

**REPRESENTATIVE DAVID PRICE (NC-04)**  
**TESTIMONY BEFORE STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND RELATED**  
**PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

I am pleased to join my friend and colleague from California today to testify in support of the House Democracy Partnership's budget request for fiscal year 2012. I had the privilege of serving as Chairman of this commission during the 110th and 111th Congresses, and I currently serve as its Ranking Democratic Member under the leadership of Chairman Dreier.

As the Subcommittee is aware, the House Democracy Partnership is a bipartisan, twenty-member commission that works with 14 partner countries around the world to support the development of effective, independent, and responsive legislative institutions. Established by the House of Representatives in 2005, the commission uses peer-to-peer exchange programs, training seminars for members and staff, and targeted material assistance to build capacity in key areas such as legislative oversight, budget analysis, committee operations, constituent relations, and library and research services.

Several features of the House Democracy Partnership's mission make it unique both within our own institution and as an element of our government's broader strategy for supporting democracy and the rule of law abroad. First, the commission targets its efforts at a specific subset of countries – namely, those that have held free and fair elections and are working actively to strengthen their democratic institutions, but that still face significant political, institutional, or material challenges that could threaten their democratic “staying power.” This targeted approach is in part philosophical, in that we only work in countries that have shown a genuine interest in outside support for their internal reform efforts, but it is also pragmatic, in that it seeks to maximize the return on our investment by limiting our activities to those countries

in which we believe they will have the greatest impact. As a result, our 14 partner countries<sup>1</sup> vary widely in their history and culture, their level of economic development, and their strategic importance to the United States, but they are united in their common desire to build stronger, more effective legislatures.

Second, the House Democracy Partnership is, to our knowledge, the only program in the U.S. government that brings together sitting Members of Congress and staff with their peers from around the world for the singular purpose of strengthening their legislative institutions. This peer-to-peer approach offers important benefits on both sides of the relationship. For our partners, it offers a critical source of knowledge and expertise about the role and function of democratic legislatures, as well as an important source of political legitimacy and momentum for their internal reform efforts. For our own Members, it offers a rare opportunity to engage directly with peer legislators from around the globe, deepening the bilateral relationship between the U.S. Congress and other legislatures and giving us a useful comparative perspective about the structure and function of our own institution.

The Partnership also benefits our government's broader democracy and governance efforts by augmenting existing legislative strengthening programs in our partner countries. As the Subcommittee is aware, the U.S. Agency for International Development, often working through implementers such as the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute, fund a wide range of legislative strengthening programs around the world, but rarely do these programs bring to bear the credibility of sitting Members of Congress and staff or the resources and capabilities of our congressional support agencies. By working closely with USAID and its implementers to identify common goals and tailor our programs accordingly, the

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<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, Georgia, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Peru, Timor-Leste, and Ukraine.

commission makes existing programs more effective and helps achieve a unity of purpose across the U.S. government.

Finally, the Partnership expands the reach of our country's diplomatic efforts by providing an alternative channel for bilateral engagement with key U.S. allies, including major strategic partners such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. The legislators with whom our commission works represent not only an important audience that is often overlooked by our usual diplomatic efforts – including, it must be said, by most congressional delegations – but also a cadre of future presidents, prime ministers, and other prominent national leaders. Establishing relationships with these leaders today will pay lasting dividends for our country down the road, allowing us to build a foundation of trust and mutual respect that can withstand the political crises of the moment.

These unique features have made the Partnership a valuable forum for strengthening democratic institutions abroad and deepening bilateral relations between the United States and key allies. In less than six years, the commission has conducted 22 congressional delegations to 40 partner countries, hosted 15 inbound delegations of legislators from partner countries for training programs in Washington, and organized nearly 30 training programs for staff from our partner legislatures, both in Washington and in their own countries. Cumulatively, over 500 members of parliament and staff have participated in the Partnership's training programs. These efforts have contributed to concrete improvements in the governance capacities of our partner legislatures, such as a new budget office in the Kenyan parliament, a research and analysis unit within the parliament of Timor-Leste, and a reform to the rules of procedure in the Peruvian Congress. They have also led to relationships with legislators in countries such as Haiti, Lebanon, and Georgia that have proven useful during times of crisis.

Most importantly for the purpose of today's hearing, the commission's programs have been conducted at a very modest cost relative to their value, due largely to its ability to leverage the resources of executive agencies and legislative support services. In recent years, the Subcommittee has generously provided the Partnership with an annual budget of \$2 million, funded through the State Department's Economic Support Fund account and administered by USAID. The majority of this amount goes to support the commission's inbound training programs for members and staff, with a smaller amount devoted to outbound delegations of retired U.S. members and staff, regional staff institutes for partner countries, and targeted material assistance. Because the commission's professional staff and administrative support are provided by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and USAID, none of its annual budget is used for internal overhead costs, maximizing the impact of this relatively small investment.

Looking ahead to FY 2012, the Commission has proposed an ambitious schedule of activities which has been made available to your staff under separate cover. In addition to maintaining our goal of visiting each of our partner countries once every two years, the commission is also planning to visit several countries identified as candidates for prospective partnership, hosting at least two seminars for partner legislators and one for legislative staff, and sending delegations of retired staff to partner countries on a case-by-case basis. **For these activities, we are requesting a level of \$1.9 million, reflecting a five percent cut from the enacted FY 2010 level.** We believe this level will allow us to maintain our full schedule of activities while also acknowledging the current fiscal realities in which we are operating.

While I believe the work that the House Democracy Partnership is doing in each of its partner countries is critically important, I'd like to close by emphasizing that our work has taken on a new significance in light of the transformational changes we are witnessing in the Middle

East. In light of developments in Egypt, Tunisia, and elsewhere, it is clear that the old paradigms that have often characterized U.S. policy in the region – an emphasis on stability over democracy and human rights, sporadic engagement with opposing political forces, a preference for military aid over development assistance – will need to be revisited. As the United States responds to these rapidly evolving events, we believe the model of engagement offered by our commission – with its emphasis on partnerships of mutual respect and long-term institutional development – is well suited to the current moment.

For this reason, the commission is actively exploring ways in which it can bring its unique resources to bear in the Middle East, in consultation with senior State Department and USAID officials. Among other things, we are discussing the possibility of a seminar that brings together members of parliament from existing HDP partner countries (such as Indonesia) with members from the new democratic legislatures of the Middle East, once they have been elected. Although these activities are in their notional stages and are thus not fully reflected in our budget request, we look forward to working with the Subcommittee to explore the role that our commission – and the House of Representatives more broadly – can play in charting a new path for U.S. relations with the Middle East.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today, and I will be happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.