FACTSHEET ON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PETITIONS

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

Section 88(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) empowers each chamber of the National Assembly to direct or cause to be directed an investigation into:

(a) any matter or thing with respect to which it has power to make laws; and

(b) the conduct of affairs of any person, authority, ministry or government department charged, or intended to be charged with the duty of or responsibility of:

(i) executing or administering laws enacted by the National Assembly, and

(ii) disbursing or administering of monies appropriated by the National Assembly.

By virtue of the Constitutional provision above, Order 18(5) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders\(^1\) provides for the establishment of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions. The Committee is generally mandated to investigate petitions from Nigerians on any issue or matter especially the conduct of affairs of government agencies.

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions is a fact-finding/investigatory body. It does not make laws or resolutions; rather it listens to allegations from individuals, collates information and advises the House.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

According to the Standing Orders, the Committee shall be composed of not more than 40 members of the House of Representatives. It maintains a secretariat headed by the Clerk of the Committee who is responsible for the administration of the Committee. The Clerk receives and sends out official communication and organizes the business of the Committee.

---


---

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a Non-Governmental Organisation Promoting Good Governance and Citizen’s Access in Nigeria
One of the most fundamental principles of the Constitution is the right it accords citizens to petition the National Assembly for redress of grievances. A petition is formal request for action from the National Assembly to redress rights violations, administrative breaches or infractions committed by public officers or authorities. It is the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions that receives and handles petitions submitted to the House Chamber.

**JURISDICTION/MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE**

The jurisdiction of the Committee includes:

1. Oversight of the Public Complaints Commission;
2. Considering the subject matter of all petitions referred to it; and
3. Annual budget estimates

In cases where the Committee has no jurisdiction, such as contractual issues between two private citizens, the Committee is expected to dismiss the petition or make recommendations for its referral to an appropriate body with the approval of the House.

**WHO CAN SUBMIT A PETITION**

Citizens whether private or corporate can petition the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions either personally or through a representative such as a legal practitioner. The person making a petition is called “the Petitioner” while the person(s) or body(ies) that the petition is made against is called “the respondent”.

It is important that the petitioner or his representative must attend the investigative hearing and defend the allegations or complaints contained in the petition.

**DRAFTING A PETITION**

There is no specific format a petition may assume. However, it is expected that a petition must be intelligible and contain relevant information on the issue(s) that the petitioner seeks to resolve.

Generally, according to the rules and practices of the Committee, a petition must:

- Be directly addressed to the Speaker, National Assembly, Abuja through the Honourable Member from his/her/their constituency or any Honourable Member of his/her/their choice
- Refer to a matter, which is within the jurisdiction of the House of Representatives to intervene (e.g. matters before a competent court or those which are the responsibility of private entities may not be made the subject of a petition to be presented to the House of Representatives).
- Identify the petitioner or petitioner(s), then a statement of grievance or complaint explaining or underlying the request for the House of Representatives’ intervention
- Set out the prayer(s) or request for action by succinctly stating what specific action the
petitioners wish the House of Representatives to take in response to the grievance.

- Written or printed on paper in language that is respectful or temperate in nature
- Written in English, but if it is written in a language other than in English, it must be accompanied by a certified translation, including the contact details of the translator
- Free of erasures and interlineation
- May contain attachments, letters, affidavits, photos or supporting documents.
- Consist only of original, handwritten signatures (printed, photocopied, faxes or electronic signatures are not accepted)
- Contain the signature of the petitioner(s) on pages, which detail at least the request for action exactly as on the first page of the petition.

SUBMITTING A PETITION

Every petition to the House of Representatives must be sponsored and presented at the Chamber by an Honourable Member of the House of Representatives, but no Member can be compelled to do so. This means that only a lawmaker can present a petition. It is expected that after writing a petition, a petitioner should locate either the Honourable Member representing his Constituency or any other lawmaker to sponsor and present such a petition. In circumstances where a petitioner is unable to submit his/her petition to the Honourable Member representing his/her constituency; he may direct his petition to the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions who may assist the petitioner in getting a Member to present the petition in the Chambers.

There are no costs for presentation or submission of a petition.

PRESENTATION OF A PETITION

Although Honourable Members will, at their discretion, generally present petitions at the request of their constituents, the presentation of a petition by a Member does not imply that he or she supports the content. In presenting the petition, the Member makes a brief statement setting out who the petition is from, the petitioners’ concerns, before reading out the request(s) or prayer(s) which the petitioners are making to the House of Representatives.

Only Petitions sent from the floor of the House can be processed and handled by the Committee on Public Petitions. Sometimes, petitions can be referred from the floor of the House to the Committee

Importantly, it is only when the petition is presented and considered in chamber, that the House can refer same to the Committee on Public Petitions for investigation. The House of Representatives Committee on Rules and Business will thereafter write a letter to the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions forwarding the petition.

DETERMINING A PETITION

The procedures for determination of petitions by House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions are not formally laid out. The Committee may adopt any procedure that is most convenient
and expeditious in the handling of the petition. However, the Committee is also guided by the basic principles of natural justice.

The procedure for determination of a petition is as follows:

1) Upon receipt of a petition, the Committee Chairman fixes a date for hearing and the Clerk communicates that date to the petitioner. The respondent is equally informed of the petition against him with a copy of same sent to him.

2) The parties are mandated to file and exchange written briefs detailing their arguments/positions to the petition. Usually, the petitioner first writes his brief, files sufficient copies at the secretariat and also serves same on the respondent. The respondent does the same.

3) The Committee may request the petitioner to provide any document(s) or material(s), which it deems necessary for the proper determination of the petitioner’s case

4) During the hearing of the petition, the petitioner is first given opportunity to present his case before the respondent presents his response.

5) The committee may either elect to engage the parties as soon as each presents his/her brief or elect to interview both simultaneously after the presentation of their brief.

6) The parties are often given opportunity to interview each other while the Committee observes.

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS**

At the conclusion of the hearing of a petition, the Committee will make a report of its findings and lay the report before the House in plenary. The Committee report must be with recommendation(s) for consideration and adoption by the House.

After receiving the report of the Committee, the House, in plenary, may take a decision based on any of the recommendations contained in Committee report. Nonetheless, the House is not even under any duty to accept any of the recommendation. Any decision taken by the House on the report will be treated as a resolution of the House of Representatives.

Thereafter, the Clerk of the Committee will notify both the petitioner and the respondent of the House’s resolution on the petition.

**LAPSE OF PETITIONS**

At the end of every term of the National Assembly, all business before the House of Representatives, including the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions, lapses. If a petition is before the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions, it will lapse too. The newly elected House of Representatives may decide to reinstate a petition. If it lapses and is not reinstated, a petitioner may present another petition on the matter. Resolutions do not have the force of law and so parties are at liberty to seek redress in a court of law.
SITTING DAYS

The Committee conducts investigative hearings/sittings on Petitions at any of the committee rooms of the National Assembly. There are no specific days for the Committee hearings/sittings.

The Quorum for the sitting of the Committee is at least one-third (1/3) of the membership of the Committee. Also, for the report of the Committee to be valid, at least one-third (1/3) of the members of the Committee must have signed the report.

Hearings are generally open to the public, except on sensitive and national security matters.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

The Clerk, House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions
Room 429, HOR Wing
National Assembly Complex, Abuja
Telephone: +2348033139801
E-mail: info@nasspublicpetitions.org
Website: nasspublicpetitions.org
STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ON HOW PETITIONS ARE PROCESSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC PETITIONS

1. The petitioner sends his/her petition either through the Honorable Member representing his/her constituency or any Honorable Member. The Petitioner can also address it through the Chairman Committee on Public Petitions.

2. The Honorable Member presents the petition at the plenary of the House.

3. The Petition is referred to the Committee on Public Petitions where it is registered and a petition number is assigned to it.

4. Summons/Hearing Notices are issued to the parties involved (Petitioner and Respondent) to appear at the scheduled date for Investigative Hearing.

5. When the Investigative Hearing on the matter is concluded/closed, the Committee prepares a report on the petition containing its recommendation.

6. The Chairman of the Committee lays the report on the floor of the House for consideration and adoption.

7. Upon consideration at the plenary, the full House may adopt, modify or refuse the Committee’s recommendation, which becomes the “House Resolution”.

8. The Clerk of the Committee transmits the Resolution to the Petitioner and the Respondent.
Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens’ participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens’ engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making processes. The main focus of PLAC’s intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

Supported By:

![European Union Logo]