the

business environment, and comply with EU requirements. The website of the new business registry is <http://www.brra.bg/>. USAID congratulates its partners who worked to make this possible: the USAID Commercial Law Reform Program and Sabev and Partners Law Firm, who are implementing the Technical Assistance to the Registration Agency (TARA) program.



МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ПРАВОСЪДИЕТО  
АГЕНЦИЯ ПО ВПИСВАНИЯТА

## Issues

### Consul General Daniel Perrone Speaks on the NOVA TV Morning Show



In his interview on the NOVA TV morning program, U.S. Consul General Daniel Perrone addresses questions on the minds of many viewers.

As much of Bulgaria got ready for work in the morning of January 23, they saw Consul General Daniel Perrone during his appearance on the NOVA TV Morning Show. Mr. Perrone demystified a popular myth in the visa process by explaining that the only documents an applicant absolutely needs to bring to the interview are the passport, the application forms, and the bank receipt certifying payment of the visa fee – Consular Officers care more about what applicants say in their visa interview than about how many pieces of paper they are able to collect.

In talking about the Green Card Lottery, Mr. Perrone said that fewer and fewer Bulgarians have applied for the program in recent years. Regarding the popular question of lifting visa requirements for Bulgarian citizens, he explained that this change would take some time, as the United States also has to make some progress in developing a system to register all the departures from the country and in creating an electronic travel authorization system. (see video - [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), [Part 4](#))

### Students Praise Summer Work & Travel Program

Former participants in the Summer Work & Travel program joined Consul General Dan Perrone at the U.S. Embassy on January 24 to discuss their experiences in the Summer Work & Travel program. Students Pavel Nankov, Denitsa Minkova, and Stanislav Hristov answered questions from journalists

during a press conference to highlight the beginning of the application period for the Summer Work & Travel program. In previous summers, the students had worked in a number of parts of the United States, and had visited even more areas in their travels around the country.

[\(see Embassy web site for more information\)](#)



Consul General Daniel Perrone and several former Summer Work & Travel students describe their experience with the program at the press conference.

### Ambassador Beyrle's Thoughts on the Summer Work and Travel Program



Ambassador John Beyrle comments on the value of the Summer Work and Travel program.

This month, Embassy Sofia is kicking off a new periodic feature to its website – short video clips in which Ambassador Beyrle comments on important issues in the relationship between Bulgaria and the United States. In conjunction with the start of the Summer Work and Travel application period, in this first video, the Ambassador discusses

his thoughts about the popular program, explaining how students are able to earn money for their studies, gain good working experience, broaden their horizons by exploring new lands, and represent their country well in the United States. The Embassy looks forward to working with the thousands of students who are expected to apply in the coming months. ([see video](#) - in *Bulgarian*)

## In the Community

### Embassy Staff Meet With Students All Around Bulgaria

In January, diplomats from several sections of the Embassy traveled around the country to speak with groups of students on a variety of topics. Though consular issues are frequently a point of interest, especially as the Summer

Work and Travel program gets underway, members of the Embassy community were able to speak about a number of other issues as well. The examples below are some of the highlights:



Jennifer Croft speaks with students after her presentation to the class.

On January 16, USAID Officer Jennifer Croft visited the Bertolt Brecht Foreign Language School in Pazardzhik. While there, she

spoke with students about the education system in the United States.



Ed Findlay goes over the Summer Work and Travel brochure during his conversation with students in Veliko Turnovo.

Vice Consul Dr. Ed Findlay spoke with professors and students at Veliko Turnovo University about the J-1 Summer Work and Travel program as well as on how the Presidential primary election

process in the United States works. During his January 16 presentation, the group was able to review the Summer Work and Travel brochure ([Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)), which is also available to the public on the Embassy website.



Students listen to Sean Hantak's answers to their questions in his visit to Varna.

Consular Officer Sean Hantak traveled to Varna in mid-January, where he held outreach sessions with a number of local student groups. In addition to meeting with students from the Fifth

English Language School on January 17 as part of the Embassy's speaker program, he also discussed the Summer Work & Travel program and other visa issues with university students.



Anthony Miranda introduces the documentary on flea markets and prepares visiting students for the discussion to follow.

On January 24 and 25, the Embassy hosted students from the 134th school to screen two documentaries, *A Flea Market Documentary* and *The Muslim Americans*. After the show, Cultural Affairs Officer Anthony Miranda led the students in a discussion of each video. The students enjoyed seeing the

various ways of life depicted in the movies, talking enthusiastically about the different local situations in each case. They also found the movies thought provoking, and that the discussion provided a good opportunity to talk about other concerns they had about the United States as well.

### Spotlight on Alumni



Nadine Zanow

Nadine Zanow is a Fulbright Alumna who received a Fulbright Grant to study and paint in Bulgaria. Born in the United States to immigrant parents from Austria and Bulgaria, Ms. Zanow began her studies in art while working as a hospital pharmacist. She received a Master of Fine Art in Painting from Boston University in 1996 and traveled to Bulgaria on a Fulbright Grant. In 1997, she received 3-month extension as Artist-in-Residence at Sts. Cyril and Methodius University in Veliko Turnovo in Central Bulgaria.

After nine years in Boston, she continues to return to Bulgaria, where she found her roots. In June – July 2003, Nadine was invited by Masterprinter Geno Genev to make lithographs at the Printmaking Center of Samokov division of the Union of Bulgarian Artists.

In 2007, Zanow and another Fulbright grantee, Brad Guarino, presented "Parallel Worlds," a traveling exhibition sponsored by the U.S. Embassy, the Bulgaria Ministry of Culture, and the Fulbright Commission. In Samokov, her favorite place in Bulgaria, she presented "Nadine Zanow, Paintings and Works on Paper," sponsored by the Graphic Studio of Samokov and Samokov Municipality. She participated in several group exhibits around Bulgaria.

She currently resides in Bulgaria with her husband.