

Step by Step Guide to the Public Petitions Process in the Senate



EUROPEAN UNION

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POLICY AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CENTRE

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to the Public Petitions
Process in the Senate**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PLAC wishes to acknowledge the support of the European Union (EU) in Nigeria in the publication of this document. PLAC is grateful to the Senate for welcoming PLAC's intervention and European Union's support

Published by



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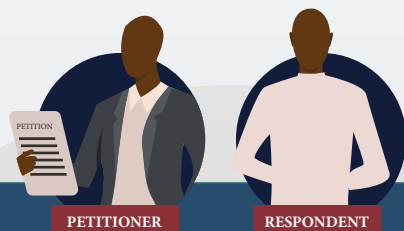
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What is a Petition?

While there is no formal definition of a petition in the Senate 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 Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions deals with Petitions referred to it by the Senate.

Content of a Petition

A petition must contain the following:

1 Address

A petitioner should directly address his/her petition to the Senate through the Senator representing his/her constituency/ any lawmaker or the Chairman, Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and 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.

3 Signatures

The petition should contain handwritten signatures on every page containing the petition.



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

The Committee oversees and monitors the Code of Conduct Bureau that addresses the conduct of public officials

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

Has power to make recommendations to the Senate on administrative actions and enforce standards of official conduct of Senators.

Some Areas Outside the Jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions

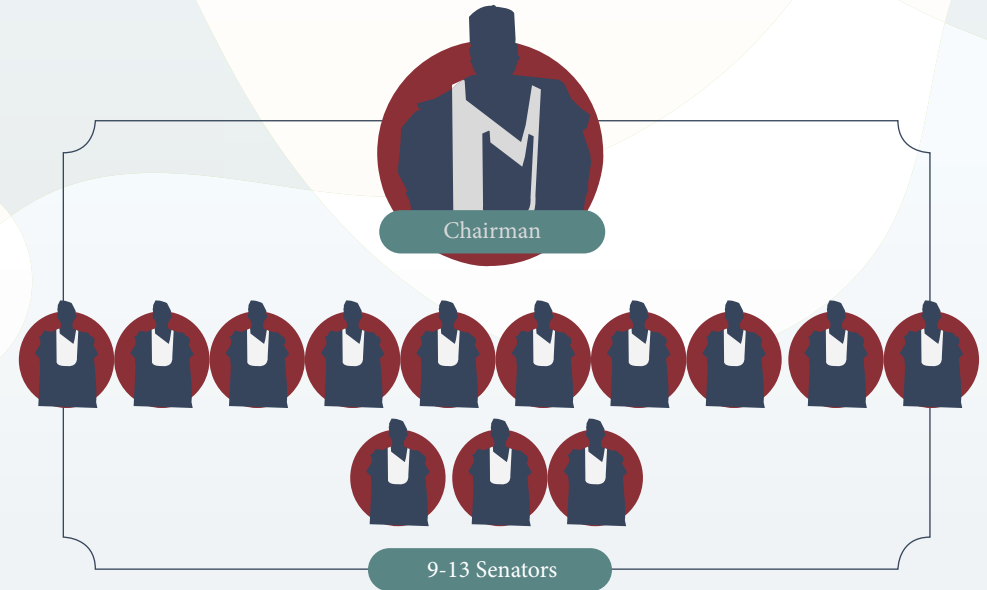
Matters pending before the Court of Law

Petitions asking for a grant of public funds

Matters between private citizens

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

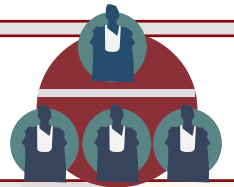
Composition of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions



The Committee is composed of 9-13 Senators and headed by a Chairman

It also has a Committee Clerk to support activities

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



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

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Notices and Hearings

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

1 Send notice of meeting to the petitioner and respondent

2 Notice will contain allegations against the respondent

3 Tell Respondent to appear in person/respond by a specific day

4 If after the meeting documents are needed to support the respondent defence, he/she/it must send the documents to the Committee

5 Following the meeting, the Clerk must send notice of hearing date to the petitioner and respondent

6 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

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

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

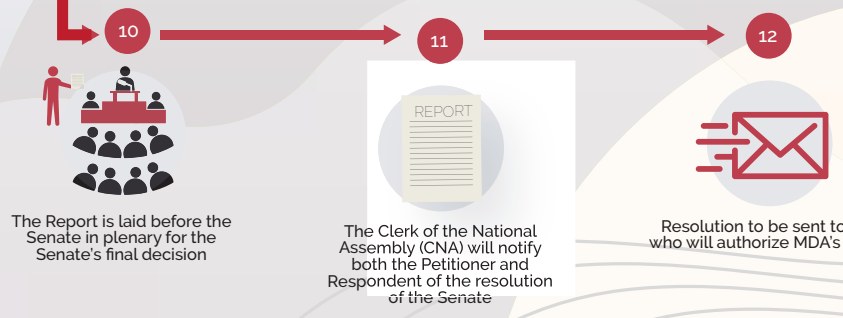
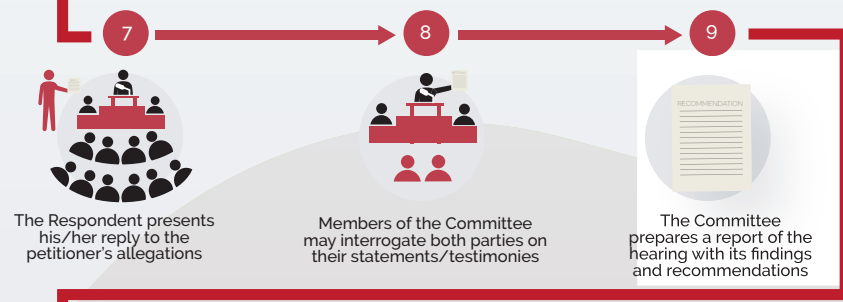
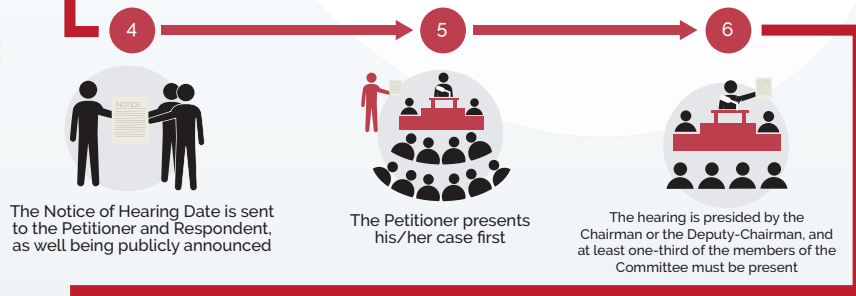
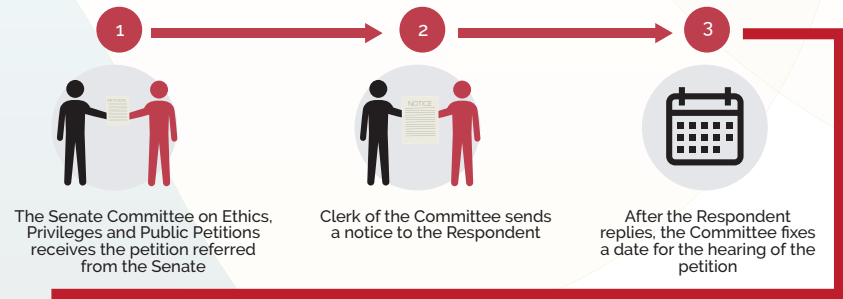
9 After petitioner concludes, respondent to reply to petitioners allegations under oath supported by relevant documents with evidence

10 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

*Committee hearings are generally open to the public.

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 Senate
- Decision taken by the Senate on the report of the Committee will be treated as a resolution of the Senate
- Following the resolution of the Senate, the Clerk of the National Assembly will notify the petitioner and respondent of the Committee's resolution
- Finally, the resolution of the Senate will be sent to the Secretary of the Government of the Federation who will authorize the Ministries, Departments and Agencies to act



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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.

