





WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



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Parliament House



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INTRODUCTION

The birth of Legislative power in Ghana (then Gold Coast) dates back to the reign of Queen Victoria of England (1837-1901). However, the importance of the Legislature in promoting good governance began to gain prominence from 1874 when the Gold Coast was given a separate Government after reuniting with other West African settlements.

In 1888, John Mensah Sarbah was nominated to serve on the Legislature Council as the first unofficial member. This marked a turning point in the advancement of Ghana's parliamentary democratic dispensation.

In 1916, the Legislative Council was reconstituted. Among the nine nominated unofficial members, six were Africans. This was in contrast to the previous eleven officials and the Governor.

Since then, Ghana's parliamentary governance has evolved into major stages of development. The adoption of the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution has brought a period of stable parliamentary governance for the past 25 years. The uninterrupted reign has provided an enabling environment, in entrenching a democratic parliamentary system. This has promoted participatory democracy in Ghana. More significantly, Ghana Parliament is recognized as a shining example of good democratic governance internationally and the African continent in particular.



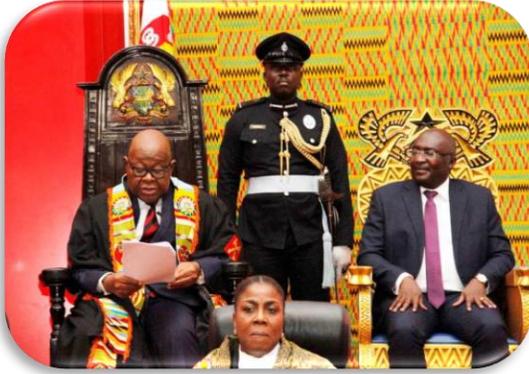
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Why is Parliament such an important governance institution?

This is because it is an embodiment of Ghana's democratic governance (a representation of the interests and voice of the citizenry).



What are some of the features of Ghana's Parliament?

Attributes of Ghana's parliamentary system include:

- Hybrid system (combines both Presidential and Parliamentary systems of government).
- Multi-party system (representatives are elected through multiparty elections).
- Independent body (it is a separate arm of Government).
- It is empowered by the Constitution to exercise oversight responsibility over the Executive Arm of Government.
- Its membership is a representation of various constituents.
- Most of its work is done through the Committee system.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



What is the structure of Ghana's Parliament?

Ghana's current Parliament consists of 275 seats representing 275 constituencies. Each of these constituencies is an embodiment of the sovereign will of the people within a given area. The people, through democratic means, elect their representatives to represent them as Members of Parliament (MPs).



Who form the "majority" and "minority" caucuses?

The party with the largest membership is termed the Majority and the party with the second highest seats becomes the Minority.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



What are the major functions of Parliament?

Parliament exercises Legislative, Financial, Oversight, Representative and Deliberative functions as part of its core functions. The table below explains these specific functions:

Function	Description
Legislative	Passing of Bills, scrutinising statutory instruments, proposing and enactment of legislation that is necessary to support reforms and development.
Financial Control	The power and duty to approve and monitor the use of public funds
Oversight	Scrutinising policy measures and executive conduct, vetting of presidential nominees
Representative	Voicing of grievances, asking Questions, making Statements, Motions, debating issue, etc



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Deliberative

Passing of Resolutions, debating topical issues of national interest, etc.

Qualification to be a Member of Parliament?

Article 94(1) of the 1992 constitution sets out the qualifying criteria of a Member of Parliament as follows;

A Member:

- I. shall be a citizen of Ghana;
- II. must have attained the age of 21 years;
- III. must be a registered voter;
- IV. shall be a resident in the constituency for which he/she stands as a candidate for election to Parliament or must have resided there for a total of not less than five years out of the ten years immediately preceding the election for which he/she stands or he/she hails from the constituency.
- V. Has paid all his/her taxes or made satisfactory arrangements to pay His/her taxes.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Criteria for Disqualification of a Member of Parliament.

Article 94(2) and (3) provide for factors, which disqualify a person from becoming an MP. These include, where a person:

- I. owes allegiance to another country;
- II. Has been adjudged or lawfully declared bankrupt and has not been discharged.
- III. Is of unsound mind.
- IV. Has been convicted for high crime under the laws of the country.
- V. Has been found to have misconducted him/herself while in public office.
- VI. Is under sentence of death or imprisonment imposed on him/her by another country;
- VII. Is not qualified to be registered as a voter under any law relating to any public elections.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



- VIII. Is a member of the Ghana Police Service, the Prisons Service, the Ghana Armed Forces, the Judicial Service, Legal Service, the civil Service, the Audit Service, Parliamentary Service, Statistical Service, Ghana fire service Customs, Excise and Preventive Service, the Internal Revenue Service and;
- IX. Is a Chief



What is the composition of the Leadership of Parliament?

The Leadership of Parliament includes the following functionaries with their roles and responsibilities:

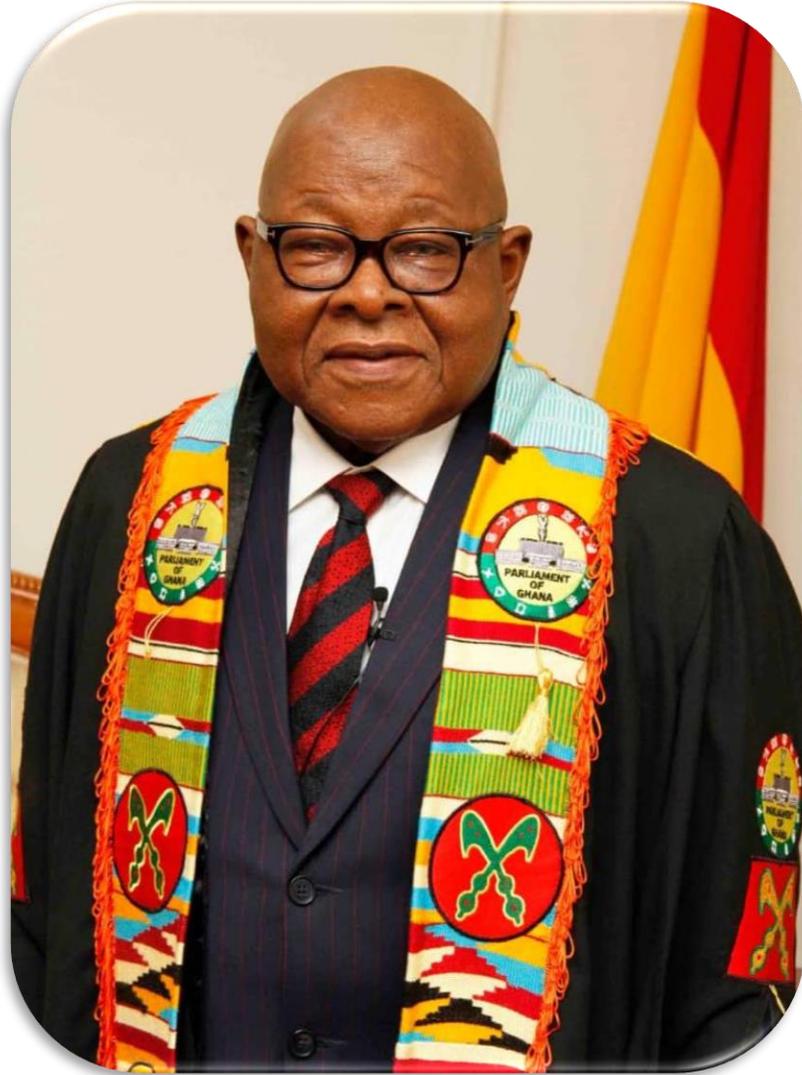


WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





POSITION	DESCRIPTION
The Speaker	<p>The Speaker is the first officer of the House. At the national level he ranks third in the official order precedence after the President and the Vice-President.</p> <p>The Speaker is elected from among persons who are MPs or who qualify to be elected as Members of Parliament. The first business that is conducted in a new Parliament is the election of the Speaker. A Member of Parliament shall vacate his/ her seat if he is elected as a Speaker. The Speakers of the First, Second and Third Parliaments of the Fourth Republic were all elected from outside Parliament.</p> <p>The Speaker presides over all plenary Sittings of Parliament. The Speaker's ruling cannot be challenged except on a substantive motion. It is the responsibility of the Speaker to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- act as the spokesperson of the House in its relations with the State, the President, the Council of State and other authorities outside Parliament and the Republic; and enforce adherence to all the Standing Orders of the House for the preservation of order and the conduct of its business. In performing his duties, the Speaker exhibits the highest sense of fairness and impartiality. The Speaker chairs the Parliamentary Service Board and as such has over-all responsibility for the internal functioning of the House and Management of Parliamentary Service.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





**First
and
Second
Deputy
Speakers**

The Speaker is assisted in the performance of his duties by two Deputy Speakers (First and Second Deputy Speaker), who are elected at the commencement of every Parliament, both of whom should not belong to the same political party.

The First Deputy Speaker presides over the Sittings of the House whenever the Speaker is absent. When he takes the Chair, he exercises all the powers of the Speaker for the effective and efficient conduct of business in the House. By the Standing Orders of the House, the First deputy Speaker presides over the Appointment Committee and the Privileges Committee.

The Second Deputy Speaker presides over the Sittings of the House in the absence of the Speaker and First Deputy Speaker. Like the First Deputy Speaker, he exercises all the powers of the Speaker for the effective and efficient conduct of business in the House. By the Standing Orders of the House, the Second Deputy Speaker presides over the Members Holding Offices of Profit.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Majority Leader

The Majority Leader represents the party with the largest number of seats in the House. He is a Member of the Leadership of the House and the Principal

Spokesperson for the Majority Caucus. He is also the Leader of Government Business in the House. It is his responsibility therefore, to ensure that business is “conducted smoothly and free from unnecessary disruptions.

The Majority Leader also chairs the Business Committee, which determines the business of each Sitting and the order in which it shall be taken without prejudice to the powers of the Speaker to determine which matters may properly be Introduced in the House. He is also Chairperson of the House Committee and the Special Budget Committee. He is assisted by a Deputy Majority Leader in the performance of his duties.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Minority Leader

The Minority Leader is a Member of Parliament designated as such by the largest Minority Party in the House. He is the Principal Spokesperson for the Minority Caucus in Parliament. He is also a member of the Leadership of the House and Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee. Until 1992 Constitution, the Minority Leader was referred to as the 'Leader of the Opposition'. The term Minority Leader was intended to strengthen the sense of cohesion in the House. He is 'assisted by a Deputy Minority Leader in the Performance of his duties.

Majority Chief Whip

He is a member Of the leadership of the House. He ensures unity, solidarity and discipline in his Party Caucus. He liaises with other Political Parties, Parliamentary Committees, the Parliamentary Service and Civil Society Organisations to further the interest of his party Caucus. He guides his Party Members on Parliamentary practice and procedure. He ensures that his party members regularly participate in the business of the House and its



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Committees. In the performance of these functions, he is assisted by two deputies.

Minority Chief Whip The minority chief whip is a Member of the Leadership of the house. He ensures unity, solidarity and party discipline among the members of this party caucus. He guides his party members on Parliamentary practice and procedure. He also Organizes party caucus meetings. The Minority Chief Whip is a member of the House Committee that is responsible for the welfare of Members. In the performance of these functions, two deputies assist him.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





What are Parliamentary Committees?

These are committees established by the House to ensure that considerable time is given for effective examination of matters before the House, owing to the volume and complexity of Parliamentary work.

What is significant about these Committees?

The committees create a platform for due diligence and efficient dispatch of the business of Parliament.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



Are the Committees the same?

No. There are various types of Committees in Ghana's Parliament. These include:

(a) **Standing Committees:** These are Committees appointed at the First Meeting of Parliament after the election of the Speaker to deal with matters of continuing concern to the House. Every Member of Parliament should belong to least Standing Committee. E.g. Committee on Gender and Children, Business Committee, etc.

(b) **Select Committees:** These are departmentally related committees charged with responsibility of scrutinizing expenditure, management and policies of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The Standing Orders of Parliament provide for 16 Select Committees such as the Committee on Health, Committee on Education, Committee on Works and Housing, etc. All Bills presented to Parliament are referred to the relevant Select Committees for analysis.

(c) **Special/Ad Hoc Committees:** They are formed by the House to investigate further any subject matter of national interest or any Bill that does not fall under any of the Select Committees.

(d) **Committee of the Whole:** A Committee which is composed of the entire membership of Parliament. The terms, composition, powers, functions and procedures for these Committees are regulated by provisions in the Standing Orders.

How are Members selected to the Committees?

A Committee of Selection chaired by the Speaker determines the membership of the Committees.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Can a member be appointed to more than three Standing Committees?

NO! Except for the Deputy Speakers and leaders of Parliamentary parties, no Member may be appointed to more than three Standing Committees.

What are the General Powers of Committees?

Committees have such powers, rights and privileges as vested in the High Court of Justice.

Are the Standing Orders still valid during Committee meetings?

Yes. In Committee meetings, the Standing Orders of the House are observed so far as many be applicable.

Who are Clerks to Committees?

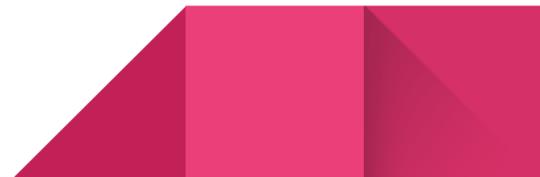
These are officers appointed by the Clerk to Parliament as Clerks to each Committee.

What at are their responsibilities?

Clerk of a Committee records the minutes of proceeding and all proceedings upon consideration of any Report or Bill in a Committee.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





What is the importance about the Parliamentary Committees?

They afford Members the ample time to investigate fully any subject matter to ensure quality output.

- They provide a platform for Engagement between Committee members, the general public and stakeholders to purposely enhance quality of work of the House.
- The Committee enable Members to gain experience in dealing with a subject matter.
- They also promote a non-partisan approach in dealing with issues before Parliament.

What stages must a Bill pass to become Law?

A Bill passes through four stages. These are:

First Reading: It entails the introduction of the Bill in the House and referral to the appropriate Committee for consideration. It is at this stage Committee involves the public in the law-making process.

Second Reading: It is a stage where the principles of the Bill on the basis the Committee's Report if fully debated in the House.

Consideration Stage: This is the stage, where the Bill is thoroughly examined with amendments being proposed and voted upon. A Member can again move for a second consideration Stage for more amendments.

Third Reading: It signifies the final reading of the Bill agreed, it is considered as passed and ready for Presidential assent.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Who are responsible for the running of the Parliamentary Service?

The Parliamentary Service is run by the Parliamentary Service Board as its highest decision-making body while the clerk to Parliament handles day to day management and Administration of the Service.

What role does the Parliamentary Service play in enhancing good governance?

The Service has been the vehicle which provides support services to the House. It works to adequately sensitize the Public on Parliamentary Activities through various programs.

What is the statutory term of Office for MPs?

The statutory term of office for Members of Parliament is four (4) years.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Duties as a Member of Parliament?

- Participate in deliberations on matters of national and international importance.
- Introduction and passage of Bills.
- Drawing attention to issues of public importance.
- Examining appropriation and usage of public funds.
- Interacting with his/ her constituents at regular intervals.
- Monitoring District Assembly initiated projects in his/ her constituency.
- Enjoined to advocate for constituents at all levels.
- Educate constituents on laws passed by Parliament and policies being pursued by Government.
- Intervene directly by undertaking development projects in constituency.

What are the institution's internal strategies in meeting the demands of Ghana's Parliament?

As strategy for effective delivery of Parliamentary support service, the Parliamentary Service is divided into three (3) Divisions namely:

- (a) Legislative Management
- (b) Information, Publication and Research
- (c) Finance, Administration and General Services

Each of these Divisions is headed by a Deputy Clerk who coordinates activities under his / her control.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





What are the duties of the Clerk to Parliament?

- He/ she is the Principal or Chief Adviser to the Speaker and Members on Parliamentary practice
- He/ she is the head of the Parliamentary Service
- Arranges Sittings of the House
- Prepares the Order Paper
- Keeps the minutes' book
- Authenticates Bills passed by the House for Presidential assent
- Presides over the First Sitting of newly elected Members of Parliament for purposes of electing the Speaker.
- Presides over the Management Committee comprising the three Deputy Clerks and Heads of Department.

What are Parliamentary Caucuses?

These are groups formed by Members who have common objectives or interest in championing the concern of the people they represent. Example: Women Caucus, Party Caucus, Children Caucus, Population Caucus, etc.

Is it necessary for Parliament to network with other International Affiliation?

Yes. This is because it promotes Parliamentary democracy through experience sharing and collaboration.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



What efforts have been made in deepening Parliamentary democracy through networking?

Ghana's Parliament is now a party to other International affiliates such as: the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), African Parliamentary Union (APU), Pan-African Parliament (PAP), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and ECOWAS Parliament.

Where can I seek further clarification on Parliamentary issues?

For further clarification, you can contact:

- The Public Affairs Department of Parliament
- Regional and District Information Services Departments
- Parliamentary Resources Centre

What role does Civil Society play in Ghana's Parliamentary processes?

Civic society participation is an indispensable attribute of democratic practice needed in shaping the work of Parliament. It is an undeniable fact that Parliament reflects the maxim. "Government of the people; by the people; for the people". The role of civil society could be described as underpinning the consolidation of Ghana's democratic gains. Civil society in this direction can help to:



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





-
- Formulate effective legislation
 - Educate the public on the work of Parliament
 - Influence important decisions of public interest
 - Streamline the use of public funds/ resources
 - Depoliticise parliamentary debates in the House
 - Evaluate Members' contributions to debates as contained in the Hansard.

What are the available mechanisms at the disposal of Civil Society? participating in Parliamentary processes?

Existing mechanisms that encourage Civil Society engagement in Parliamentary processes range from:

- Participating in a Committee
- Submitting Petitions
- Participating in the Speaker's Breakfast Forum
- Participating in Annual National / Regional Fora
- Submitting Memoranda on issues before Parliament
- Organising workshops and involving MPs in discussing pertinent issues of public concern.

Who can attend Parliamentary Sessions?

Any person, so far as the person's presence does not pose a security threat to parliamentary proceedings.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?



Where can I get access to documents on Parliamentary proceedings?

Copies of documents on Parliamentary proceedings are available at the Department of Official Report and the Parliament Library within Parliament House in Accra.

Lexis

Act: It is a bill passed by the House and assented to by the President.

Agenda Paper: Document containing a list of items of business to be considered by the House

Amendment: A proposal to altar the terms of a Motion, Resolutions or provisions of a Bill.

Back Bench: These are seats occupied by Members of Parliament who are not Ministers or Deputy Ministers of State and do not hold any office in the Majority or Minority caucuses.

Bill: A draft Act of Parliament

By-election: An election organised to fill a vacant parliamentary seat.

Dissolution: A situation where the term of office of Members of Parliament ends after its First Sitting.

First Reading: It is the introduction of a Bill to the House without provoking debates or votes

Hansard: This is the Official Report containing nearly verbatim reports of proceedings of the House which bring out the intent and spirit of Acts of Parliament.

Mace: A staff symbolising the authority of the House entrusted to the Speaker



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT PARLIAMENT?





Member in Charge: The Member or Minister who introduces a Bill to Parliament

Motion: Is a proposal tabled to elicit a decision or an opinion of the House on a given matter.

Point of Order: A request by a Member to the Speaker to interrupt proceeding in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Private Member's Bill: A Bill introduced in the House by a Member who is not a Minister or Deputy Minister.

Privilege: Special legal protection from prosecution enjoyed by Members and Officers of Parliament that enables them to perform their official duties unimpeded.

Petition: A proposal to the House for redress of a grievance

Quorum: The minimum number of members required to be present to enable Parliament conduct Business in accordance with the standing Orders.

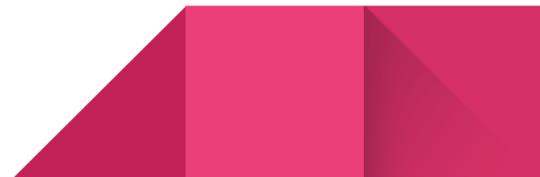
Recess: A period beginning from the day Parliament adjourns Sitting to the day of resumption of Sitting by the House.

Standing Orders: Rules that regulate Parliamentary proceedings

Supplementary Question: An Oral Question asked as a sequel to a Substantive Question.



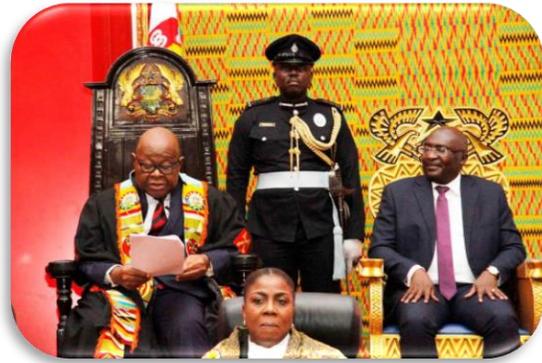
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#BringParliamentCloserToThePeople

From the Public Affairs Directorate, Parliament.



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