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**State/Foreign Operations Subcommittee Testimony**

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I thank Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the House Democracy Partnership. HDP is a commission on which I have had the pleasure of serving as both Chairman and Ranking Member since it was established by then-Speaker Dennis Hastert in March of 2005.

While the commission has its roots in an earlier effort by the House of Representatives in the 1990s, following the fall of the Iron Curtain, to assist the legislatures of Central and Eastern Europe, HDP was established within the context of the post 9-11 world. Oppression and lawlessness had fostered a strain of violent extremism that proved to be a grave threat to our national security. Our foreign policy very rightly became refocused on the need to promote and strengthen democracy – not just on elections that can be exploited by those with anti-democratic intentions or afford a veneer of legitimacy to corrupt and oppressive regimes, but on building truly democratic and accountable institutions that provide a path to peace and prosperity.

From the outset, HDP was designed to play a targeted role within this broader effort. There are a host of government agencies and non-government organizations that contribute to U.S. democracy strengthening efforts. HDP does not duplicate these efforts, but rather supplements them in a way that no other organization could replicate: we offer the expertise of U.S. Members of Congress. Foreign service officers, international consultants, attorneys and democracy advocates all do tremendous work in advancing the cause of democracy around the globe. HDP, with its very limited resources and capacity could never replicate this work, nor

does it seek to. What we do offer is the ability to speak to legislators in developing democracies as peers, backed by the credibility that comes with the 222 year history of the U.S. Congress.

We provide training and support on core legislative functions like exercising oversight of the executive branch, developing a responsible budget, conducting public hearings, responding to constituent concerns, and administering a professional staff structure. Far from the detachment of a theoretical or academic perspective, we are able to approach this training and assistance from the practical perspective that only comes with real-world experience. HDP is the only organization that enables sitting Members of the House of Representatives, and staff, to conduct this kind of training. We develop our programs in close consultation with the U.S. Agency for International Development, International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute, to ensure that we are supplementing their programs, and utilizing our unique capacity in a way that complements and enhances the work that U.S. tax dollars are funding.

We currently have 14 partner legislatures, including those of high strategic importance like Afghanistan and Pakistan, those with a potential to play a leading global role like Indonesia, those in our hemisphere like Peru and Haiti, and those that represent some of the world's newest countries and opportunities for democracy's advance, like Kosovo and Timor-Leste. We are of course following the developments in the Arab world extremely closely, and hope to soon have a number of new candidate partners throughout the Middle East, the Magreb, and beyond.

To date we have conducted training for over 500 MPs and staffers from our partner legislatures, in dozens of training seminars here in DC. We have met with hundreds more in their own legislatures and districts, discussing with them both the unique challenges that their

particular institutions face and the common threads that unite all of us striving to build a more perfect union.

Each and every one of our partners has invited us to work with them, to provide our support and assistance in advancing their own internal reform efforts. This is a key point that bears emphasis – our work is targeted on those countries who have made a transition to democracy and whose legislatures have both the desire and the constitutional authority to operate as a coequal branch of government, though they do not yet have the capacity to do so. Other very worthwhile programs focus on promoting democracy where it does not yet exist; ours does the decidedly unglamorous work of building institutions once that transition has taken place. Other important programs focus on encouraging leaders in fledgling democracies to take on the difficult work of reform and institution building; ours partners with those who have already embarked on this effort and want our assistance in achieving real results.

Because of the nature of our programs, which essentially seek to help those who help themselves, we have achieved a number of successes in a relatively short amount of time. We have helped the House of Representatives in the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia, in its quest to gain greater independence from the executive branch in both its staff structure and internal budgeting process. We have helped the Kenya National Assembly establish a budget office, giving the legislature far greater capacity to both exercise oversight and address the enormous challenge of corruption. We have helped the Macedonian legislature to establish a committee hearing process, and witnessed their first-ever public oversight hearing. These are significant successes.

We look forward to continuing this work in FY12. To that end, we are requesting support of \$1.9 million out of the Economic Support Fund, a 5% reduction in the \$2 million HDP received annually in FY08, 09 and 10. We are requesting this reduced amount because we believe every single program in the federal budget, even the most worthy, must begin to do more with less, given our very difficult economic times. As Chairman of HDP, I am wholeheartedly committed to the highest possible level of discipline and accountability.

This Subcommittee is charged with the very difficult task of ensuring that our foreign assistance dollars are spent wisely, efficiently and without redundancy. That goal is central to our request for support for HDP. We remain committed to executing our targeted but important work that complements other programs and enhances their effectiveness without creating redundancies. This work, in turn, gives Members of the U.S. House of Representatives an opportunity to advance our Reaganesque goal of sharing American values and advancing the cause of liberty by engaging directly with our counterparts in new and reemerging democracies. I thank the Chairwoman, the Ranking Member and the other Members of the Subcommittee for your time and consideration.