



British Embassy
Astana



REPORT

Monitoring the implementation of election programs of deputies

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Introduction

Election programs of parliamentary candidates are one of the main components of traditional electoral campaigns. From 2007 to 2023 the elections of deputies to the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan were carried out according to a proportional system, election programs did not play any role in the campaigns. The programs of political parties acted as pre-election programs, and during the campaigns the parties emphasized one or another item from their programs that was most relevant at the time of the elections.

The election programs of candidates running in single-mandate constituencies are once again gaining relevance after the introduction of amendments to the Constitution and electoral legislation in 2022 allowing citizens of Kazakhstan to exercise passive voting rights through self-nomination. Undoubtedly, the return to a mixed electoral system, which ensures the participation of both political parties and single-mandate candidates, has increased the competitiveness of elections. During the campaign, citizens had the opportunity to get acquainted with the electoral programs of single-mandate candidates, and these programs included certain activities that the candidate must carry out if he is elected to the Mazhilis.

In addition to campaigning, candidates' election programs also have a binding meaning. In accordance with Art. 113-12 of the law “On elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, loss of voter confidence, including those associated with failure to implement the election program, is the basis for initiating the recall of a deputy elected in a single-mandate territorial electoral district. Such a recall is quite difficult to organize, but the very possibility of recall due to non-fulfillment of the election program imposes certain responsibilities on the deputy to implement the election program.

Monitoring candidates' election programs is important for the transparency and accountability of a deputy's activities to voters. Local communities and civil society organizations, using a monitoring tool, can evaluate the activities of deputies in the light of their election programs - which program items are taken into account by deputies in their activities, and which items are not implemented. At the same time, monitoring is a flexible tool, since it allows a fairly broad assessment of the activities of deputies. Thus, since a deputy is elected in a majoritarian constituency, points of his election program in which he promises to pay increased attention to the needs of the residents of his constituency can also become the object of monitoring.

Thus, monitoring the implementation of the electoral programs of MPs elected in majoritarian constituencies is an important initiative that helps strengthen a culture of political participation and accountability, and ensures an open and inclusive democratic process.

I. Methodology

The project “Promises Watch: Empowering Citizens to Monitor Promises for Accountable Governance” is carried out by the NGO Echo from September 2023 to February 2024.

The goal of the project is to involve civil society activists in monitoring the implementation of election programs used by Mazhilis deputies during election campaigns, thereby cultivating a culture of political participation and accountability, as well as contributing to a more open and inclusive democratic process.

The project monitored the implementation of election programs of Mazhilis deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies. 12 civil activists from 12 regions of Kazakhstan were involved in the work. Activists had to research the election programs of single-mandate deputies and find out, using open data sources and requests to the deputy, how he fulfills the promises to voters that he made during the election campaign. The website of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan was used as the main source of data for the analysis. Additional sources include links to deputies’ accounts on social networks and media publications that were indicated by deputies in responses to requests about their election programs.

A monitoring table was developed for the project. By filling it out, activists compiled profiles of single-mandate deputies, including the availability of his election program, his activities within the framework of committees and working groups of the Mazhilis, requests that the deputy sent or signed, meetings with voters. In addition, the deputy’s activities in relation to socially significant issues, such as human rights, domestic violence, freedom of media, budget transparency, ecological issues were taken into account.

Since the elections in which deputies were elected took place on March 19, 2023, the activities of the Mazhilis deputies were considered during the first (from March 29 to June 30, 2023), and partially the second (from September 1 to December 29, 2023) sessions of the 8th Convocation. Activists carried out monitoring from October 25 to December 31, 2023, after which the results were summarized and a general report was generated.

II. Analysis of the activities of deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies

Pre-election programs

In accordance with the electoral legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, before the start of the election campaign for deputies of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan,

29 territorial electoral districts were formed in the country in which elections of single-mandate deputies were held. The elections were quite competitive - 370 candidates ran in 29 districts, with an average of more than 12 candidates for 1 place.

According to the voting results, of the 29 deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies, 22 represented the Amanat party. Only 7 single-mandate deputies can be considered independent - one deputy each from Astana and West Kazakhstan, two deputies from the Almaty region and three deputies from Almaty.

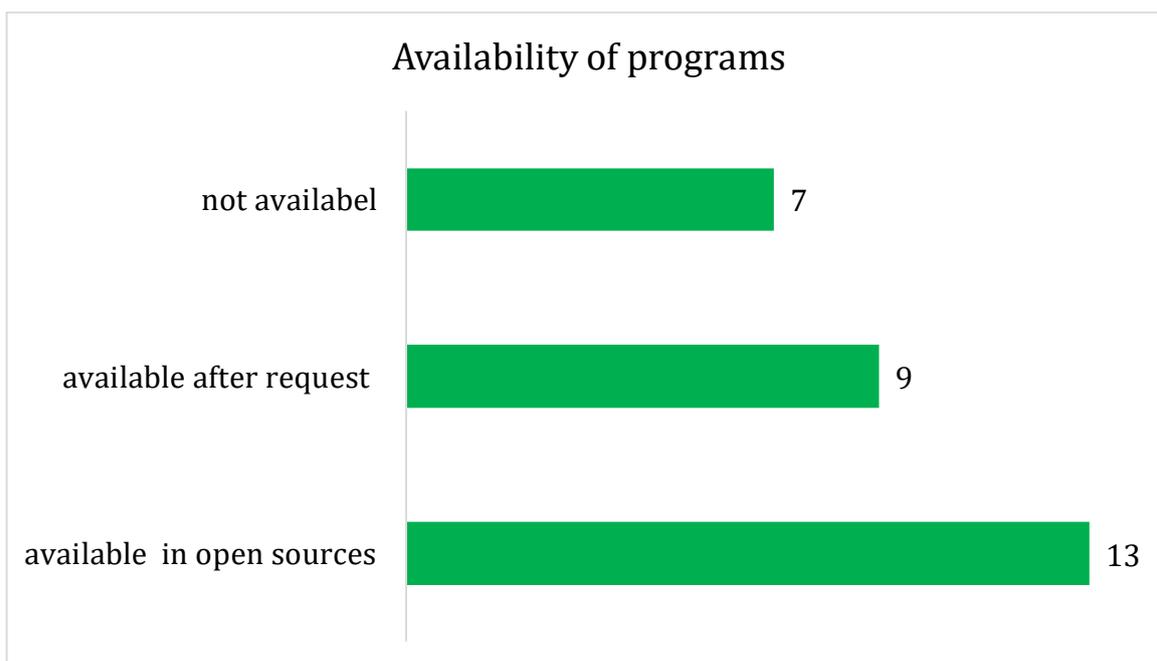
The analysis examined the election programs of deputies; Monitoring activists assessed the availability of election programs, as well as their quality - whether they were their own programs, or adaptations of party programs, whether they contained specific election promises. The election programs of each deputy were considered in their entirety, without dividing them into problems of the electoral district and other socially significant problems.

Availability of election programs

The availability of a deputy's election program implies that a voter can find this program without resorting to a complex search; the program can be available in media or social media, as a separate file on the deputy's website, etc., that is, available in a few clicks. If the deputy's program was not available in open sources, or the links led to resources that were no longer supported, monitoring activists made a request to the deputy about his election program on the Mazhilis website or through the e-Otinish electronic appeal service.

An analysis of the availability of election programs of deputies showed that only 13 election programs of current single-mandate deputies are publicly available on media websites and social networks. Requests were made to deputies, after which 9 more deputies sent their programs, and 7 deputies either did not respond to the request or indicated that they used the program of the Amanat party, which in fact means that their own election programs are not available.

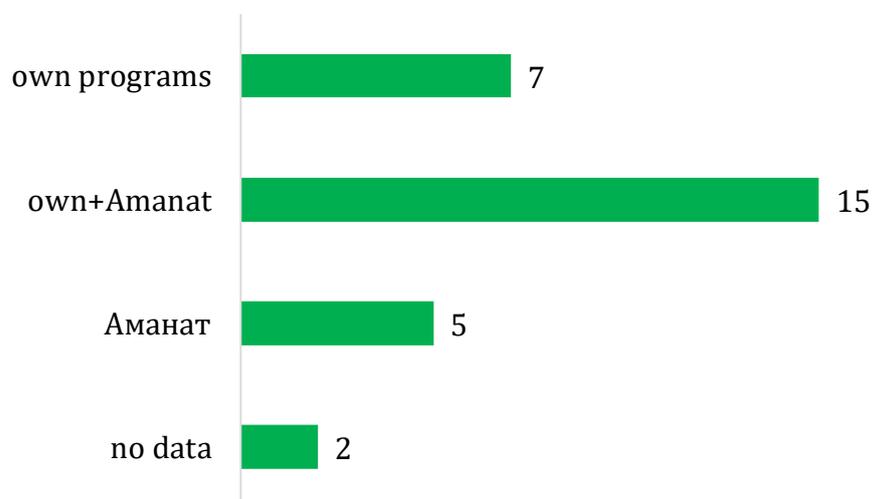
(Diagram 1)



Quality of election programs

As for the quality of election programs, 7 independent single-mandate self-nominated candidates developed and used their own programs during the campaign. As for the self-nominated candidates from the Amanat party, some of the candidates, 15 out of 22 people, used their own programs, which at the same time contain the theses and points of the main program of the Amanat party, but taking into account local specific features, the candidates took into account the problems of specific electoral districts, and in the election, campaign promises on specific issues were used. 5 deputies indicated that they used the program of the Amanat party in their election campaign, and do not have their own program. 1 deputy, in response to a request about the program, sent a link to a broken website page, and 1 deputy did not provide his election program after the request. (Diagram 2)

Election programs of deputies



The main issues that are reflected in the election programs of independent candidates usually concern the problems of the districts in which they ran. For example, the program of independent deputy Kaskarauov (Electoral district No. 12, Almaty region) contains specific proposals for the implementation of projects in the field of processing agricultural products in the territory of the electoral district, the development of irrigation systems, support for farmers on leasing agricultural equipment, etc. In addition, the program indicates activities to ensure quality education, development of sports and culture, indicating specific indicators and objects. The program of independent deputy Nazarov (Electoral district No. 11, Almaty region) contains specific proposals for the development of tourism in the territory of the electoral district, etc.

Those candidates who ran in single-mandate constituencies from the Amanat party used programs that contained individual theses of the Amanat party program, as well as the candidates' vision of solving the problems of the electoral districts. At the same time, some deputies in responses to the request indicated that they used the party program during their campaign. The election program of the Amanat party contains 10 main theses, which in a generalized form show the whole range of problems that the Amanat party, as the ruling and largest one in Kazakhstan, is going to solve during the current parliamentary term. These 10 main points contain the following objectives:

1. Increase in real incomes of citizens, improvement of working conditions and job security;
2. Guarantees of decent social security, including low-income people and people with special needs;
3. Providing quality educational and medical services;
4. Providing housing and comfortable infrastructure;

5. Development of production, logistics and scientific solution of applied economic problems;
6. Revival of the village and improvement of the welfare of rural residents;
7. Support of culture, development of language and strengthening of civil society;
8. Creating conditions for youth development, providing jobs and improving living conditions for youth;
9. Environmental protection;
10. Protection of citizens' rights and fight against corruption.

How were the main theses of the Amanat party program taken into account in the programs of single-mandate party members? For example, the program of single-mandate deputy Erkin Abil from the Amanat party (Electoral district No. 20, Kostanay region) is mainly focused on education problems. The deputy in his election program promises to achieve the construction of new schools, providing them with all the necessary equipment and Internet access, as well as the modernization of colleges and the opening of new specialties in regional universities. Also in the election program, the deputy promises to increase the salaries of employees of educational institutions to the level of the regional average.

This example shows that the deputy made the main thesis of his program the issue of quality educational services from the Amanat party program, taking into account local characteristics. As additional theses, the deputy used the issue of interethnic harmony (thesis on supporting culture, language development and strengthening civil society from the Amanat party program), the issue of improving the quality of life in the countryside (thesis on the revival of the village), the issue of fair social policy (thesis on guaranteeing a decent social provision) and the issue of strengthening the role of local self-government (thesis on protecting the rights of citizens). Thus, the deputy's own election program consists of the theses of the Amanat party, but has a specific link to the region from which the deputy ran.

Another illustrative example is the program of single-mandate deputy Sabilyanov (Electoral district No. 8, Abay region). In his program, the candidate took into account the pressing issues of his district, such as supporting citizens affected by the Semipalatinsk test site and improving the infrastructure of Semey, which recently became a regional center. All issues of his program also clearly fit into the theses of the Amanat party program: the issue of the Semipalatinsk test site falls under the thesis of guarantees of decent inclusive social security, improving the infrastructure of Semey - under the thesis of quality housing and infrastructure, issues of agricultural development of the Abay region - under the thesis of revival of the village, etc.

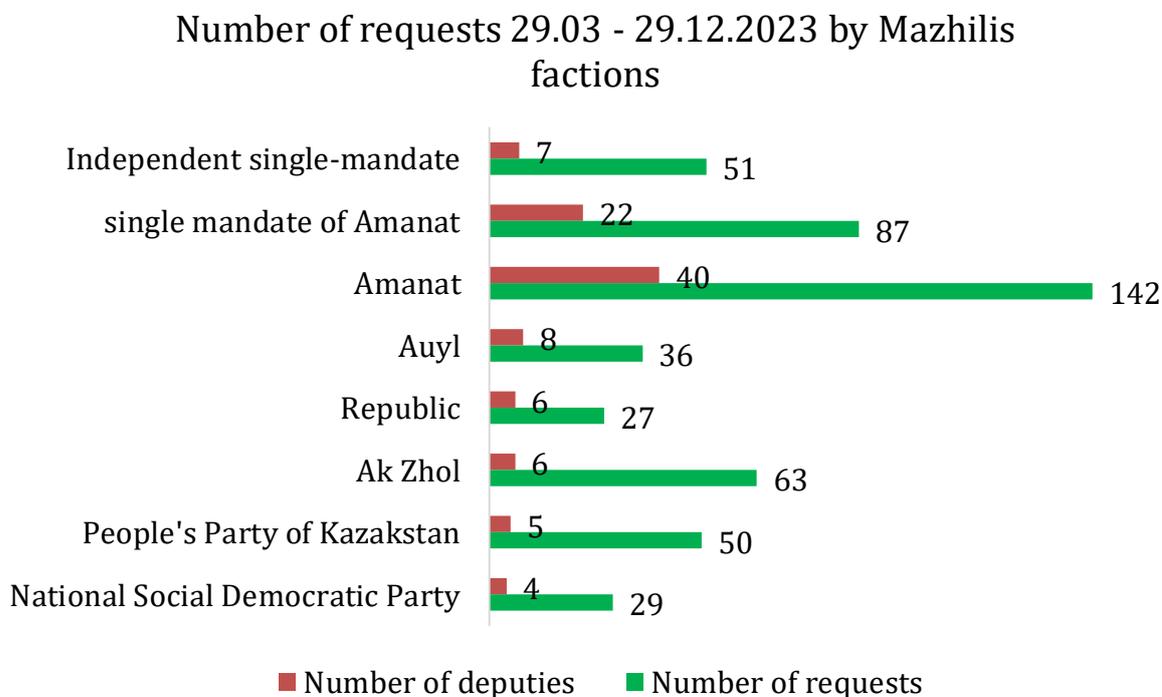
It is obvious that the election program of the Amanat party is very broad and cannot be fully implemented for one single-mandate deputy; its implementation is carried out by the entire Amanat faction.

Deputy requests

One of the priority monitoring tasks was to find out to what extent the activities of deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies corresponded to the election programs that they promoted in their election campaigns. For this purpose, an analysis of the parliamentary requests of single-mandate deputies was carried out.

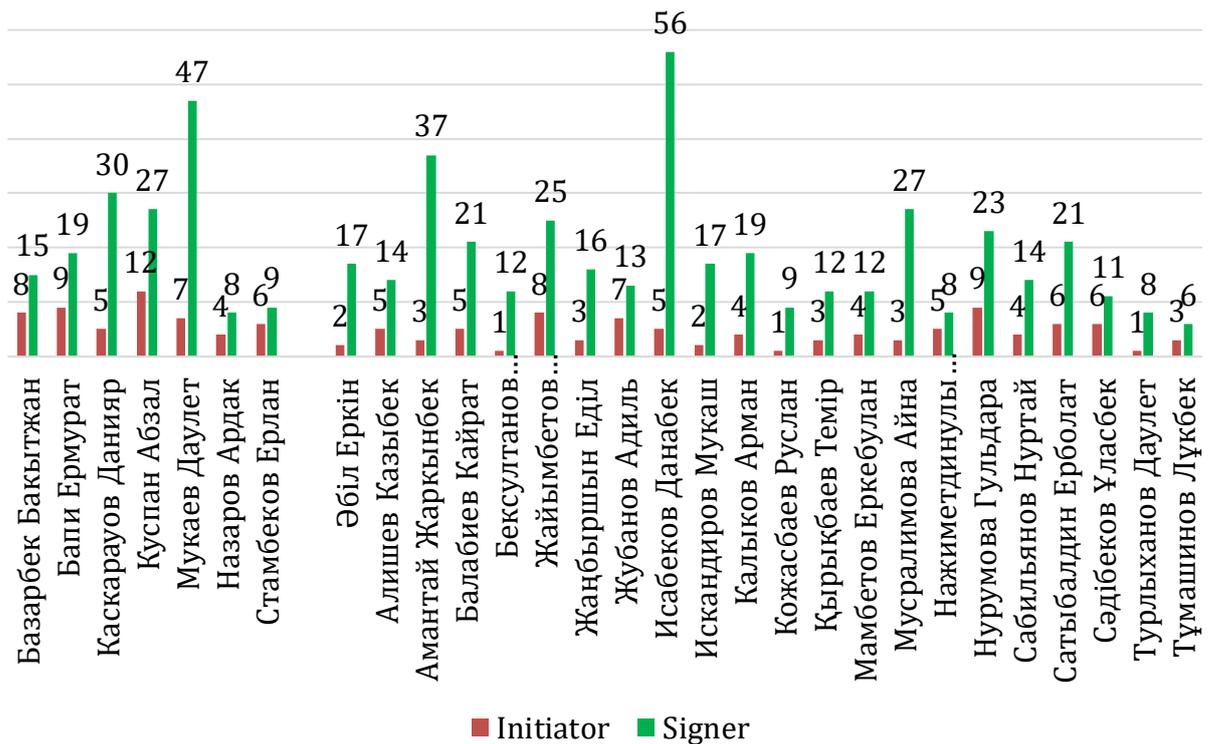
It should be noted that deputies elected in single-mandate constituencies are among the most active deputies of the Mazhilis. According to statistics, in the period from March 29 to December 29 2023 single-mandate deputies sent 140 requests. At the same time, 7 independent single-mandate deputies initiated 51 requests and 22 single-mandate deputies from Amanat initiated 87 requests. At the same time, the remaining 40 deputies of the Amanat faction sent 142 requests over the same period. The total number of submitted parliamentary requests, taking into account all factions of the Mazhilis, is shown in Diagram 3:

Diagram 3



The number of deputy requests by single-mandate deputies is shown in Diagram 4:

Number of requests 29.03 - 29.12. 2023 by deputies



In general, parliamentary requests cover a very wide range of problems. For the purposes of the study, all requests were divided into two main groups, which, at the same time, are interdependent and complementary: these are parliamentary requests relating to the implementation of the election programs of deputies, and parliamentary requests relating to socially significant issues. Socially significant issues include the following topics: judicial reforms, human rights, budget transparency, freedom of speech and media, gender equality, protection of women's rights, combating domestic violence and the environmental issues.

Activists who carried out monitoring sent requests to deputies what initiatives on socially significant issues were carried out by deputies. The responses to these requests from deputies were very general, and the vast majority of deputies limited themselves to a general description of the activities within the committees and working groups. Two single-mandate deputies, independent D. Mukaev (Electoral district No. 2, Astana) and from Amanat A. Musralimova (Electoral district No. 9, Akmolda region) recommended making an appointment in the Mazhilis. Deputy N. Sabilyanov (Electoral district No. 8, Abay region) answered, that he will hold meetings in Semey and to ask questions there.

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programs of deputies, and deputy requests relating to socially significant issues. Socially significant issues include the following topics: judicial reforms, human rights, budget transparency, freedom of speech and media, gender equality, protection of women's rights, combating domestic violence and the environment.

The most requests were initiated by independent single-mandate deputy A. Kuspan (Electoral district No. 14, West Kazakhstan region), 12 requests for the period from March 29 to December 29, 2023. It should be noted that all requests initiated by him are in one way or another consistent with his election program and relate to socially significant issues. In his requests, the deputy raises issues of the return of illegally withdrawn assets, fair distribution of budget funds, inspection of the activities of oil service companies in producing regions, improvement of transport links, debt burden of the population, etc. In addition, the deputy initiated requests on reform of the judicial system, on the interpretation and enforcement of articles of the Criminal Code, and on corrupt practices of construction companies. All these requests correspond to the promises in the deputy's election program about improving existing legislative acts, revising unfair judicial acts, adopting laws aimed at improving the socio-economic climate of society and improving the environmental situation. In addition to the fact that the requests relate to the deputy's election promises, they also touch on key socially significant issues, such as judicial reform, human rights, ecology and budget transparency.

The largest number of participations in requests under the initiator + signatory scheme was from single-mandate deputy from the party Amanat D. Isabekov (Electoral district No. 6, Shymkent), 5 initiated requests and 56 signatures in requests from other deputies in the period from March 29 to December 29 2023. The election program of the deputy, based on the election program of the Amanat party, contains promises to work on the implementation of the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to contribute to the creation of favorable conditions for a comfortable and safe life, to consider ways to concretely resolve issues, requests and needs of the people on topical issues, to improve the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on housing queues and issues of land transfer, strengthening interethnic peace and protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens, improving the infrastructure of Shymkent, opening new industries, protecting the environment, improving educational and medical services, fighting corruption and implementing digital democracy. All these promises coincide with the theses of the election program of the Amanat party, and on all these issues the deputy is a signatory or initiator of requests. As for socially significant issues, the deputy is a signatory to the request on the need to introduce gender-legal expertise within the framework of the existing scientific legal expertise; is also a signatory of the request to strengthen environmental protection in the Kolsai Lakes environmental protection zone.

Also, on the topic of ecology, he is the initiator of a request on the issue of wastewater treatment facilities in Shymkent.

Considering that the majority of single-mandate deputies, to one degree or another, used the Amanat party program as their election programs, it is obvious that the requests contain demands and issues raised in the party program. As for independent single-mandate deputies, there is a greater range of interests in their group. For example, independent single-mandate deputy A. Nazarov (Electoral district No. 11, Almaty region) initiated a request regarding the quality of roads in the Almaty region, which, undoubtedly, is an important issue for residents of the district; however, the issue of road quality is very indirectly related to the deputy's election program; the program contains issues of the development of culture, sports and tourism, about which there are several signed requests from other deputies. Regarding socially significant issues, the deputy initiated the request to ban LGBT ideology, and 10 more deputies acted as signatories, including independent single-mandate B. Bazarbek (Electoral district No. 5, Almaty), single-mandates from the party Amanat A. Zharkynbek (Electoral district No. 23, Pavlodar region), D. Isabekov (Electoral district No. 6, Shymkent), K. Beksultanov (Electoral district No. 18, Karaganda region), and E. Satybaldin (Electoral district No. 28, Ulytau region).

Independent single-mandate B. Bazarbek (Electoral district No. 5, Almaty) has the main pool of requests regarding land relations, construction and water use, which directly relate to the theses of his election program - the fight against corruption in land issues, which is also undoubtedly important social significant question.

In general, in the activities of each deputy one can find participation in requests for topics that relate to their election programs and socially significant issues. The number of such requests varies greatly for each of the deputies of the group under consideration, and from them it is impossible to draw an unambiguous conclusion about the deputies' commitment to fulfilling the requirements of their election programs. However, it is obvious that deputies take into account the factor of the presence of certain issues in their parliamentary activities.

Meetings with voters

Another important aspect of the activities of deputies is meetings with voters. During these meetings, deputies can collect the wishes and orders of voters, as well as report on their activities in the Mazhilis, including the implementation of their election program.

During the monitoring, activists studied the section of the Mazhilis website where materials about meetings of deputies are posted. Unfortunately, this section of the site is not filled out by all

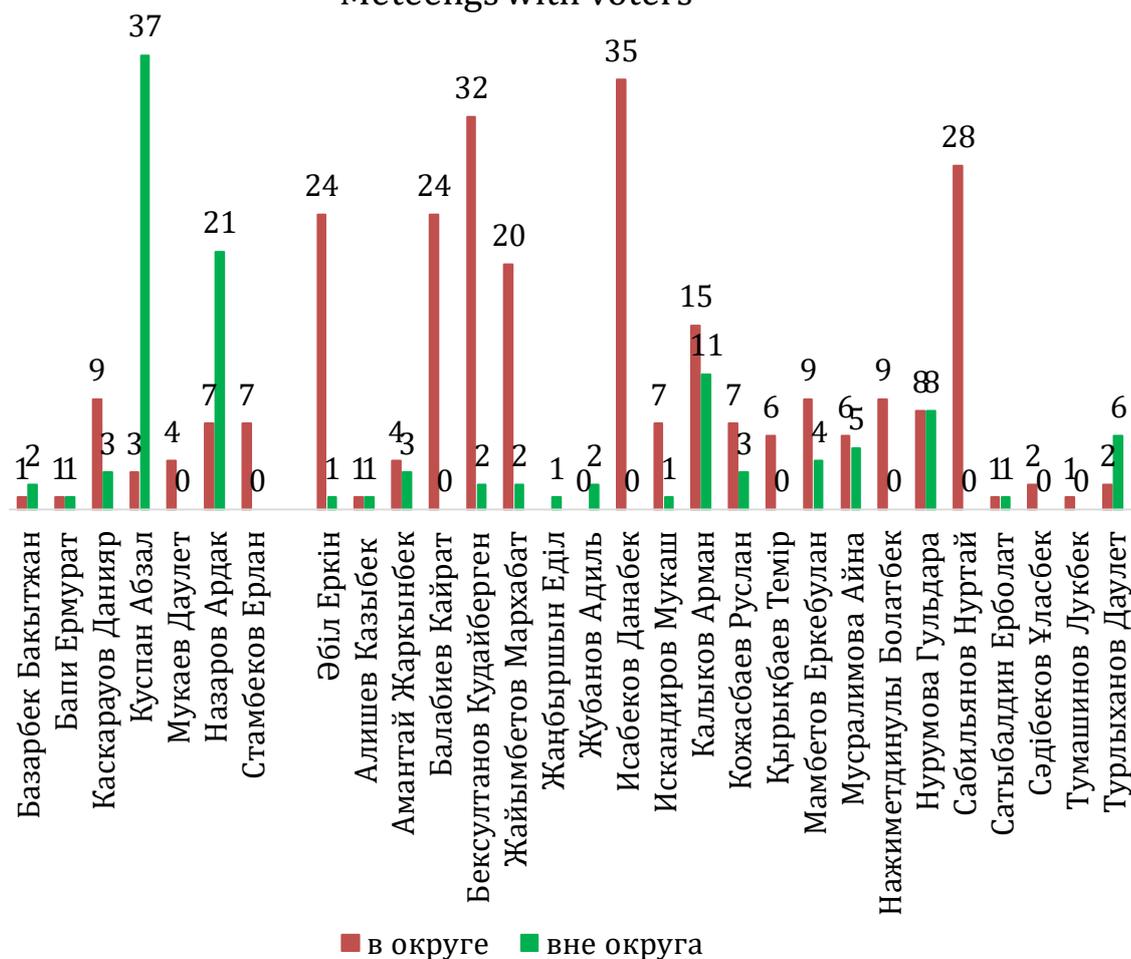
deputies. Some deputies indicated information about meetings during the holiday period, some did not. Some deputies did not cover their meetings with voters at all during the first session, there is no information for 2023. In the absence of information on the Mazhilis website, activists turned to the social networks of deputies. Information from social networks is often fragmentary and difficult to analyze, since sometimes one post contains information about several meetings, sometimes vice versa, several posts are devoted to one meeting, often there is very little information about the meeting, mostly photographs or videos are published, from which it is difficult to understand the topic and composition of meeting participants.

Based on the results of the analysis of available information about meetings of single-mandate deputies with voters, the following picture is observed. Almost all single-mandate deputies indicate that they hold meetings with voters. However, these meetings do not always take place in the very district from which the deputy was elected. For example, independent deputy B. Bazarbek (Electoral district No. 5, Almaty) held a number of meetings with voters in Almaty, and in the Almaty and Kyzylorda regions, these meetings were on the topic of land relations, the issue of which is included in the deputy's election program. Single-mandate party member Amanat E. Zhanbyrshin (Electoral district No. 22, Mangistau region) receives citizens in Astana, deputy A. Nazarov (Electoral district No. 11, Almaty region) receives both in Astana, in the Mazhilis building, and in the district. Single-mandate A. Kuspan (Electoral district No. 14, Eastern Kazakhstan) receives citizens in the Mazhilis, and at the same time is very active on social networks; single-mandate from the party Amanat K. Alishev (Electoral district No. 10, Aktobe region) is very active on social networks, and many other deputies are also active on social networks and use them to communicate with voters, collect requests from voters, conduct consultations, etc.

Summarized available information on meetings of single-mandate deputies with voters is displayed in

Diagram 5

Meteengs with voters



III. Conclusions and recommendations

One of the goals of the study was to involve local activists in monitoring the activities of single-mandate deputies, their implementation of their election programs, and intensifying the dialogue between voters and deputies. In general, with rare exceptions, deputies were willing to make contact and provide information about their activities and programs, but there are some exceptions. Some deputies formally responded to the activists' requests, or provided links to non-working resources, or recommended looking for information on the Mazhilis website, indicating that all information about the deputy's activities was there. Unfortunately, one of the conclusions of this monitoring is that the Mazhilis website, for all its advantages, is far from perfect.

The function of sending a letter or request to a deputy did not work on the parlam.kz website, although such a function was originally intended, and there is a special form for applying. Activists

were forced to use the e-Otinish resource to send requests to deputies. The e-Otinish resource itself does not have the function of sending a message directly to a specific deputy; it sends a request to the “Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” apparently to the Office of the Mazhilis, which then forwards the appeal to the deputy. This complicates and lengthens communication between the deputy and citizens, and makes it less effective. When a voter sends an appeal to a deputy through the “Appeal to a Deputy” option on the Mazhilis website, there is no notification that the appeal has been received, it has been assigned a number, a response must follow on a certain date, etc.

The Mazhilis website does not have a section for publishing election programs of deputies. The activities of deputies are reflected both in personal profiles and in general faction profiles; Since 22 out of 29 single-mandate deputies are members of the Amanat faction, information about their activities had to be collected in different sections of the site, which made the work of activists very difficult. Information about meetings with voters is not reflected in the profiles of 11 out of 29 deputies, or there is information only about meetings in 2024, information about meetings in the 1st session and before December 29, 2023 is missing. Also, unfortunately, the generalized materials on the activities of deputies available on the website - files “Infographics - Mazhilis in Figures” for the first session and for the period from September 1 to December 29, 2023 of the second session of the eighth convocation, contain inaccuracies: the total number of deputy requests does not agree with the count of deputy requests on the corresponding tab of the site.

Regarding the main question of the study - whether deputies of the Mazhilis elected in single-mandate constituencies make efforts to implement their election programs - we can answer in the affirmative. Each of the single-mandate deputies initiated or signed parliamentary requests, which contained questions and proposals related to the election programs. Some of the deputies did this to a greater extent, some to a lesser extent, but based on the results of the study, it can be argued that all single-mandate deputies, both independent and representing the Amanat party, are guided by election programs. This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of meetings with voters - at meetings and during receptions of citizens, deputies often communicate on topics that were the theses of their election programs.

The monitoring also revealed the problem of relatively weak involvement of citizens in dialogue with deputies. Undoubtedly, each deputy has a team of his supporters in the regions, the same asset, as a rule, forms his audience on social networks, etc. During meetings in work collectives, with young people, and with other target groups, perhaps this asset increases. However, the majority of citizens do not consider the deputy as a defender of their interests; they turn to him, if

they do, when they cannot find solutions to their problems and issues in other authorities. At the same time, there is still a narrative in society, formed over the past decades, that deputies cannot influence anything, play the role of a “notary chamber” under the Government and the Presidential Administration, and are not able to help citizens in solving their problems.

It can be stated that the implementation of a project to monitor the implementation of election programs of single-mandate deputies contributes to greater transparency and accountability of the activities of deputies, increases the involvement of citizens in dialogue with deputies, helps to form a more objective opinion of citizens about the deputies of the Mazhilis, and can be used as an argument to refute the prevailing views in society negative narratives about the activities of the Mazhilis and its deputies.

Recommendations

Deputies of the Mazhilis of the Republic of Kazakhstan elected in single-mandate constituencies:

1. Publish and regularly update information about your work (initiating and signing deputy requests, work in committees and working groups of the Mazhilis, reports on meetings with voters and receiving citizens) in your profiles on the website of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
2. Publish your election programs in your profiles on the Mazhilis website.
3. Create and, upon request, provide an archive of your activities as a deputy.
4. Actively interact with civil society organizations and civil activists on issues of transparency and accountability of the activities of deputies.
5. Raise the issue of the functioning of the website of the Mazhilis of Parliament, taking into account the shortcomings that were noted during the monitoring.

To civil society organizations, civil activists, media and bloggers:

1. Actively get involved in projects to monitor the activities of representative bodies at all levels, disseminate information about problems and findings.
2. Research the election programs of deputies, and use them to protect the interests of citizens through the involvement of deputies in this protection.

3. Form and promote in society a narrative about the opportunity to influence the resolution of pressing issues through deputies of representative bodies.

4. Actively interact with deputies of representative bodies to resolve socially significant issues.