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Opening the People's House

Governments and citizens collaborate to build more transparent, inclusive parliaments

In conjunction with the International Day of Democracy on Sept. 15, lawmakers and citizen watchdogs in more than a dozen countries will work together to open up and modernize a quintessential democratic institution: the legislature. The goal, organizers say, is to ensure that core democratic functions like lawmaking and government oversight are as transparent and inclusive as possible.

[Global Legislative Openness Week \(GLOW\)](#), from Sept. 15-25, will involve a series of related activities in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Guatemala, Israel, Jordan, Mexico, Montenegro, Poland and elsewhere. The campaign will use a common hashtag ([#OpenParl2014](#)) and is spearheaded by the Legislative Openness Working Group of the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative with 64 participating countries.

"Having an open legislature means that we can adapt to social and technological changes, respond to citizen demands and stay close to the people who elect us," Chilean Senator Hernán Larraín said. "Providing more information and expanding citizen participation, in a deliberate and meaningful way, will make legislatures more effective and help us to ensure that democracy works to deliver solutions to the problems citizens face in their daily lives."

Chile was the first partnership country to create a national action plan focused on legislative openness--a model that the working group is encouraging other parliaments to follow. The Congress of Chile will conclude GLOW by hosting the working group's annual meeting Sept. 25-26, with a focus on institutionalizing openness.

"Young activists, government reformers and civic technologists have begun tackling social problems with enormous energy and talent, but we know that institutional change also requires stamina and organization," said Scott Hubli, director of governance at the National Democratic Institute (NDI). "All sides need to work together to build consensus, identify opportunities and chart a practical course forward, and that's what GLOW is all about."

**Global Legislative Openness Week
September 15-25, 2014**

Who: The Legislative Openness Working Group of the Open Government Partnership, and members of the global community of parliamentary monitoring organizations.

What: A series of events and activities to promote transparent, inclusive parliaments

Where: #OpenParl2014 and OpenParl2014.org, with in-person events in Montenegro, Chile, Poland, Australia, Canada, Mexico and elsewhere.

More information: OpenParl2014.org

The Congress of Chile and NDI serve as co-chairs of the working group, which was formed in 2013 to expand the scope of commitments made by Open Government Partnership countries.

Opening Parliamentary Data

Many civil society activists are focused on improving the flow of information between legislatures and citizens and creating digital tools that enable citizens to engage in the process. From Brazil and Estonia to Tunisia, such tools are allowing citizens and legislators to review pending bills, share policy information and communicate more easily with each other.

“The spread of social media has changed how citizens organize and communicate, but many political institutions are rooted in tradition and have been slower to adopt these new technologies,” said Hubli. “The focus of GLOW, and of the working group as a whole, is to develop concrete action plans to make legislative openness a reality.”

GLOW Events Include:

- **Sept. 15-16, Podgorica, Montenegro**
Legislative Openness Working Group Regional Meeting: Expanding Civic Engagement through Parliamentary Openness
- **Sept. 18-22, Serbia**
“Yes for Open Parliament” street actions in six cities
- **Sept. 20-21, Sydney, Australia**
Hackfest - GLOW Edition
- **Sept. 23, Buenos Aires, Argentina**
Presentation of the second Index on Legislative Transparency
- **Sept. 25-26, Valparaiso, Chile**
Legislative Openness Working Group Annual Meeting: Institutionalizing the Open Parliament Agenda

Civic innovators and technologists play a key role in this aspect of the open government movement. During GLOW, the Open Australia Foundation will hold its latest “civic hackathon,” an intensive coding workshop during which volunteer programmers collaborate to identify specific civic problems and invent platforms or applications to address them. A coalition of Polish civil society organizations is working with the city of Gdansk to hold its own hackathon shortly after GLOW.

“Every legislature comes to this discussion from a different starting point, but every legislature can deepen its engagement with civil society on transparency and accountability issues,” Hubli said. “GLOW can facilitate discussions on what information is available to the public, what opportunities exist for citizens to voice their opinions, how legislatures can improve their operations and what procedures can be put in place to better address the problems faced by citizens.”



The Legislative Openness Working Group of the Open Government Partnership aims to deepen the exchange of knowledge across governments, parliaments, civil society and international institutions in the development and enactment of commitments on legislative openness. For more information, visit opengovernmentpartnership.org.