

MONGOLIA PROGRAM PROFILE



History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a legislative strengthening partnership with Mongolia in May 2006. This program has focused on committee strengthening, developing and enforcing an ethics code, and constituent relations. The Commission has encouraged progress on these fronts through congressional visits to Mongolia, staff training programs in Macedonia and Poland, and training seminars for visiting MPs and parliamentary staff in Washington.

Accomplishments

- HDP work with parliamentary leadership and senior staff on the importance of independent research and analysis helped lead to the establishment of a Mongolian parliamentary research service, whose leadership has been trained at HDP seminars.
- Attendance at HDP training sessions for research and budget staff has led the research service director to propose the creation of a budget analysis unit to provide economic and fiscal analysis. HDP is organizing a study mission for parliamentary leadership and senior staff to facilitate consultations with similar U.S. units at the federal, state and local level.

Background

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Mongolia underwent a peaceful democratic transition in 1990 and adopted a democratic constitution in 1992 establishing a new parliamentary republic. The constitution created a 76-seat unicameral legislature, known as the Great State Hural, which elects the prime minister who in turn forms the government.

Congressional Delegations

In June 2009, a congressional delegation of six Members of Congress led by Representative David Price visited Mongolia to meet with their counterparts in the State Great Hural, including Speaker Demberel. The delegation also met with Mongolian President Elbegdorj and Prime Minister Bayar. The delegation's program with the State Great Hural focused on the importance of independent legislative research. In addition, other sessions addressed the work of committees, particularly those involved in defense, ethics and budgeting.

Accompanying the delegation were three specialists from the Congressional Research Service, who conducted a program for their counterparts in the newly created parliamentary research service for the Great Hural. They shared best practices and discussed the intricacies of running a legislative research service, utilization of information technology for research purpose, and effective office management in seminars and coaching sessions.

In July 2007, Representative Donald Payne led five Members of Congress on the Commission's first delegation to Mongolia. Members met with their counterparts in the State Grand Hural and held a public inauguration of the partnership between the Congress and the SGH. The delegation discussed corruption and ethics legislation with their Mongolian counterparts, as well as issues of bilateral concern.

Staff Delegations

Retired researcher, Sherry Shapiro from the Congressional Research Service met in Ulaanbaatar with staff of the State Great Hural (the Mongolian parliament) in June 2015 to build on the legislative research and analysis lessons learned during the Legislative Staff Institute in October 2014. The training consisted of an advanced course on techniques of public policy analysis and craft skills needed to work effectively with the Parliament. Additionally, it included a seminar on oversight, specifically related to planning and organizing public hearings. The Commission consultants met with the secretary general of the parliament and the director of research to gauge the extent to which MPs were making use of the research unit, how satisfied they were with the services they received from the unit, and ways to further partner with HDP to continue professionalizing the research unit staff.

In July 2015, during a visit to celebrate 25 years of democracy in Mongolia, founding HDP chairman Rep. David Dreier presented the speaker of Mongolia's parliament, Z. Enkhbold with a certificate of appreciation for their continued partnership. Additionally, Brad Smith, congressional advisor and former chief of staff to Rep. Dreier, held a roundtable discussion with secretariat staff of Mongolia's parliament, including parliamentary advisors and assistants, wherein he shared his own experience supporting a member of the U.S. legislature.

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 Ulaanbaatar 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 State Great Hural 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. Legislative staff from Mongolia and the United States were eager to continue fostering the peer-to-peer relationships formed during the visit.

MP Seminars

Five members of parliament participated in a member exchange focused on budget processes and financial oversight in the legislature in September 2014. Delegates examined: congressional committee structure; the role of legislative support services and the budget products they provide; processes for preparing and analyzing governmental budgets; organization and implementation of public, budget, and oversight hearings; functions of audit institutions and mechanisms for budget oversight; policy considerations for taxation, trade, and financial services; and legislative ethics. In addition to observing a public committee hearing and activities on the House floor, delegates 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 State Great Hural 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.

Members of Mongolia's State Grand Hural visited Washington in September 2009 for a week-long seminar focused on committee operations. The program was led off by the Congressional Research Service with an overview of Congress and its committee structure. Committee staff and former Members of Congress spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff in the organization of public hearings. A number of Members of Congress spoke to participants about their personal experience with using committee work to advance their legislative and oversight priorities.

In April 2008, three MPs from the Hural traveled to Hawaii for a special training seminar on defense oversight. The seminar exposed the Mongolian MPs to the relationship between the Department of Defense and the U.S. Congress, with the aim of strengthening civilian control of the armed forces in Mongolia. The MPs also traveled to Washington for meetings at the Pentagon, the Department of State, and Congress.

Six members of the Mongolian parliament visited Washington in July 2007 for a week-long program concentrated on legislative operations and constituent relations. The Office of the Clerk of the House and the Congressional Research Service led off the program with an overview of Congress. Participants then participated in workshops on the role of politics in the legislature; the importance of an independent legislative research service; and budget analysis and oversight. The Mongolian delegation then traveled to the district of Representative Mazie Hirono in Hawaii to directly learn about effective constituent service.

Staff Seminars

Staff of the State Great Hural participated in a Legislative Staff Institute organized by the Commission in March 2015. The staff institute hosted 22 participants from 7 partnership countries for a week-long seminar that focused on strengthening legislative oversight mechanisms. The delegates identified strategies for strengthening legislative oversight mechanisms and increasing communication between legislatures, supreme audit institutions and civil society in addition to meeting with members of the U.S. House of Representatives, expert staff of Congressional committees; representatives from government support agencies, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The seminar was a forum for the sharing of reform agendas between fellow participants and experts from the U.S. Congress and created an opportunity for delegates to present on examples of successful oversight mechanisms in their home legislatures, furthering a peer-to-peer exchange of information.

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 parliament State Great Hural 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 June 2010, two staff members of the Mongolian parliament traveled to Warsaw, Poland to attend the 20th anniversary of the Frost-Solomon Commission, which was the predecessor to the House Democracy Assistance Commission. They were joined by 22 staff members from 11 partnership countries, along with MPs and research staff from former partners of the Frost-Solomon Commission. While they were in Warsaw, current and former staff of the Congressional Research Service worked with the Mongolian staff to help them further develop their parliamentary research service through workshops, peer-to-peer discussions, and open forums. Speakers underlined the importance of reliable, impartial, timely, and accurate research to the work of democratic legislatures. They also shared tips on how to engage legislators and help them see the value of research, which was a concern shared by a number of participants.

Staff from the Mongolian parliament have also participated in all seven Legislative Staff Institutes organized by the Commission since 2007. Most recently, in December 2010, Mongolian staff took part in a staff institute focused on committee operations, where they held meetings with CRS, staff from several House committees, and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Commission. In addition, committee staff from the Republic of Macedonia shared their experience in developing procedures to begin using oversight hearings as an element of the work of their parliamentary committees.

In October 2010, staff from the Mongolian State Grand Hural participated in a staff institute that focused on strengthening legislative budget analysis capacity. Twenty-one staff from 11 partner countries participated in the program, which included meetings with or presentations by officials from the Congressional Budget Office, CRS, and staff from the House Committees on Budget, Appropriations, and the Joint Committee on Taxation. Additionally, budget analysts from the Kenya National Assembly shared their experience in establishing and developing a parliamentary budget office.

The fifth staff institute was held in December 2009 and was organized in conjunction with CRS. The institute hosted 27 participants from 12 partner countries, who were mostly officials and analysts of their respective parliament's research services. The program focused on the role of a research service in providing independent information and analysis to members of parliament and their staff.

In November 2009, Mongolian parliamentary staff participated in a staff institute centered on the third annual World E-Parliament Conference, which addressed the manner in which information and communications technology can help improve legislative representation, transparency, accountability, openness, and effectiveness.

Also in November 2009, staff from the Hural was invited to a training program in Macedonia. They joined participants from Georgia, Kosovo and Macedonia for an intensive program emphasizing committee operations. The program examined how staff can more effectively support committee operations by organizing hearings, soliciting public input on legislation, conducting policy and legal research, and writing effective committee reports.

Mongolian parliamentary staff joined 28 parliamentary staffers from 10 partnership countries in Washington in December 2008 for a staff institute focused on strengthening committee operations. Participants gained an understanding of committee operations in the U.S. Congress and explored topics such as staff roles and responsibilities, legislative analysis, drafting and research, legislative-executive relations, and media relations.

A staff institute in October 2008 that centered on congressional oversight and budgeting included staff from the Mongolian parliament. Participants were given an overview of the budget process in the U.S. and the structure, organization, and services provided by the Congressional Budget Office. The program dealt with transparency, revenue estimation, and key budgetary policy issues such as health, defense, agriculture, infrastructure, and education.

Mongolian parliamentary staffers were present for the inaugural staff institute in December 2007. The Institute offered a two-track program, one for senior parliamentary administrators and the other on research and analysis services for the legislature. The program included a three-day overview of the U.S. Congress, a one-day visit to the Maryland Legislature to learn about state and local government, and a five-day series of meetings and workshops with current and retired Congressional research and administrative staff.

Self-Initiated Parliamentary Delegations

Vice Speaker G. Batkhoo of the Great Hural visited Washington on in March 2009 for a two-day visit. The Speaker was able to meet with Members of the Commission, including Representatives David Price and David Dreier, to discuss the ongoing partnership between the Mongolian State Grand Hural and the U.S. House of Representatives.