

UKRAINE PROGRAM PROFILE



History of Partnership

The House Democracy Assistance Commission approved a legislative strengthening partnership with Ukraine in November 2006, and the program ended in June 2011. During that time, the Commission worked with the Ukrainian parliament in the areas of committee oversight, parliamentary politics, ethics, and the legislative application of information technology.

The Commission encouraged development through Congressional visits to Ukraine, and training seminars in the U.S. for visiting MPs and parliamentary staff.

Background

Ukraine's legislative branch is a unicameral, 450-seat parliament known as the Verkhovna Rada. The parliament elects the executive branch and the Cabinet of Ministers, which led by the Prime Minister. Ukraine follows a semi-presidential system, so in addition to the parliament and prime minister, a president is directly-elected every five years. The Verkhovna Rada is responsible for drafting laws, ratifying foreign treaties, electing judges, appointing some officials, and if necessary, amending the Constitution. Ukraine held parliamentary elections in September 2007.

Congressional Delegations

In June 2011, Representative David Dreier led a four-Member delegation to Kiev to meet with members of the Verkhovna Rada. The delegation met with members of the Rada's U.S. Interparliamentary Group, led by Oleh Bilorus, chairman of the Rada's foreign affairs committee, to discuss relations between the Congress and the Rada after the end of the HDP program. The delegation also met with Arseniy Yatseniuk, leader of the Front for Change Party; Yulia Tymoshenko, leader of the Bloc of Yulia Tymoshenko; and Justice Minister Oleksandr Lavrynovych.

In late March 2008, the Commission organized a delegation of seven Members of Congress, led by Representative David Price, to meet with their counterparts in the Verkhova Rada. The delegation focused on meeting newly elected members, and held discussions with them on constituent relations, committee operations, budgeting, and social policy. They also met with Speaker Arseniy Yatseniuk and senior members of the foreign affairs and defense committees. In addition, the delegation sat down with President Yushchenko and met with local and regional officials in Lviv, the western Ukrainian city that has played an important role in Ukrainian culture.

Three Members of Congress, led by Representative David Price, visited Ukraine on the Commission's behalf in March 2007. They met with Speaker Alexander Moroz and with the foreign affairs and national defense committees to discuss issues of bilateral concern. The delegation met with numerous committee chairmen to discuss committee relations and operations. Capacity-building sessions were held on political ethics, the application of information technology to legislative work, and role of political parties in a legislature.

MP Seminar

In July 2008, the Commission organized a week-long seminar for Ukrainian MPs to discuss the importance of an independent legislative research service. House Committee staff and Members of Congress also spoke to participants about various aspects of committee operations, including the role of staff in organizing public hearings, and how committees are used to advance policy and oversight priorities.

Staff Seminars

Ukrainian parliamentary staff joined 28 parliamentary staffers from 10 partnership countries in Washington in December 2008 for an Legislative 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 committee-press relations.

A staff institute in October 2008 centered on congressional oversight and budgeting again included staff from the Ukrainian 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.