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**AFGHANISTAN
PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANCE
PROJECT**

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Legislative Newsletter

Calendar

- Wolesi Jirga (Lower House) Agenda:
 - Electoral Law
 - Independent Election Commission Structure Law
 - Law on Rights and Privileges of the Disabled
 - Law on Rights and Privileges of the Relatives of Martyrs and Missing
 - Communication Services Regulatory Law
 - Higher Education Law
 - Law on Social Behavior
 - Extradition Law
 - Law on Personnel Affairs of ANA, ANP and NDC Sergeants
 - Political Parties Law
 - Law on Civil Servants
 - Law on Salaries of High Ranking Government Officials
 - Law on Health

- Meshrano Jirga (Upper House) Agenda:
 - Mining Materials Law
 - Law on Petroleum and Gas (Hydro Carbons)

- Joint Committees:
 - Law on Reform Commission of National Police Forces
 - Law on Gatherings, Protests, and Demonstrations
 - Statistics Law
 - Medicine Law

National Assembly weekly meeting schedule:

- Sundays and Tuesdays: Wolesi Jirga committees and Meshrano Jirga plenary
- Saturdays, Mondays, and Wednesdays: Meshrano Jirga committees and Wolesi Jirga plenary

Legislation

The status update and description of bills remaining inactive for several weeks have been removed. They will be reintroduced as the drafts become active. Bills on the official Assembly agendas will remain in the calendar above.

Electoral Law

Honorable Registani, Chairman of the Wolesi Jirga Electoral Law Subcommittee and ad hoc committee (of Kuchi seat supporters and opponents) member, has informed APAP that the committee has asked the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to explain the rationale for reserving 10 seats for Kuchis (nomads) in the Lower House of the National Assembly. The committee has requested a response within a week.

The Electoral Law establishes the electoral system and will regulate electoral issues, including voting centers/polling stations, observers, election campaigns, candidacy, and counting.

Mining Materials Law

The Meshrano Jirga National Economy and Budget Committee has completed its deliberation of the law and sent it to the Meshrano Public Welfare and Environment Committee for review.

The law will regulate mine ownership and control, security, management, private investment, minerals, and other affairs related to mining.

Law on Personnel Affairs of ANA, ANP and NDC Sergeants

There were no changes in the bill's status last week. The law has been returned from the President's office but a group of Wolesi Jirga MPs is pushing for a 2/3 vote to make the bill law. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs states that there is a new, more relevant, government draft in process.

The law will regulate personnel affairs (appointment, transfer, vacation, discipline, rewards, and retirement) of ANA, ANP and the NDS sergeants.

Statistics Law

The law remained inactive last week and is pending further discussion in a joint meeting of the houses.

The Statistic Law addresses the duties, authorities, and organization of the Independent Central Statistics Department. The law establishes a central office for coordination and integration of all statistical activities at the country level.

Medicine Law

An August 9th scheduled meeting of a joint committee did not occur. The committee may meet later in the week.

The Medicine Law regulates the production, import, stocking, and distribution of medicine and medical equipment.

Higher Education Law

On August 4th a majority of Wolesi Jirga legislators approved Articles 28-34 of the bill. On August 6th, the Religious, Cultural, Education and Higher Education Committee introduced Articles 35-44 to the plenary, which approved Articles 35-37. The Wolesi amended Article 32 of the draft to require bachelor degrees and 80% or greater average scores in college to acquire a Pohyalai (Assistant Professor) ranking. Candidates should also speak both Dari and Pashtu, have a foreign language, and not be disabled. Teaching should be done in the language of the majority of students in class.

The law will regulate the activities of public and private higher education institutions in Afghanistan.

Law on Civil Servants

The law is under consideration in the Wolesi Jirga.

The law addresses the salaries and ranks of civil service employees, and outlines measures to: make administrative corrections to Government systems; clarify job descriptions for Government employees; improve education standards of Government employees; improve employee talent and work ethic; and provide employee housing and benefits.

Law on Salaries of High Ranking Government Officials

The law has been approved by the Wolesi Jirga and is set to be sent to the Meshrano Jirga on August 13th.

The law determines salaries of all high ranking government officials.

Political Parties Law

The law is being considered by the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Wolesi Jirga after being returned to Parliament by the President's office. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs sites the following reasons for returning the draft: 1) Article 7 states that the government is responsible for maintaining security of political party offices inside and outside the country, which is not possible; 2) Article 18 would allow the Supreme Court to transfer authority to dismiss Political Parties to authorized courts. The Constitution says that this is the responsibility of the Supreme Court; and 3) Article 22, which would require the court to list the reasons for dismissal, would overextend the process.

The law will regulate political parties' creation, activities, rights and responsibilities.

Law on Military Courts

On August 6th the bill was discussed and approved by a joint meeting of the houses. The law was sent for Presidential endorsement on August 9th.

The Military Court Law will regulate the structure and responsibilities of military courts.

Law on Petroleum and Gas (Hydro Carbons)

The law has been sent from the Meshrano Jirga National Economy and Budget Committee to the Meshrano Public Welfare and Environment Committee. It is scheduled to reach the plenary in the second half of August.

The law regulates petroleum and gas (Hydro Carbons), ownership, production, use, leases, contracts, research, and protection.

Law on Health

The draft law is being debated in the Wolesi Jirga Health, Sports, Youth, Labor and Laborers Committee.

The law will regulate health services, maintenance and expansion of private health services and health centers, implementation of health projects in different areas of the country, prevention of disease, and protection of mothers and newborns.

News

Upper House Questions Security Officials

On August 2nd, the Meshrano Jirga in a closed session called the heads of the Afghan security agencies for questioning on the national security situation. The senators and officials discussed a proposed National Assembly security plan which addresses internal and international problems, police force capacity, and economic and social themes. The head of the National Directorate of Security, Amrullah Saleh, acknowledged several strengths of the Assembly plan but said that implementation of many components would be impossible.

The Deputy Minister of Defense, General Mohammad Akram, and Ministry Spokesperson, General Zaher Azimi, explained that given the escalating security situation, an 86,000 strong National Army is insufficient. The Deputy reported that the Ministry of Defense has worked hard to convince donor countries to fund increased capacity building of the National Army. The international community has agreed to finance training of another 40,000 soldiers and officers, the officials reported.

Because the Ministry of Interior sent the Deputy Minister for Administrative Affairs rather than the Minister himself, as requested, the Meshrano did not question the Deputy. Source: Meshrano Jirga DIPR

Other agenda items included the lack of control over armed groups, detention and searches of innocent civilians due to inaccurate information provided to NATO, and violations of international law.

Legislators Reportedly Claim Asylum

According to several local media reports, two Afghan legislators have claimed political asylum in Italy. Honorable Parween Mahmand Talwasa and Honorable Fahima Ahmad Zai while on official business by invitation of the Italian Parliament have reportedly applied for asylum. National Assembly MPs and officials are quiet about the case but some argue that the reports reflect a history of news agency speculation. Wolesi officials did not provide direct answers to inquiries about scheduled return dates, etc.

MPs Accused of Supporting Taliban and Drug Trade

Deputy head of the National Directorate of Security, Dr. Abdullah, has asserted that a “number of delegates” of Parliament “support drug traffickers and terrorists.” This is the first time a high-level government official has made such allegations. An unnamed Lower House official rejected Dr. Abdullah’s comments, countering that they are simply an attempt to deflect criticism of the government for failing to tackle the problem.

Source: Reuters

Acronyms:

ANA – Afghan National Army

ANP – Afghan National Police

DIPR – Department of Information and Public Relations

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDS – National Directorate of Security