

Parliamentary Staff Institute

December 2012



David Dreier, Chairman • David Price, Ranking Democratic Member

Strengthening Committee Operations in the Legislature

From December 17 to 21, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) organized a weeklong Parliamentary Staff Institute on committee operations for 23 staff from 12 HDP partner countries: Afghanistan, Georgia, Haiti, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Mongolia, Peru, and Timor-Leste. This program was organized in cooperation with the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Developing the capacity of legislative committee staff and committee operations is a central component of HDP's work with its partner legislatures.

The Parliamentary Staff Institute included presentations and discussions with officials from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS). After receiving an overview of each organization, along with an introduction into the U.S. Congress and committee system, the delegates received intensive training on committee operations. One particular highlight was a portion of the seminar that allowed delegates to compare how the committee process works in their own countries with the rest of the delegations. Most of the visiting staff serve various committees in their respective legislatures.

Two former Members of Congress, Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) and Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), shared their experience on developing a committee agenda. Sessions were also held on coordination between different committees in the legislative branch, the U.S. nomination and confirmation process, coordination with the executive branch, and the importance of utilizing the press to advance a committee agenda. An attorney from the House Office of Legislative Counsel discussed the legislative drafting process.

The seminar included a focus on public hearings. The Macedonian delegation gave a presentation on their experience with holding public hearings for the first time. The program concluded with sessions on oversight, markups, record-keeping, and committee staff development.

This was the tenth Parliamentary Staff Institute organized by HDP since the inaugural program in 2007. In addition to its Parliamentary Staff Institutes, HDP's programs for legislative staff have included combined member/staff training seminars in Washington, Regional Staff Institutes, and delegations of current and retired U.S. congressional staff to train staff in their home countries.