

TRIP REPORT:

HAITI

MAY 2010



On May 7, 2010, a delegation from the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) traveled to Haiti to assess the status of the country's recovery efforts and consult with the Haitian National Assembly on the last day of its mandate. The delegation was led by HDP Chairman David Price (D-NC) and included HDP Ranking Member David Dreier (R-CA); HDP Members Donald Payne (D-NJ), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA); and Reps. Bobby Rush (D-IL), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Brad Miller (D-NC), and Gwen Moore (D-WI). This was HDP's seventh outbound congressional delegation of the 111th Congress and 20th overall.

HDP's partnership with the Haitian National Assembly was initiated in 2007 following the country's successful 2006 legislative elections. For the past three years, HDP has worked closely with members and staff of the National Assembly to strengthen their institution, organizing numerous congressional exchanges and at least ten training programs for Haitian legislative staff. The earthquake that struck Haiti in January 2010 destroyed the parliamentary compound and took the lives of several of its members and staff, and HDP has been working in its wake to help the National Assembly resume its day-to-day functions and play a meaningful role in the government's reconstruction efforts.



Reps. David Price and Brad Miller tour the remains of the National Assembly.

In addition to the material challenges of rebuilding an institution from the ground up, the National Assembly also faces an uncertain political future, with the mandate of the entire Chamber of Deputies and one-third of the Senate set to expire in May 2010 until new elections can be held. The current visit was an opportunity to reaffirm U.S. support for the Assembly at a critical moment, consult with Haitian legislators on the manifold challenges that lie ahead, and focus the U.S. government's attention on the specific needs of the parliament.

The visit began with a tour of downtown Port-au-Prince, where members surveyed the remains of the National Assembly compound and Presidential Palace. In intensive meetings with State Department and USAID officials at the U.S. Embassy, the delegation emphasized the need for the U.S. government to address the needs of the National Assembly in its broader reconstruction strategy, including by helping to identify a meeting space for the parliament and maintaining USAID's legislative strengthening program. Embassy officials informed the delegation of the U.S. commitment to funding a temporary parliamentary facility and working to ensure that new legislative elections are held as soon as possible.

The central focus of the delegation's visit was its meetings with parliamentary leaders at the National Assembly's temporary meeting space in a police academy in Petionville. At a meeting with several Deputies chaired by Chamber President Levaillant Louis-Jeune, the delegation expressed sympathy and support for the country's tragic loss and emphasized the need for Deputies to remain involved in the reconstruction effort, even as their term in office expired.

Several Deputies indicated that they would be running for reelection and would thus remain involved in leading their communities along the path to recovery, while also underscoring the need for the Senators remaining in office to perform the parliament's oversight functions.

The delegation's meeting with the Haitian Senate was chaired by Senate President Kely Bastien and included a majority of the 19 Senators who will remain in office after the current legislative



The delegation meets with a group of Senators at the parliament's temporary meeting facility in Petionville.

term expires. HDP Members affirmed their resolve to continue the commission's partnership with the Senate despite the difficult circumstances, and encouraged the Senate to be as active as possible in conducting oversight of the government's reconstruction efforts in the months ahead. Several Senators acknowledged the increased oversight responsibilities that their chamber would assume but voiced their concern that reconstruction decisions were being consolidated in the executive branch and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission without adequate involvement by the parliament.

Overall, the delegation successfully advanced HDP's mission by reaffirming its support for the Haitian National Assembly at a critical moment in the institution's history. In the months ahead, HDP will be actively working to ensure that the needs of the parliament are reflected in the broader U.S. reconstruction effort.

For more information about the House Democracy Partnership, please contact the HDP office at (202) 226-1641 or visit <http://democracy.house.gov>.