

Washington, D.C. – Representative David Price (NC-04), co-chair of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP), returned this morning from two days of meetings with Afghan parliamentary leaders that coincided with enactment of the US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement.

"The Afghan Parliament has made remarkable progress, amid formidable challenges, over the past ten years," Rep. Price said. "Our House Democracy Partnership has engaged with the Parliament intensively for the last six years, member to member and staff to staff. This week's visit convinced us that our partnership is more important than ever, for Afghanistan's ability to defend and govern itself will depend heavily on the legitimacy and effectiveness of its representative institutions."

In Afghanistan, Rep. Price and HDP chair David Dreier met with the speakers of the Wolesi Jirga and the Meshrano Jirga, the lower and upper houses of the Afghan parliament, and with cross sections of the membership of the International Affairs, Budget Affairs, Internal Security and Defense Affairs, and Women's Affairs Committees. Concurrently, HDP staff conducted workshops for parliamentary staff. Later, the HDP delegation met with President Karzai and with leading opposition figure and likely Presidential candidate, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah.

"The parliament has been a relative bright spot in the governance of Afghanistan," Rep. Price said. "Domestically it has acted as a check on the President, asserting its power to modify the President's proposed budgets and confirm or reject nominees to head government agencies. Its members are attuned to the policy challenges that need to be addressed as we withdraw our troops and place the responsibility for securing the country fully in the hands of the Afghan National Security Forces."

The delegation also stopped at Camp Leatherneck, in Southwest Afghanistan's Helmand province, to meet with troops implementing the Obama Administration's plan to advise and train Afghan National Security forces. The Camp's commanding officer is Major General C.M. Gurganus, Commander Regional Command Southwest. Gen. Gurganus is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and makes his home in Wilmington, NC.

Established by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2005, HDP uses peer-to-peer exchange programs, training seminars for members and staff, and targeted material assistance to build parliamentary capacity in key areas such as legislative oversight, budget analysis, committee

operations, constituent relations, and library and research services. Its singular focus on the legislative branch of government and its unique ability to bring together American legislators and their peers from around the world have made the commission a valuable forum for strengthening democratic institutions and deepening bilateral relations. Rep. Price chaired the Commission during the period of Democratic leadership (2007-2010); this is his third visit to Afghanistan.



Photo caption: Rep. David Price (D-NC), Rep. David Dreier (R-CA), Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Major General C.M. Gurganus, Commander Regional Command Southwest, at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

###

