

HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

The Commission's mission is to strengthen democratic institutions by assisting parliaments in emerging democracies. Central to the Commission's work will be the provision of technical expertise enhancing accountability, transparency, legislative independence, and government oversight in foreign parliaments.

The Commission was established by the House (H. Res. 135) to:

- Work with the parliaments of selected countries that have established or are developing democratic parliaments which would benefit from the Commission's assistance;
- Enable Members, officers, and staff of the House of Representatives and Congressional support agencies to provide expert advice to members and staff of the parliaments of such countries, including visits to the House and support agencies to observe their operations first-hand;
- Make recommendations to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) regarding the provision of needed material assistance to such parliaments to improve the efficiency and transparency of their work;

Commission Members

Hon. David Dreier of California,
Chairman

Hon. Jim Kolbe of Arizona

Hon. Paul Gillmor of Ohio

Hon. Mark Kirk of Illinois

Hon. John Boozman of Arkansas

Hon. Joe Wilson of South Carolina

Hon. Tom Cole of Oklahoma

Hon. Candice Miller of Michigan

Hon. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska

Hon. David Price of North Carolina
Ranking Member

Hon. Silvestre Reyes of Texas

Hon. Lois Capps of California

Hon. Rush Holt of New Jersey

Hon. Adam Schiff of California

Hon. Artur Davis of Alabama

Hon. Allyson Schwartz of Pennsylvania

HOUSE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

- Mission: To help strengthen the parliaments of new democracies around the world by enabling Members and staff of the House of Representatives to share their expertise with their counterparts in order to enhance accountability, transparency, legislative independence, and government oversight.
- Enables Members of Congress and congressional staff to directly assist their counterparts in the parliaments of newly democratic countries.
- Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.), Chairman of the Committee on Rules, is the Chairman of the House Democracy Assistance Commission. Rep. David Price (D-N.C.) is the ranking Democratic Member. There are 16 Members: 9 Republicans and 7 Democrats.
- Will provide technical assistance to the parliaments of newly democratic countries on a peer-to-peer basis, with Members of Congress working with Members of Parliament and House staff working with their parliamentary counterparts.
- Created by the U.S. House of Representatives on March 14, 2005 (H. Res. 135).
- Assistance programs commence in January 2006 and will take place both in the United States and in the capitals of partner countries.
- Will complement existing parliamentary development programs, particularly those undertaken by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), International Republican Institute, and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.
- Can recommend to USAID that material assistance – such as office equipment, computers, library materials, and other information and communications technology – be provided to a given parliament, in order to help establish research libraries, legislative information systems, or other initiatives.
- Five candidate countries for first-year partnerships: East Timor, Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya and Macedonia.
- Special consideration for parliamentary programs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Ukraine, after parliamentary elections are completed and new parliaments take office. Additional parliaments from additional regions will be selected in future years.
- Indirect successor to the Frost-Solomon Task Force, which provided assistance to the parliaments of 10 new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe from 1990-1996.

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Potential areas of technical assistance

- **Committee operations:** Members and staff of various House committees could advise parliamentary committee chairmen and clerks how to structure staff and activities to ensure effective oversight, such as organizing public hearings and marking up legislation
- **Budgetary issues:** House Members, staff of the budget and appropriations committees, and Congressional Budget Office experts could help improve capacity of parliaments to scrutinize the government's budget and amend it to reflect the priorities of the parliament.
- **Defense oversight:** Defense is among the most difficult areas for legislatures to exercise effective oversight, as expertise is often lacking. House Members and staff, especially from the Committee on Armed Services, could help their parliamentary counterparts learn how to scrutinize the government's defense plans.
- **Specialized legislation and oversight:** House Members and staff with specific expertise could assist Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff to draft and amend specialized legislation, such as HIV/AIDS programs or a package of laws to counter terrorism, or to oversee key ministries, such as an oil ministry.
- **Legislative procedure:** Members and staff from the House Rules Committee, legislative counsel, House Parliamentarian's office and Congressional Research Service could advise Members of Parliament and staff on bill drafting and parliamentary procedure.
- **Research services:** Library research specialists from the Congressional Research Service and Library of Congress could help establish or improve parliamentary libraries or research services.
- **Information services:** Congressional information technology experts could advise parliamentary staff how to use information technology to set up a legislative information service and other systems that disseminate information about parliament's work.
- **Constituent services:** House Members and staff could advise Members of Parliament and their constituency office staff on how to liaise with constituents and handle inquiries, concerns and casework.