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by

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on

**“Improving Parliament for Parents: A Case of House of Representatives of
Thailand”**

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**" Improving Parliament for Parents:
A Case of House of Representatives of Thailand"**

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Abstract

This communication will provide an overview of the evolving context within the House of Representatives of Thailand, emphasizing the increasing presence of young and women members. The legal framework, including the Constitution's flexible leave policy for MPs, will be highlighted, with specific instances of leave for first-child delivery. It will delve into the medical benefits scheme covering pregnancy to delivery and the continuation of the monthly allowance during maternity leave. Lastly, details of the Secretariat's project to enhance the workplace for parenthood, featuring facilities like a breastfeeding room, childcare center, and a special summer camp, will be shared. The aim is to showcase Thailand's commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for parliamentary members navigating the responsibilities of parenthood.

Introduction

I am honored to stand before you today as we delve into a topic close to my heart and crucial for the future of our parliamentary system: "Improving Parliament for Parents: A Case of House of Representatives of Thailand." I am excited to share with you our nation's endeavors to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for our diverse parliamentarians.

Context of the House of Representatives of Thailand

In the dynamic landscape of our parliamentary system, we have witnessed a significant influx of young and dynamic members, including a growing representation of women in recent years. A wave of vibrant, young voices, and a growing representation of women, has ushered in a new era for the House of Representatives of Thailand. At the end of last year, the number of women parliamentarians in the House of Representatives of Thailand increased to the historical highest record of 97 or 19.4 percent. In addition, we now have 215 young parliamentarians, an increase from 132 in the previous election in 2019. This demographic shift has prompted us to reevaluate our policies and practices to ensure that our parliamentary system is not only robust but also adaptable to the evolving needs of our members.

Number of members of the House of Representatives of Thailand, by age/sex

	18 - 20	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 45	46 - 50	51 - 60	61 - 70	71 - 80	81 - 90	91 and over
Male	0	25	79	48	50	91	84	22	5	0
Female	0	7	35	21	4	17	10	2	0	0
Totals per age interval	0	32	114	69	54	108	94	24	5	0
	Total <= 45: 215				Total >= 46: 285					

Legal Framework and Flexible Leave Policy

One fundamental aspect that underpins our commitment to supporting parenthood is our legislative framework. According to the 2017 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, a cornerstone of our democratic principles, it is stipulated that in one year there will be two ordinary sessions of the National Assembly, each with a period of one hundred and twenty days. If a member of the House of Representatives is absent from a meeting for more than one-fourth of the number of meeting days without permission from the Speaker of the House of Representatives, his or her membership in the House of Representatives will be terminated.

The Rule of the House of Representatives regarding signing up to attend meetings and taking leave from meetings of the House of Representatives, which was updated in 2019, also stipulates that any member who is unable to come to a meeting of the House of Representatives must notify and submit an excuse letter for the absence in advance to the Speaker to request permission. Otherwise, the member must inform the meeting absence in writing to the Speaker to request permission after the fact no later than seven days.

Our Constitution and rule refrain from categorizing leaves for Members of Parliament. Instead, each MP is empowered to specify their reasons for leave, which are then submitted to the Speaker. This flexibility allows our members to address personal matters, including the joyous occasion of welcoming a new life into their families.

A touching example of this flexibility is found in cases where MPs take leave for the delivery of their first child. It is heartening to witness our parliamentary system acknowledging and celebrating such significant life events, fostering an atmosphere of understanding and support.

Medical Benefits Scheme and Financial Support

Turning our attention to the practicalities of parenthood, the monthly allowance, a crucial aspect of sustaining MPs in their roles, is continued as usual during maternity leave, providing financial stability when it is needed the most. The basic salary for MPs is around 2,000 US Dollars while the basic allowance is around 1,190 US Dollars. Moreover, it is essential to highlight the comprehensive medical benefits scheme provided for MPs. This scheme covers expenses from pregnancy to delivery, up to 1,125 US Dollars for the surgical delivery, ensuring that our parliamentarians can focus on their duties without undue financial burdens during this critical period, together with the continuity of the monthly allowance during maternity leave.

Secretariat's Project for Parenthood Support

Beyond legal and financial considerations, the Secretariat of the House of Representatives has embarked on a transformative project to make our workplace more accommodating to parenthood. This initiative includes the establishment of essential facilities such as a dedicated breastfeeding room and a special summer camp for the children in the Parliament Building.

The breastfeeding room is located in the Bureau of Parliamentary Medical Services on the 1st floor of the Parliament Building. This breastfeeding room is a part of the collaboration between the Secretariat of the House of Representatives and the Department of Health in promoting welfare and the privacy of breastfeeding on the premises, as it fosters the bonding between the mothers and their children. This is a good opportunity to serve as a model for other organizations to support the welfare and promotion of breastfeeding.

The Special Summer Camp for Happiness is our newly launched project, starting this month, to provide temporary childcare for children of the parliamentary staff during summer holidays with special activities including both physical and mental development. The project was planned and organized in partnership with the Faculty of Education, Suan Dusit University. By investing in these amenities, we are actively fostering an environment where our parliamentarians can balance their professional responsibilities with the joys and challenges of parenthood.

Conclusion and Call to Action

In conclusion, our commitment to improving the parliamentary experience for parents within the House of Representatives of Thailand is not merely a policy objective but a reflection of our dedication to inclusivity, diversity, and the overall well-being of our members. As we continue to adapt to the changing dynamics of our society, fostering a family-friendly environment within our parliamentary halls is not only a strategic choice but a moral imperative.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your attention today and invite you to engage in a meaningful discussion on this vital aspect of parliamentary reform. Your insights, suggestions, and collaboration are invaluable as we collectively work towards a stronger, more resilient democracy that truly reflects the aspirations and diversity of our society.

Closing Remarks

Thank you once again for your time, and I am more than willing to entertain any questions or further discussions during the course of this meeting or at your convenience. Let us embark on this journey together, as we strive to create parliamentary spaces that not only legislate but also inspire positive change in the lives of our members and their families.
