

KYRGYZSTAN PROGRAM PROFILE



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History of Partnership

The House Democracy Partnership approved a legislative strengthening partnership with Kyrgyzstan in February 2012. The program is designed to focus on strengthening the unicameral Jogorku Kenesh (Supreme Council) in the areas of committee operations, budget analysis, and constituent outreach.

Accomplishments

- Peer-to-peer assistance to Kyrgyz legislators in Bishkek.
- Concurrent training program for staff of the Jogorku Kenesh.
- Formal visit by U.S. legislators to the Jogorku Kenesh.

Background

While Kyrgyzstan has a history of an engaged civil society and a pluralistic political environment, its efforts to move toward a democratic system have been marked by several popular uprisings, successive experiments with constitutional reform, and ongoing struggles with corruption. Nationwide demonstrations in the spring of 2005 resulted in the ouster of authoritarian President Askar Akayev, who had run the country since 1990. Following the revolution, former Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev was elected president. However, the democratic hopes stemming from the 2005 revolution were short-lived, and over several years, the new president manipulated the parliament to consolidate powers for himself. In July 2009, after months of harassing his political opponents and media critics, Bakiyev was re-elected in a presidential campaign that the international community deemed flawed. In April 2010, Bakiyev was deposed in a violent revolution that exacerbated ethnic tensions and led to violence against the ethnic Uzbek population. His successor, Rosa Otunbayeva, served as interim president until Almazbek Atambayev was inaugurated in December 2011.

The most recent elections for the Jorgorku Kenesh, in October 2015, resulted in the entry of six parties, including three new parties. President Atambayev's party, the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) won a plurality of seats (38), with *Respublika-Ata Jurt* (28 seats), *Kyrgyzstan* (18 seats), *Onuguu-Progress* (13 seats), *Bir Bol* (12 seats) and *Ata Meken* (11 seats) also winning representation. A majority coalition was formed by SDPK, *Kyrgyzstan*, *Onuguu-Progress* and *Ata Meken*, while *Respublika-Ata Jurt* and *Bir Bol* serve as the opposition parties. The Jorgorku Kenesh is comprised of 120 members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms.

Congressional Delegations

A delegation of five Members of Congress, led by House Democracy Partnership Chairman David Dreier, inaugurated HDP's partnership with Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek on February 20-22, 2012. The delegation met with Speaker Asilbek Jeenbekov to formally open the partnership between HDP and the Jogorku Kenesh and spent a full day in parliament. In addition to meeting with faction leaders and members of the opposition, the delegation hosted a discussion on committee oversight with committee chairs from the Jogorku Kenesh. Concurrent staff training was held for the staff of the Jogorku Kenesh on the topic of constituent outreach.

Staff Delegations

In August 2015, a delegation of current staff from the offices of Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-IN) and Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA) met in Bishkek with committee chairs, members of parliament, the secretary general of the parliament, the director of research and parliamentary staff to gauge the extent to which the Jogorku Kengesh (Kyrgyz Parliament) has evolved since joining the HDP and how satisfied they were with the level and quality of engagement they had with the partnership. The delegation was pleased to learn of the democratic growth that had occurred and how HDP supported those democratic reforms as well as ways in which Kyrgyzstan was interested in partnering with HDP to continue strengthening their democracy. Legislative staff from Kyrgyzstan and the United States were eager to continue fostering the peer-to-peer relationships formed during the visit.

MP Seminars

Kyrgyz MPs were invited to Washington in June 2014, for a week-long seminar that focused on strengthening committee operations. The seminar hosted 20 MPs from five partnership countries. Delegates examined the U.S. Congress committee structure and functions including committee relations with the executive branch agencies they oversee; the role of committee chairs; the role and significance of public hearings; professional research, drafting, and amending services to committees; and several other related issues. Additionally, MPs observed a public committee hearing and met with current and former members and staff of the U.S. Congress.

In June 2013, the HDP organized a weeklong program for visiting members of the Kyrgyz parliament designed to enhance the leadership and legislative skills of women members of parliament regarding economic development. The delegation attended briefings and participated in presentations and interactive exchanges given by their counterparts in the U.S. Congress, policy experts and other relevant civil society to explore the U.S. legislative process and examples of how women legislators can advance and effectively communicate to constituents, economic growth and related policy agendas.

The Jogorku Kenesh sent a delegation of five Members of Parliament to Washington in September 2012, for a seminar on committee operations. They met with active and retired Members of the U.S. Congress, members of the Congressional Research Service, and Congressional Budget Office. The focus was on oversight and legislative hearings, as well as constituent service and ethics.

Staff Seminars

In January 2015, two parliamentary staff members joined colleagues from 14 other countries for the largest HDP staff institute to date. Facilitated by the National Democratic Institute, the weeklong program focused on strengthening committee operations. The program sought to provide participants an overview of committee operations in the U.S. Congress, and covered topics such as internal and external policy analysis resources, the oversight role and oversight tools available to committees, as well as legislative and executive branch relations. Emphasis was placed on organizing, preparing and conducting public hearings. The program also provided the delegates the opportunity to discuss the role and functions of committees in their home legislatures.

Staff of the Kyrgyz parliament participated in a Legislative Staff Institute organized by the Commission in October 2014. The staff institute hosted 24 participants from 12 partnership countries for a week-long seminar that focused on legislative research, analysis, and drafting. The program began with an overview of how the U.S. Congress works, led by the office of the Clerk of the House and the Congressional Research Service. The seminar focused largely on the policy analysis process, which was designed to enhance analytical skills, strengthen the connection between information providers and the legislative process, and to ensure that legislatures were presented with a variety of choices to solve societal problems. The seminar provided best practices to (1) define the problem to be addressed, (2) identify alternative solutions for the resolution of the problem, and (3) trace the key impacts and effects of the alternatives, to utilize when providing products and services to the legislature.

In October 2012, two staff members from the Kyrgyz Supreme Council participated in a staff institute to strengthen legislative budget analysis. Twenty-three staff from twelve partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with officials from the Congressional Budget Office, the Congressional Research Service, and staff from the House Budget, Appropriations, Agriculture, and Ways and Means Committees. Participants also met with representatives from the Government Accountability Office, the World Bank Institute and the International Budget Partnership.