

MACEDONIA PROGRAM PROFILE



DAVID DREIER, CHAIRMAN • DAVID PRICE, RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER

History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a legislative strengthening partnership with the Assembly of Macedonia in 2006. The partnership focuses on strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the Macedonian parliament by assisting them with committee operations, constituent relations, information technology, rules of procedure, and staff structure.

Since 2006, the Commission has encouraged development on these fronts through Congressional delegations to Macedonia and training programs for both Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff. Additionally, the Commission donated a computer server suite to enhance the Macedonian Parliament's internal information technology capacity.

Accomplishments

- HDP's longstanding work with Macedonian parliamentary committees culminated with the Assembly's first-ever oversight hearing in 2010, when Rep. Earl Pomeroy was asked to testify on U.S. assistance to Macedonia.
- HDP hosted a training seminar for Macedonian constituent office staff with district directors of Members of Congress, helping to establish the importance of constituency offices in Macedonia and to persuade MPs to fund those offices when U.S. government funding ended.
- HDP work with Assembly leadership and senior staff on the importance of independent research and analysis helped lead to the establishment of the Parliamentary Institute, a research service and training institute for Macedonian MPs and staff.

Background

After declaring independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Macedonia has worked to peacefully reconcile its diverse ethnic groups through parliamentary politics. The Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, is the nation's 120-seat legislative body whose members are elected every four years.

Congressional Delegations

Chairman David Dreier headed a delegation to Macedonia in April 2012 to renew HDP's relationship with the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. Members began their visit with bilateral meetings with President Gjorge Ivanov and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, where they discussed Macedonia's progress towards further democratization and majority-minority relations within Macedonia. Following these meetings with the government, the delegation met with the members of the steering committee for the Parliamentary Institute, which the Assembly is developing to serve as a legislative research service. Members of the HDP delegation emphasized the need for any such research service to be independent from political parties and for the hiring process to be conducted in a meritocratic and transparent manner. The delegation also met with the parliamentary group for collaboration with the U.S. Congress and held a workshop on committee oversight with the Assembly's committee chairs.

In addition, HDP and Rules Committee staff met with 65 constituent office managers from across Macedonia for an intensive program on effective constituency outreach. The program focused on how to run a constituent/district office and how best to provide casework services and communicate with constituents. The next day, following a session on effective parliamentary opposition held with Macedonian opposition leaders, the delegation met with the President of the Assembly, Trajko Veljanovski, to discuss the Parliamentary Institute, committee oversight, and his plans for the further development of the Assembly as an institution. Completing its visit to Macedonia, the delegation visited two constituency offices in a municipal building in Gazi Baba, Macedonia, just outside the capital. The delegation met with members of the Assembly representing the region, as well as the local mayor, to discuss the relationship between members of parliament and local officials and constituents.

Representative Earl Pomeroy led a congressional delegation to Macedonia in February 2010. During the two-day visit, the delegation met with the President, the Speaker of the Assembly and the Prime Minister. The U.S. delegation was present for the National Assembly's first-ever committee oversight hearing, which was made possible through the passage of legislation which codified the Assembly's oversight role and power. The hearing was headed by the Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, whose chairwoman had participated in several partnership training programs, and focused on an international agreement between Macedonia and the United States. In addition to Representative Pomeroy, and the U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia, the Macedonian Minister of Education testified before the committee and responded to the questions of committee members. In addition to the focus on committee hearings, the delegation also held a training session on legislative research.

In March 2008, Representative David Price led a delegation of seven Members of Congress to Macedonia to meet with their counterparts in the Assembly. The delegation met with the Parliamentary Women's Caucus to discuss effective advocacy and legislative initiatives, as well as with parliamentary committee leaders to discuss oversight and committee operations. During the trip, the Members of Congress also met with Assembly Speaker Ljubisha Georgievski to dedicate a \$50,000 network server suite provided by the Commission to enhance the Assembly's information technology capabilities. The delegation also conducted discussions on effective constituency representation, which contributed to the decision by the Assembly to permanently establish constituency offices throughout the country.

In November 2006, Representative David Dreier led a delegation of four Members of Congress to Macedonia to work with counterparts in the Assembly on improving constituent relations and staff support. During the three-day visit, Members and Macedonian MPs discussed topics ranging from the Assembly's newly revised rules of procedure to the role of majority and minority party coalitions. A concurrent staff program provided the opportunity for staff of the House of Representatives to build peer relationships with their Macedonian counterparts and share their expertise in committee operations and the organization of public hearings.

MP Seminars

In July 2012, six Macedonian MPs came to Washington to participate in a week-long seminar on committee operations. They were joined by colleagues from Liberia and Kosovo. The program covered various aspects of committee operations including the role of leadership, legislative ethics, oversight, and committee hearings. Members of Congress and staff also discussed the importance of non-partisan institutions such as the Congressional Research Service, the Government Accountability Office, and the Congressional Budget Office. More than a dozen current and former representatives were able to participate and share their experiences with the visiting MPs.

In June 2012, HDP invited four female MPs to participate in its inaugural Women's Seminar. The week-long program brought together women MPs from four partner countries (Macedonia, Indonesia, Kosovo, and Peru) to discuss economic and political issues relevant to women. The seminar began with presentations from think tanks and NGOs on topics including advocacy, economic empowerment, and using research to further policy. Later in the week, the MPs met with female Members of Congress, including the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Women's Caucus and a member of the House Leadership Team, to exchange ideas about particular challenges faced by elected female representatives and strategies for furthering women's advancement into leadership positions.

In September 2009, Macedonian Members of Parliament traveled to Washington for a week-long seminar focused on committee operations. The Congressional Research Service began the program with a presentation on Congress and its committee structure. Current committee staff and former Members of Congress spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff and organizing public hearings. Members of Congress spoke to participants about their personal experiences utilizing committees to advance their legislative and oversight priorities.

The previous year, in July 2008, the Commission arranged a week-long seminar for Macedonian MPs to discuss committee structure, as well as the importance of an independent research service to quality legislating. U.S. House of Representatives committee staff and Members of Congress spoke to participants about committee operations, including staff roles and responsibilities in organizing hearings, and how committees are used to advance policy objectives.

The first Commission seminar for Macedonian legislators was held in April 2006. Ten members of the Assembly visited the district of Representative Candice Miller in suburban Detroit, which is home to the largest Macedonian-American population in the United States. The program included an introduction to state legislatures and local government, focusing on federal-local relations and constituent service. The Macedonian delegation then traveled to Washington for a program which paired them with their counterparts on various House committees. Discussions centered on the work of committees, the role of information technology, and the importance of legislative access to independent, expert information and analysis. The program culminated with a focus on majority-minority and intraparty relations.

Staff Seminars

Staff from the Assembly have participated in several Legislative Staff Institutes organized by the Commission since 2007. In October 2012, two staff members from the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia 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.

In December 2010, Macedonian staff took part in a staff institute focused on committee operations, where they held meetings with the Congressional Research Service, staff from several House committees, and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Commission. In addition, Macedonian

committee staff 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 Assembly 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.

In June 2010, two staff members of the Assembly 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 Macedonian 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.

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, including Macedonia, 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.

The Assembly of Macedonia hosted an HDP-organized training program in Mavrovo, Macedonia, in November 2009. Macedonian staff joined 24 other participants from Kosovo, Georgia and Mongolia 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.

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

Macedonian 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 on congressional oversight and budgeting again included staff from the Assembly. 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.

Macedonian parliamentary staff 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.

Material Assistance

During a Congressional delegation visit in March 2008, the Commission donated a \$50,000 computer server suite to enable the Macedonian parliament to move away from its reliance on hard copies of documents and to an internet-accessible legislative information system for its Members. The server has improved internal legislative management, and strengthened the Assembly's capacity to conduct independent research and analysis.