

The National Council of Provinces Select Committee on Members' and Provincial Legislative Proposals considers draft Bills from individual NCOP members and provincial legislatures.

Petitions may also be tabled in Parliament and referred to the relevant committee that deals with the issue raised in the petition.

Internal Committees

The National Assembly has a number of internal committees that deal with matters affecting the running of Parliament. The Committees normally consist of senior Members of Parliament. The Rules Committee and its sub-committees deal with House rules, the budget of the House, support for Members, internal arrangements, and powers and privileges of members. Other internal Committees are the Programme Committee that plans the work of the Assembly, the Disciplinary Committee, and the Committee of Chairpersons.

The National Council of Provinces has its own domestic Committees. The Rules Committee and its subcommittees deal with the NCOP rules, the NCOP budget, parliamentary privileges, internal arrangements, international relations and delegated legislation. The Programme Committee plans the work of the NCOP and the Committee of Chairpersons make recommendations about the functioning of Committees and other NCOP forums.

Ad hoc Committees

Parliament or one of its Houses may appoint an ad hoc (temporary) Committee when a special task must be done. When the task is complete, the Committee is dissolved.

Joint Committees

The National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces together appoint a number of joint committees, for example the Constitutional Review Committee.

The Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence and the Joint Standing Committee on Defence are statutory Committees. This means that they are established, by the Constitution or by an Act of Parliament, as well as in terms of the rules of Parliament.

The committees play a very important role in the process of building democracy and involving the public in the processes and activities of Parliament.

This pamphlet is available in all the official languages of South Africa.



PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Produced by the Public Education Office • Parliamentary Communication Services • INSPIRED BY PEOPLE
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PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



English *Committees of Parliament*
Committees of Parliament

THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF COMMITTEES IN PARLIAMENT

The two houses of Parliament, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, conduct their work in plenary sessions (where Members of a house meet together in one group), in joint sittings (where Members of both houses meet as one group), and in Committees (smaller groups of Members).

Working in Committees allows Parliament to:

- Increase the amount of work that can be done
- Ensure that issues can be debated in more detail than in plenary sessions
- Increase the level of participation of Members of Parliament (MPs) in discussions
- Enable MPs to develop expertise and in-depth knowledge of the specific Committee's area of work
- Provide a platform for the public to present views directly to MPs, something which is not possible in a plenary sitting of Parliament
- Provide an environment for Parliament to hear evidence and collect information related to the work of a specific Committee.

Committees are, in general, proportionally representative of the parties in Parliament. Committee meetings are open to the public, but may be closed if there is a good reason to do so.

The different committees have one or more of the following functions:

- They monitor and oversee the work and budgets of national government departments and hold them accountable
- They consider and amend Bills, and may initiate Bills
- They consider private members' and provincial legislative proposals and special petitions
- They consider international treaties and agreements
- They examine specific areas of public life or matters of public interest
- They take care of domestic parliamentary issues

Committees have the power to summon any person to appear before them, give evidence or produce documents. They may require any person or institution to report to them. Committees may also receive petitions, representations or submissions from the public. Each Committee is headed by a Chairperson.

THE DIFFERENT COMMITTEES OF PARLIAMENT

Portfolio Committees

The National Assembly (NA) appoints from among its members a number of *Portfolio Committees* to shadow the work of the various national government departments.

The role of Portfolio Committees is to:

- consider Bills,
- deal with departmental budget votes,
- oversee the work of the department they are responsible for, and enquire and make recommendations about any aspect of the department, including its structure, functioning and policy.

The work of Committees is not restricted to government. They may investigate any matter of public interest that falls within their area of responsibility. There is a Portfolio Committee for each national Ministry and its associated government department/s.

Select Committees

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) appoints from its permanent members a number of *Select Committees* to shadow the work of the various national government departments and to deal with Bills.

Because only 54 of the 90 NCOP Members are permanent delegates compared to the 400 of the NA, the Select Committees oversee the work of more than one national government department.

Public Accounts Committees

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Public Accounts acts as Parliament's watchdog over the way taxpayers' money is spent by the Executive. Every year the Auditor-General tables reports on the accounts and financial management of the various government departments and State institutions.

Heads of government departments and institutions are regularly called by this committee to report and account for expenditure. The Committee can recommend that the National Assembly takes corrective actions if necessary.

Members' Legislative Proposals and Petitions Committees

Draft bills can be submitted by individual Members of the National Assembly. These bills are considered by the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Private Member's Legislative Proposals and Special Petitions. If the Committee agrees with the principle of the draft Bill, a Bill will be prepared and dealt with by Parliament.