

Price Welcomes Delegates from Emerging Democracies

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. David Price (NC-04) addressed a gathering of lawmakers from four Asian and European countries by describing democracy as a "work in progress". He said democracy is not an end in itself, but an "ongoing process that requires the enduring commitment of the nation's leaders."

Forty-four members of parliament from East Timor, Georgia, Indonesia, and Macedonia were in Washington this week for a conference with U.S. lawmakers on ways to strengthen their democratic institutions. The event was sponsored by the House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC), also known as the Dreier-Price Commission after its leading members, Rep. David Dreier (R-CA) and Congressman Price, a North Carolina Democrat. HDAC has chosen to assist these four countries whose parliaments are in a developmental stage.

The visiting delegates attended meetings with lawmakers, congressional and State Department staff, and participated in workshops on budgetary oversight, legislative research and parliamentary administration. Price shared his professional expertise when he led a discussion on the federal budget and the appropriations process with members of parliament from Macedonia and Indonesia. He also played a major role in setting the week's agenda and planning the events.

Congressman Price first conceived of the Commission after working with the Frost-Solomon Commission in the early 1990s, a similar congressional partnership with emerging democracies that focused on the breakaway republics of the former Soviet Union. After that program was eliminated under the new House leadership in 1994, Price worked for years to restore the program, finally succeeding last year with the help of Rep. Dreier.

"In an environment that is so poisoned with partisanship, the work of the House Democracy Assistance Commission is one area that we should all agree upon," Price said. "All of us, Democrats and Republicans alike, would like to see democratic governments flourish throughout the world, and we are doing our part to strengthen the emerging democracies that are in the early stages of development by conferencing with foreign lawmakers and sharing ideas and best practices."

In May, Price and other HDAC members will lead a delegation to provide assistance to Afghanistan and Georgia in May, two countries that have experienced historic transitions to democracy in recent years. Later in the year, Price will visit Lebanon, Kenya and Macedonia. Price hopes to eventually partner with an Iraqi parliament once stability is restored in the country.

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