

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 developing a Parliamentary Research Center, budget analysis, oversight, 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

Representative David Dreier led a four-Member delegation to Mongolia in June 2011 to meet with members of parliament and senior staff. The delegation met with Speaker Demberel, emphasized the importance of continued support to the Parliamentary Research Center and discussed plans to develop a budget analysis unit in the center. The delegation also discussed oversight responsibilities with all seven committee chairmen. The delegation visited the headquarters of the Bayanzurkh District and met with the district governor, district council president, other officials and constituents to discuss the relationship between the national legislature and local governments and constituents. Prior to departure, the delegation met with President Elbegdorj.

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.

MP Seminars

The Mongolian State Great Hural sent a delegation of six 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.

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

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 eight Legislative Staff Institutes organized by the Commission since 2007. In January 2012, two staff members participated in a training seminar on legislative research and analysis. They were joined by colleagues from 12 other HDP partner countries. The parliamentary staff institute included presentations and discussions with Members of Congress and top officials from the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Current and former CRS staff provided the participants an overview of basic legislative research and analysis techniques including identifying sources of information, basic policy analysis, developing alternatives for the legislature, and conducting impact analysis.

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 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.

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.