

News & Observer Editorial: "Price Boosts Democracy"

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Democracy can be a joyous but fragile thing. Doubters need only look to Baghdad as a not-so-shining example. So U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi made an enlightened decision when they named Rep. David E. Price of Chapel Hill as the ranking Democrat on a U.S.-funded international commission to help foreign nations set up new democratic governments.

Price's selection is fitting. He was a Duke University professor of political science before being elected to Congress, and he has a well-grounded understanding of the challenges and advantages in America's form of government. The commission also is a direct result of legislation Price introduced without success in the past, but which passed this year with co-sponsorship by Rep. David Dreier, a California Republican. Price has made it a focus during more than 15 years in Congress to visit and encourage emerging democracies, including work on a task force in the early 1990s that offered advice, equipment and training to new legislatures in Central and Eastern Europe.

So will the new 16-member House Democracy Assistance Commission, which will give emerging democracies insight but also tools to put their governments on a solid footing. President Bush is correct that people yearn for the right to choose their leaders, just as America's founders properly noted that government is best when placed in the hands of the governed. Price's bill, and his place on the new commission, advance those visionary purposes.

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