

Member of Parliament Seminar

March 2011



David Dreier, Chairman • David Price, Ranking Democratic Member

Strengthening Committee Operations in the Legislature

Improving the capacity of committee operations is a primary component of the House Democracy Partnership's work with its partner legislatures. From March 28 to April 1, 2011, the House Democracy Partnership (HDP) organized a weeklong seminar for 22 Members of Parliament from three HDP partner countries (Indonesia, Lebanon, and Pakistan) and one observer country (Iraq). This program was organized in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Members of Parliament met with a dozen of their counterparts in the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss the organization and operation of public committee hearings, the



The Honorable Samira al-Musawi, Member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, and other Iraqi and Lebanese MPs, listen to a CRS presentation.

importance of committee oversight, legislative ethics, the support Members receive from agencies such as the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and the role of a committee chairperson.

The program began with an overview of the U.S. committee structure by CRS, and presentations by senior staff members of key House committees on how committees sets their agendas in consultation with House leadership, how committee press operations are managed, how legislative drafting takes place, and how budget analysis is provided by CBO for the Congress. In addition, participants also met with the Comptroller General of the United States, viewed an Appropriations Committee hearing at which USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah testified, and compared and contrasted their own committee systems with one another's.

This was the twelfth seminar for Members of Parliament organized by HDP since the commission was established in 2005. HDP has also organized seven parliamentary staff institutes in Washington, D.C. for staff of HDP partner countries in areas such as committee operations, budget analysis, and research and analysis. Additionally, the Commission has undertaken regional staff seminars in Kenya, Macedonia, and Poland; three joint MP/staff training seminars; and twenty-two outbound Congressional delegations to HDP partner countries.