



May 12, 2020

ParlAmericas and the International Republican Institute, in partnership with the National Assembly of Panama, held an online seminar on the importance of legislative openness

On Wednesday, April 29 of this year, ParlAmericas and the International Republican Institute (IRI) with the valuable support of the National Assembly of Panama, held an online seminar on open parliament and action plans for legislative openness, with the aim of continuing to encourage actions in favour of this agenda in Panama.

Welcoming remarks were given by Senator Blanca Ovelar (Paraguay), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, Member of the National Assembly Fernando Arce (Panama), ParlAmericas Board Member, and Beatriz de Anta, IRI's Resident Program Director in Panama. Senator Ovelar noted that "At ParlAmericas, we value the great efforts that have been made by the region's parliaments to continue meeting virtually and we encourage all legislative work to continue meeting standards of transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics, pillars of an open parliament." Member of the National Assembly Arce made reference to the complicated times that countries are currently facing and emphasized that "it is important to remember that all of us, legislators, officials and citizens, must act together to counter this crisis and take care not only of our health, but also the health of our democracy."

During this activity, Patricio Vallespín, a former Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile, spoke of the importance of legislative openness for current political action where committing to open parliaments provides an opportunity to continue building credibility, trust and civic legitimacy. Natalí Casanova, Senior Program Officer of the Open Parliament program at ParlAmericas, later stressed that advancing this agenda has also meant adopting measures to modernize parliament, which, in turn, has facilitated the transition to the virtual sittings currently being held by national legislatures in order to continue their work in the face of the global crisis. Following these presentations, the experiences of Chile and Paraguay were presented by Rocío Noriega, Advisor to the Bicameral Group on Transparency of the National Congress of Chile, and María Liz Sosa, Director General of Legislative Strengthening and External Cooperation of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay, who emphasized the importance of involving civil society organizations in processes for co-creation and implementation of commitments for legislative openness, as well as the importance of addressing other related issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

The event concluded with remarks by Her Excellency Lilly Nicholls, Canadian Ambassador to Panama, and Beatriz de Anta, Resident Director of the IRI in Panama.