

Fresno's Mexican consulate extends hours for immigration changes, driver's licenses

By Andrea Castillo

The Consulate of Mexico in Fresno is extending its hours in response to increased demand for consular services because of President Barack Obama's [executive action on immigration](#) and the new state driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.

With the new evening shift, which started Monday, the consulate is now open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., though appointments end at 7 p.m. The consulate's most solicited services are passports and consular identification cards.

Consulate officials [announced their intent to expand services in late November](#), following Obama's immigration announcement. That included expanding the consulate's call center, increasing hours of operation and outreach to areas outside of Fresno, and collaborating with immigration attorneys and local nonprofits to explain the new programs and help people apply.

Officials said the new hours will help Mexican nationals access the documents necessary to apply for the executive action and [driver's licenses under Assembly Bill 60](#), which went into effect Jan. 2. Obama's plan extends deportation relief to up to 5 million immigrants living in the country illegally.

Spokesman Edgar Olivera said the consulate's Fresno office was previously staffed 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with appointments ending at 3 p.m. He said they added eight part-time employees, now at 36 total.

Before the executive action announcement and driver's license implementation, Olivera said the consulate saw around 200 people per day in Fresno. With longer hours, they expect to see 280 people per day. The consulate sees an additional 200 people per day in cities around Fresno, which they rotate visits to four times a week.

The Mexican Consular network around the United States has implemented similar measures, including the ability to [obtain birth certificates through the consulate](#). Mexico previously required its citizens to get birth certificates at government offices in the country, forcing many of those living here to ask friends and relatives there to retrieve the paperwork.

To request a passport or consular ID card, Mexican nationals must first make an appointment online at mexitel.sre.gob.mx, or by phone at 1 (877) 639-4835. The call center is staffed Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., and weekends 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Contact Andrea Castillo: acastillo@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6279 or [@andreacastillo](https://twitter.com/andreacastillo) on Twitter.

Copyright

© 2015 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>