



THE MAIN ESSENCE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF DEPUTIES OF LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE STATE AUTHORITIES AND LEGAL ISSUES OF ITS IMPROVEMENT

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The role of local representative bodies is paramount in delegating public administration powers to lower levels, widely implementing the principles of popular sovereignty in territorial governance, and ensuring citizens participation in resolving matters of local significance. Chapter XXI of the updated Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan [1] has improved the foundations of local state power, clearly delineating the scope of powers between the Kengashes (Councils) of People's Deputies and the khokims (governors). In particular, as a logical extension of the principle of separation of powers at the local level, the complete elimination of the practice whereby khokims concurrently served as chairpersons of the Kengashes of People's Deputies marked a new phase in enhancing the independence of local representative institutions. In this context, analyzing the legal status of deputies of the Kengashes of People's Deputies, the core essence of their activities, and the mechanisms for the effective exercise of their powers assumes pressing scientific and practical significance.

From theoretical and legislative perspectives, the Kengashes of People's Deputies are collegial bodies whose primary operational format is the session. Pursuant to the Law "On Local State Power" [2] and the Law "On the Status of the Deputy of the Regional, District, and City Kengash of People's Deputies" [3], a Kengash is authorized to exercise its powers when at least two-thirds of the total number of deputies are elected, and a session is deemed legally competent (quorate) only if more than half of the registered deputies participate. The frequency of sessions, the availability of forward-looking work plans, and the legal force of adopted decisions determine the regulatory impact of representative power. The institutional manifestation of a deputy's activity is reflected in active participation in sessions, expressing opinions and proposals on agenda items, and voting on the approval of regional socio-economic development programs, local budgets, and normative legal acts.

The fact that deputies operate on a voluntary (non-professional) basis creates their dependence on the executive authorities, particularly local khokimiyats and sectoral departments. Practice shows that the majority of draft





decisions submitted for consideration at Kengash sessions are drafted directly by the sectoral departments of khokimiyats, rather than by the deputies themselves or standing commissions [4]. Consequently, being fully occupied with their primary employment, deputies lack sufficient time and resources to conduct comprehensive legal, financial, and economic analyses of these draft documents.

Another ambiguity is evident in the accountability and functional focus of deputy activities. In mass media and social network reports, the performance of deputies is primarily measured by their handling of voters' material issues, local road repairs, elimination of communal infrastructure failures, or provision of social assistance [5]. Undoubtedly, addressing citizens' appeals constitutes an integral part of deputy duties. However, such an approach leads to duplicating the direct functions of the executive branch and reinforces the perception in the public consciousness of a deputy as an executive or administrative officer rather than a public protector and policymaker. A deputy's primary performance criteria should instead be evaluated by their participation in local norm-making (rulemaking), oversight over the targeted and effective expenditure of local budget funds, and the tangible results of deputy inquiries addressed to executive branch officials.

In order to elevate the efficiency of local representative bodies to a qualitatively new level, it is expedient to implement the following priority tasks:

First, it is necessary to gradually professionalize the activities of local Kengashes. To achieve this, provisions should be introduced into the legislation ensuring that the chairpersons of standing commissions of the Kengashes of People's Deputies, or a specific portion of the deputies – for instance, at least 15–20% of the Kengash members – operate on a permanent, professional, and salaried basis. This reform will enable the Kengash to independently and professionally develop and analyze local budgets and draft normative acts within its own framework;

Second, it is essential to enhance the professional qualifications of deputies and strengthen the operations of Kengash secretariats. The secretariats under the Kengashes must be transformed into independent analytical and legal apparatuses, staffed with qualified analysts and legal experts who are autonomous from the executive branch;

Third, the criteria for holding a deputy mandate should be refined. To ensure that an elected individual is closely acquainted with the issues of the local territory, it is appropriate to consider introducing institutional mechanisms such





as a permanent residency requirement for a specified period within the relevant administrative-territorial unit.

In conclusion, the constitutional reforms underway in the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at democratizing and decentralizing local state governance require further strengthening the status of deputies of the Kengashes of People's Deputies, introducing a professional approach to their activities, and fully operationalizing effective instruments of representative oversight. This, in turn, will serve as a solid guarantee for ensuring genuine popular sovereignty in the regions and establishing effective public oversight over the activities of executive bodies.

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