

Prospects for Improving the Activities of the Committees of the Legislative Chamber

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Annotation: This paper explores the enhancement of the activities of the committees of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan within the framework of digital transformation and parliamentary modernization. The research emphasizes the growing role of advanced information and communication technologies in improving legislative efficiency, particularly through mobile applications, artificial intelligence, and electronic platforms. Current challenges include uneven distribution of draft laws, lack of standardized procedures, delays in submission processes, limited legislative initiative from deputies, and insufficient use of digital monitoring tools. To overcome these issues, the study proposes measures such as balanced distribution of draft laws, improved procedural regulation, strengthening deputies' initiatives, mandatory financial justification for draft laws, and the introduction of electronic tracking mechanisms. Implementation of these reforms would increase transparency, efficiency, and accountability, while contributing to the development of an "electronic parliament" aligned with international best practices.

Key words: Parliamentary reform, Legislative Chamber, Oliy Majlis, Digital transformation of parliament, Legislative efficiency, Committee procedures, International best practices.

In recent years, the proportion of the population of our country utilizing services of the global Internet network has been steadily increasing. In particular, according to the data of the Ministry of Digital Technologies of the Republic of Uzbekistan, by the end of 2022, the number of Internet users in Uzbekistan exceeded 31 million, of which 29.5 million were mobile Internet users.

As noted above, one of the statutory functions of the committees of the Legislative Chamber consists in handling appeals submitted by individuals and legal entities. Therefore, drawing upon the experience of leading foreign states, it seems expedient in the future to develop a specialized parliamentary mobile application. Under the existing practice, the electronic channels through which individuals and legal entities may address appeals to deputies and senators are limited, being mediated primarily through the Presidential Virtual Reception, the People's Reception, and directly through the official websites of the Senate and the Legislative Chamber.[1]

According to data from 2021, more than 70 percent of appeals submitted to Parliament were made in written form. This fact highlights the necessity of introducing novel mechanisms of appeal submission. In light of this, it would be reasonable to enable citizens to direct their petitions to Parliament via popular social media platforms—for instance, by creating a special "Appeal to Parliament" bot on Telegram. However, this issue remains unresolved to date.

Significant measures are also being implemented in Uzbekistan to foster the development of artificial intelligence technologies. In particular, pursuant to the "Digital Uzbekistan – 2030" Strategy and the Presidential Resolution "On Measures to Create Conditions for the Accelerated Implementation of Artificial Intelligence Technologies," the rapid introduction and wide application of artificial intelligence systems, the effective use of digital data, and the assurance of their quality have been designated as priority objectives. From this standpoint, it is advisable in the future to explore

possibilities for the integration of artificial intelligence into the activities of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of parliamentary activity, some states have introduced practices of evaluating the performance of deputies.[2] The introduction of such mechanisms may serve as a factor accelerating the transition to an “electronic parliament” system and as an instrument for increasing the accountability and efficiency of deputies.[3] In certain countries, deputies’ ratings are determined according to such indicators as the number of articles published, the number of statements and comments issued (likes), and the number of views received.[4]

Another urgent task is the refinement of mechanisms ensuring public participation in the development of legislative drafts. Within the legislative framework of the Oliy Majlis, it is important that all draft laws be posted on the official portal *qonun.gov.uz*, enabling citizens to provide their opinions and proposals, establishing mechanisms for feedback, and obligating the responsible committee to respond to suggestions submitted. Additionally, to create convenience for citizens, the responsible committee should also organize simplified surveys (for example, allowing citizens to indicate whether they “approve” or “disapprove” of a draft law).

Such a practice has already been introduced in Brazil, where simplified online polls are carried out through the official websites of the Chamber of Deputies and its committees. It would be appropriate to adapt similar mechanisms to Uzbekistan’s parliamentary mobile application. Moreover, within the framework of an “electronic parliament” system, the parliamentary library and information resource centers play a crucial role.

As seen in leading foreign states such as the United Kingdom,[5] Australia, Ireland, and several European countries, the “electronic parliament” system has been effectively implemented. The U.S. Congress website, with its comprehensive, detailed, and user-friendly structure, represents another model worthy of emulation for Uzbekistan.

Currently, the official website of the Legislative Chamber should be further enriched with information about the committees and other structural units. At present, ten committees operate within the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Based on the conducted analysis, the following shortcomings have been identified:

There exists a disproportion in the distribution of draft laws among the committees, which negatively affects deputies’ efficiency and hinders the balanced division of responsibilities.[6] Deputies assigned an excessive number of drafts are compelled to engage primarily in legislative drafting, leaving insufficient time for oversight, analytical work, and engagement with constituents. Consequently, the quality of laws declines. *For example: during the reporting period, the Committee on Combating Corruption and Judicial-Legal Issues reviewed 25 draft laws, while the Committee on Public Health considered only 2, and the Committee on Labor and Social Issues—5.*

The procedures for reviewing draft laws within committees are not clearly defined; moreover, in practice, different committees approach this task in divergent ways, resulting in fragmentation in the legislative review process.[7]

The quality of draft laws submitted by entities vested with the right of legislative initiative remains unsatisfactory. This necessitates their conceptual reworking by deputies of the Legislative Chamber, which in turn creates additional workload.

For instance, Article 13 of the Law “On the Regulations of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan” stipulates that, based on the responsible committee’s opinion and the views of factions, the Council of the Legislative Chamber may decide whether to admit a draft law for

consideration or to return it to the initiator if it does not comply with the requirements of Article 12 of the same Law.

Draft laws are often submitted after the prescribed deadlines, which imposes additional strain on deputies and hampers the timely adoption of laws.

1. Deputies' level of initiative in drafting legislation remains low.

For instance, during the first nine months of 2022, deputies initiated only 9 draft laws under their right of legislative initiative, while in the corresponding period of the current year, only 7 were initiated—amounting to merely 4.67 percent of the total number of deputies.

2. Draft laws requiring material expenditures or affecting state revenues and expenditures are often submitted without financial-economic justifications or the mandatory opinions of the Cabinet of Ministers.

For example, in the explanatory note to the draft law amending certain legislative acts concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in rental relations and improving pension assignment and payment procedures, it was noted that the adoption of the law would require an additional annual expenditure of 15.2 billion UZS from the extra-budgetary Pension Fund starting from January 1, 2024. Nevertheless, the Cabinet of Ministers' opinion was not attached to the draft.

3. There is no electronic portal reflecting the stages of movement of draft laws, making it difficult to track their status (e.g., preliminary discussion, reading stage, submission to the Senate, etc.).

On the basis of these findings, the following proposals are advanced:

Eliminate disproportionality in the distribution of draft laws among committees. *For instance, at present, 10 percent of deputies of the Legislative Chamber are lawyers, and nearly 36 percent of them serve in the Committee on Combating Corruption and Judicial-Legal Issues.*[8]

Improve the practice of reviewing draft laws in committees, including establishing a standardized procedure for discussions, decision-making by voting, and the article-by-article review of drafts during preparation for the second reading. A draft normative act regulating this procedure should be developed.[9]

Introduce a rule allowing committees to reject a draft law or return it to the initiator if it fails to meet required standards. This proposal should be reflected in Article 12 of the Law “On the Regulations of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis.”

Strengthen deputies' use of their right of legislative initiative, with special attention to issues identified during constituency work and field studies.

Require financial-economic justifications and the Cabinet of Ministers' official opinion for all draft laws entailing material costs or affecting state budget revenues and expenditures.

Establish electronic tracking of the status of draft laws within the Legislative Chamber.

Introduce mechanisms for monitoring draft laws mandated by presidential decrees and resolutions, including whether such drafts have been submitted to the Legislative Chamber.

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