

**Washington, D.C.** - David Price On the Floor of the House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker, it was one year ago today, March 14, 2005, that the House gave final approval to the formation of the House Democracy Assistance Commission. Today I am pleased to report that the HDAC, which is chaired by Rep. David Dreier and on which I serve as Ranking Member, is off to an energetic and encouraging start.

My hope in first proposing creation of the Commission in the 108th Congress was to build upon and extend the pioneering work of the Frost-Solomon Task Force, which in the early 1990s extended support to the emerging democratic parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe. Those hopes began to be realized as Speaker Hastert got behind the idea, the authorizing resolution was refined and passed, and both Speaker Hastert and Leader Pelosi appointed serious, committed Members to carry out the work of the Commission.

During calendar year 2005, the Commission entered into agreements with five parliaments around the world to provide material, technical, and procedural assistance to members of Parliament as they learn how to govern their nations responsibly, effectively, and, in many cases for the first time ever, democratically. The Commission has now, begun its work with these nations: East Timor, Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya, and Macedonia.

Our relationship with these countries will continue, hopefully over the course of several years. At the same time, the Commission will be undertaking programs with a new round of emerging democratic parliaments in 2006. We hope to continue to support our country's ideals and interests in key nations around the world through our assistance.

While our program is still in its early stages, we have already seen clear evidence of the impact it can have. Last month, the Commission's first delegation of members of Congress traveled to Indonesia and East Timor and began to train members of those nations' parliaments. I want to especially thank the members of this delegation: Reps. Jim Kolbe, Lois Capps, Adam Schiff, and Allyson Schwartz, who I understand were greeted with warm welcomes and rapt attention in both countries. While in East Timor, this delegation announced that the House Democracy Assistance Commission would be helping East Timor build a parliamentary library from the ground up, no small accomplishment in a nation with extremely limited resources. Our Commission's work goes far beyond building physical structures, however; we are helping to

build the foundations of effective and lasting democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the House Democracy Assistance Commission is an all-too-rare example of sincere bipartisan cooperation, Chairman Dreier, who chairs our commission, has helped us carry out our work with no considerations other than the best interests of the House, the United States, and our partner parliaments, Under his leadership, our Commission's 16 members have been able to demonstrate to our partners our deeply-felt, shared respect for and admiration of American democracy and the esteemed institution of the House of Representatives. We also owe a particular debt of gratitude to the Commission's Staff Director, John Lis, whose energy and vision have helped us launch the Commission in such a promising way.

Every day, members of Congress are called upon to assess and oversee our Nation's policies toward developing democracies around the world. The House Democracy Assistance Commission offers the House an opportunity to directly contribute to the sustainability and effectiveness of these democracies. We are working to establish democracy not just in name but also in practice, training our partners in the nuts and bolts of democratic government. Mr. Speaker, I can think of no more important work for ensuring our national security and maintaining our role as leader of the free world. I thank you and I thank my colleagues for your support, and I look forward to continuing our work.

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