

Step by Step Guide to the Public Petitions Process in the House of Representatives



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POLICY AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CENTRE

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to the Public Petitions
Process in the House of
Representatives**

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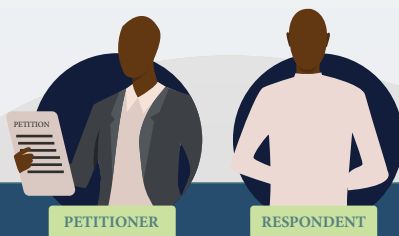
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What is a Petition?

While there is no formal definition of a petition in the House of Representatives Standing Rules, it can be described as a formal written request made to an authority or an organized body.



The Person who makes the request is called a petitioner while the person who it seeks relief against is referred to as the respondent



There can be more than one petitioner and respondent to a Petition. While petitions are generally made against Ministries, Departments and Offices, they are sometimes made against private respondents.

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions deals with Petitions referred to it by the House of Representatives.

Content of a Petition

A petition must contain the following:

1

Address

A petitioner should be directly address his/her Petition to the House of Representatives through the Member representing his or her constituency/ any lawmaker or the Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions.

2

Body

The body of the Petition must include the complaint and relief it is seeking in English language. If it is written in a language other than English language, it should be accompanied with an English translation certified to be correct by the member who presents it.

3

Signatures

The petition should contain handwritten signatures on every page containing the petition. However, corporations must sign with their common seal.



Jurisdiction of the Public Petitions Committee

The Committee oversees Public Complaints Commission, a government agency that investigates administrative justices. This includes power to oversight the annual budget estimates presented by the Committee. It also conducts oversight on the conduct of any person or authority of the agency charged with the responsibility of executing or administering law or disbursing moneys.

The Committee has power to consider the subject matter of all the petitions referred to it and make recommendations on actions to be taken thereon by the House of Representatives

Some Areas Outside the Jurisdiction of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions

Matters pending before the Court of Law

Making Laws or Resolutions

Matters between private citizens

Matters over which the National Assembly has no power to make laws

Composition of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions



Chairman



The Committee is composed of not more than 40 Members and headed by a Chairman

It also has a Committee Clerk responsible for its administration

The quorum of Committee sittings to hear a petition is one third of the members appointed



Committee sittings are presided by a Chairman or Vice Chairman in his absence

Notices and Hearings

Once the Senate refers the petition to the Committee, the Clerk will

1 Send a hearing notice to the petitioner and respondent

2 Notice will contain allegations against the respondent and that a reply must be made within a specific period or day at the hearing

3 Committee to make a public announcement of the date, place and subject of the Committee hearing at least a week before date of the hearing

4 At hearing the Committee Chairman will begin with an open statement (introducing the subject and purpose of the hearing, each member of his Committee and parties to the petition).

5 At hearing a Petitioner/Respondent must tell their stories uninterrupted

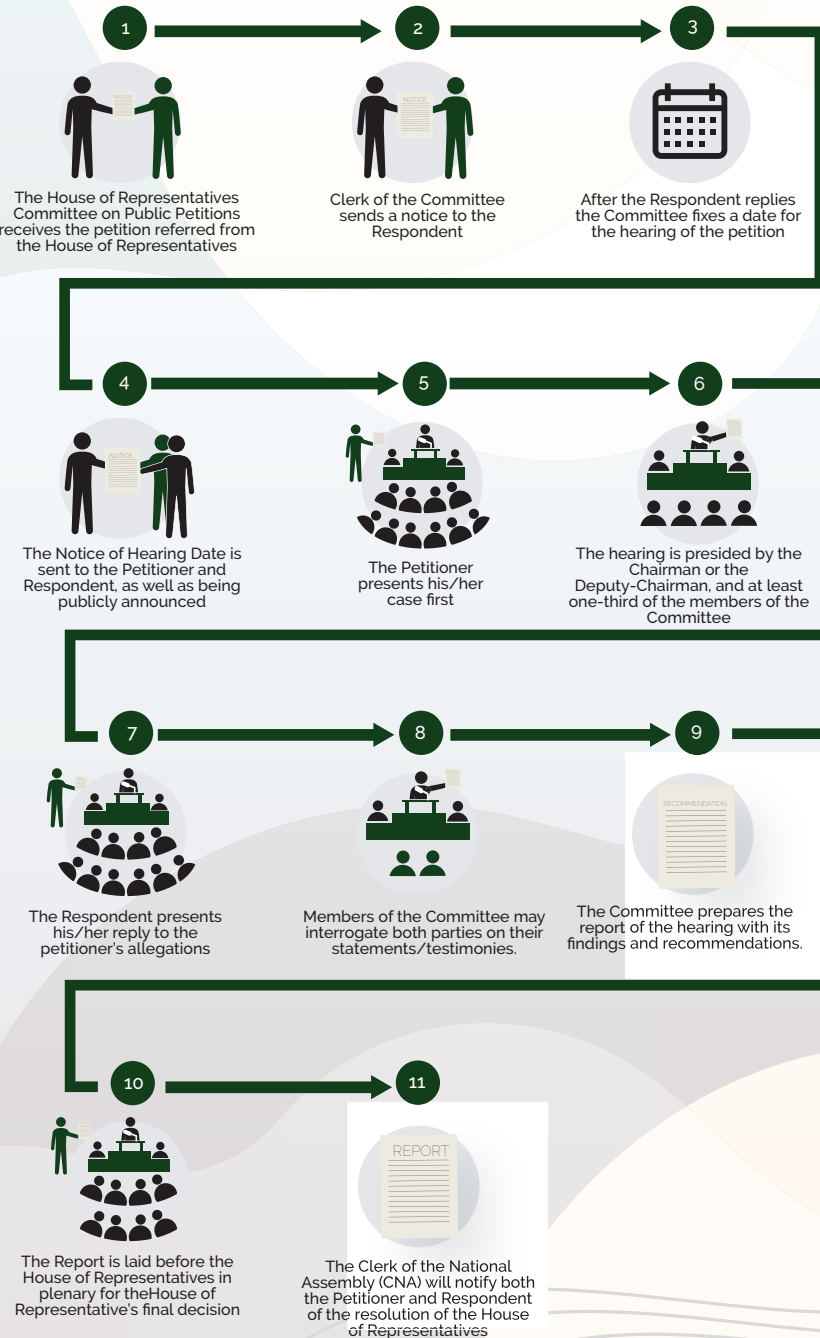
6 Petitioner often gives brief summary of his petition first with supporting documents

7 After petitioner concludes, respondent to reply to petitioners' allegations supported by relevant documents with evidence

8 Testimonies of petitioners/respondents can be supported by witnesses. However, witnesses who intend to testify must submit written statement of the testimony with the Committee by date of hearing

Determination of a Petition and Report of Committee

- The Committee Clerk is responsible for presenting a draft of the report which must contain the findings and recommendations of the Committee
- The draft report prepared is then given to Members to consider and approve
- The final report approved by majority of members will be presented to the House of Representatives
- Decision taken by the House of Representatives on the report of the Committee will be treated as a resolution of the House of Representatives
- Following the resolution of the House of Representatives, the Clerk of the National Assembly will notify the petitioner and respondent of the Committee's resolution



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About PLAC

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.

