

TRIP REPORT: KOSOVO & MACEDONIA APRIL 2012



A delegation from the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) traveled to North Africa and the Balkans from March 30 to April 6, 2012, to renew the commission's partnership with the Kosovo Assembly and the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, to meet with the new parliament in Egypt, and to conduct a bilateral visit to Libya. The delegation was led by HDP Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) and Ranking Democratic Member David Price (D-NC) along with Reps. Jim McDermott (D-WA), Erik Paulsen (R-MN), and Gerry Connolly (D-VA). This was HDP's seventh outbound legislative strengthening mission of the 112th Congress and 28th overall since 2005.

The delegation began its mission with a visit to Tripoli (April 1), where it discussed Libya's political transition with the Chairman of the National Transitional Council, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, and Prime Minister Abdulrahim al-Keab. The delegation met with Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Abdel Aziz to discuss bilateral relations and the regional geopolitical situation. Members also met with a range of civil society, media, and political leaders at a forum organized by the U.S. Embassy.



*Reps. David Price and David Dreier meet
Shura Council Speaker Ahmed Fahmy*

The next stop for the delegation was Cairo (April 2-3), where the primary mission was to meet with the newly elected members of the bicameral Parliament of Egypt following the country's first free and fair elections in decades. Members discussed possible areas of cooperation with the People's Assembly with Deputy Speaker Ashraf Thabet and with the Shura Council's Speaker, Ahmed Fahmy. The delegation hosted a gathering of prominent and newly elected parliamentarians to learn more about the make-up of the new parliament and promote possible ties between the U.S. Congress and its Egyptian counterpart. A meeting with the Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Kairat el Shater, allowed the delegation to learn more about the Brotherhood's political plans and to discuss bilateral and regional politics. Finally, the delegation met with the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Field Marshall Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, with whom Members underscored the need for the democratic transition to continue in Egypt.



*Chairman Dreier meets with Speaker Krasniqi
of the Kosovo Assembly*

In Pristina, Kosovo (April 3-4), Members of the delegation met with their counterparts in the Kosovo Assembly to continue the relationship the House Democracy Partnership has had with Kosovo since 2009. After meeting with President Atifete Jahjaga to discuss U.S.-Kosovo relations and tensions between Kosovo and Serbia, the delegation met with the Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly, Jakup Krasniqi. During its time in the Assembly, the delegation met with Serb and other ethnic minority members of the parliament to discuss minority rights; with the Budget and Finance Committee to discuss budget oversight and fiscal analysis; and

with the Public Accounts Committee to discuss oversight of government spending. The Kosovo Assembly's women's caucus met with the delegation to share their experiences, which was followed by sessions on committee hearings and constituent services for committee chairs, deputy chairs, and caucus leaders. HDP staff held concurrent discussions with Kosovar committee staff on public hearing preparations and the role of staff in oversight activities.

Following the visit to Pristina, the delegation traveled to Skopje, Macedonia (April 4-6), to renew



HDP Delegation hosts workshop in Macedonia on effective opposition in parliament

HDP's relationship with the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, which has been an HDP partner since 2006. 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.

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



Delegation visits constituency office and Assembly members in Gazi Baba, Macedonia

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.

Overall, the delegation successfully advanced HDP's mission of strengthening democratic institutions abroad and fostering closer ties between the U.S. Congress and key partners. For more information about HDP's programs, please visit <http://democracy.house.gov>.