

Baltic-Eurasia Inter-Parliamentary Training Institute Program Summary

With a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy, the International Republican Institute (IRI) initiated the Baltic-Eurasia Inter-Parliamentary Training Institute (BEIPTI), a regional parliamentary governance program that links parliamentarians in the Baltic countries, primarily Lithuania, to parliamentarians in the emerging Eurasian democracies of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. These three countries have formally set an objective of integrating into Europe politically, governmentally and economically, including full membership in the European Union.

Through this program, IRI helps elected and appointed officials from these young democracies develop the skills to govern in a transparent, responsive, effective manner to ensure the improvement of the lives of their citizens with a focus on parliamentary governance. In short, IRI – with its Lithuanian *Seimas* partners – assists these countries upgrade to European Union governance standards.

The BEIPTI program focuses on the particular needs of each participating parliament, but has found that training seminars on drafting legislation, committee procedures, information technology, research, the budget process, constituent service and parliamentary oversight are important topics facing all emerging democracies.

Since October 2006, IRI has worked closely with the *Seimas* in administering parliamentary assessments, exchanges and training programs with the objective of providing exposure, expertise and experience to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff members from selected emerging democracies in the former Soviet Union. This program has assisted elected and appointed officials in these nascent democracies in institutionalizing democracy, particularly at the parliamentary level – a key element in governance.

By combining the resources of the U.S. government with the parliamentary expertise of both IRI and the *Seimas*, the parliamentary program has hosted 156 members of parliament and parliamentary staff from Moldova and Ukraine.