

Parliamentary Staff Institute

October 2012



David Dreier, Chairman • David Price, Ranking Democratic Member

Strengthening Budget Analysis in the Legislature

From October 15 to 19, 2012, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) organized a weeklong Parliamentary Staff Institute on budget analysis for 23 staff from 12 HDP partner countries: Colombia, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, 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 budget staff is a central component of HDP's work with its partner legislatures.

The Parliamentary Staff Institute included presentations and discussions with top 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 budget analysis. One particular highlight was a portion of the seminar that allowed delegates to share how the budget process works in their own countries with the rest of the delegations. Most of the visiting staff work in the budget office or for the budget committees of their respective legislatures.

Two former Members of Congress, Representative Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) and Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND), shared their insight as to how independent analysis aids Members in budget decisions and offered their own experiences with the U.S. budget system. Current CBO staff held sessions on writing about budget analysis for legislators, developing economic forecasts, budget baselines, revenue forecasts, and cost estimates of legislation. A session on analyzing the government's budget submission was jointly presented by CBO and staff from the House Committee on the Budget, and a session on legislative modification of the budget included staff from the House Committees on Appropriations and Ways and Means.

The World Bank Institute discussed their legislative strengthening efforts, particularly focused on improving budget analysis in countries around the world, and the International Budget Partnership presented on the role of citizens and civil society in the budget process. Finally, the Government Accountability Office presented on the role of the supreme audit institution and House committee staff presented on the need for strong oversight of the executive.

This was the ninth Parliamentary Staff Institute organized by HDP since the commission was established in 2005. 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 advise HDP partners in targeted areas of development.