



AFPC Launches Russian Parliament Exchange Program

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While Russia faces uncertainty with its people engaged in a struggle for democracy, the American Foreign Policy Council has launched the Russian Parliament Exchange Program. The program was established in May of last year at the request of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Russian parliament.

The objective of the program is twofold. The first is to expose top staff members of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR to the mechanics of democracy and the free market—an exposure we hope helps facilitate the move to democracy in their country.

The second objective is for U.S. Congressional staff to keep abreast of the conditions in the Russian Republic by spending time in Moscow. The information gained is critical in that it will provide senior staff of U.S. Senators and Congressmen with essential knowledge and insight when advising policy makers. Only by spending time in the Russian capital will Washington officials better appreciate and understand the challenges facing this emerging democracy. Likewise, the experience will help them sharpen their analytical abilities when it comes to Russian affairs.

The first exchange last May, co-sponsored by the Legislative Studies Institute, brought six senior staff members of the Parliament to the U.S. for an intensive immersion in the democratic process and free market practices in our country. The twelve-week trip comprised a formal study of both government and non-government institutions, including the three independent branches of government. Russian officials learned about the Bill of Rights from law professors, how American companies operate from successful businessmen, and the inner workings of the U.S. government from our officials.

According to AFPC President Herman Pirchner, "In this century, no democratic nation has started a war against another democratic nation. A democratic Russia makes for a more peaceful world. It is in our security interests to encourage democracy in the former Soviet Union and see to it that it succeeds."

"Our experience with the first delegation proved the program to be of inestimable value to the short-term needs of our Russian guests," says AFPC Executive Vice President Elizabeth Derby. "Even with only a modicum of external, opposing forces, it still took us thirteen years to create a republic in this country, from the Revolution in 1776 to the election of Washington in 1789. If one agrees that human nature has not changed all that much in two hundred years, one should assume that the merging democratic forces in Russia will experience the same tortuous delays that we did."