



**PARLIAMENT**  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**IPU –ASGP**  
**APRIL 2026**

***NEWS AND INNOVATIONS***  
***A COMMITTEE ON THE***  
***PRESIDENCY***

Parliament of the Republic of South  
Africa

Secretary to Parliament: Xolile George

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# Introduction

South Africa became a constitutional democracy in 1994 – just over three decades ago. The final Constitution (1996) established a bi-cameral Parliament, consisting of the **National Assembly** and the **National Council of Provinces (NCOP)**. The Assembly for its part is elected by proportional representation with a mandate to

–

*“...ensure Government by the people under the Constitution. It does this by choosing the President, by providing a national forum for public consideration of issues, by passing legislation and by scrutinizing and overseeing executive action.”*



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# *Oversight and Accountability*

The writers of the Constitution understood the law and parliamentary procedure must leave no ambiguity as to the respective obligations of Parliament and the Executive.

Section 42 of the Constitution mandated the Assembly to scrutinize and oversee Executive action. Conversely, the Constitution stated that the Executive must be accountable collectively and individually to Parliament and must provide members with full and regular reports.



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# Statutory Framework

During the first years of the democratic order, Parliament considered a plethora of **statutes and regulations to foster oversight and accountability**. These included laws to empower members, to regulate the public service and state finances and to consolidate the system of checks and balances. Laws included, *inter alia*, the –

- *Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act (2004)*
- *Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (1999)*
- *Money Bills and Related Matters Act (2009)*



# *The National Budget*



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In terms of the PFMA, the **National Budget** must be divided into separate **Votes**, one for each Government department. Additionally, each department must submit a strategic plan with measurable objectives for their respective Votes.

The Assembly must consider each Vote individually before it can pass the Budget. The Assembly can only amend Budget Votes in accordance with specific procedures. These procedures require that, *among other things*, any amendment to a departmental budget can ordinarily only come about following report by an oversight committee.



# *Parliamentary Procedure*

The Constitution also stipulated that Parliament, as an independent arm of State, **could determine and control its own internal arrangements**, and make rules and orders concerning its business with due regard to representative democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement.

The Assembly **must create mechanisms** to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of Government are accountable to it and to maintain oversight over the exercise of National Executive authority.



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# Portfolio Committees

As one tool, the revised rules put in place an array of **portfolio committees to oversee each national department**. The rules state, *inter alia*, that a portfolio committee –

*“may monitor, investigate, enquire into and make recommendations concerning any such executive organ of state, constitutional institution or other body or institution, including the legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure, staff and policies of such organ of state, institution or other body or institution...”*

Among the procedural and oversight issues raised over time, however, was the absence of a committee to oversee the Presidency.



# *The Presidency*

The Presidency stands at the apex of the National Executive. It comprises, the –

- The Office of the President, currently Mr M C Ramaphosa, who is both the Head of State and Government;
- Deputy President, Mr P S Mashatile, who is the Leader of Government Business (in Parliament); and
- Minister in the Presidency, responsible for coordinating Government strategy and overseeing key administrative entities.



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# *The Presidency*



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Together with these offices, the Cabinet Office and the Legal and Research Services offer administrative and advisory services in the Presidency. The budget of these offices is consolidated as **Vote 1: The Presidency**, in the Budget.

The Presidency also houses several other strategic departments and State agencies including the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; the Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities; the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), Statistics South Africa; and the State Security Agency. These entities have their **own Votes**.





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# *Oversight over the Presidency*

Parliament has devised various means to oversee certain functionaries and entities within the Presidency -

The President must report to Parliament on the plans and performance of the State. e.g. when he or she delivers the annual State of the Nation Address. The President and Deputy President respectively also answer oral questions in the Assembly four times every year. This is in addition to written questions which members pose on a weekly basis.

Some departments and entities within the Presidency are subjected to scrutiny within committees (those with their own Votes). This has not, however, been the case with Vote 1.





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# *Oversight over the Presidency*

During the Sixth Parliament (2019-2024) some parties argued that the absence of committee oversight over Vote 1 was contrary to law.

*The Judicial Commission on Inquiry into allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud* (called the State Capture Commission) also recommended that Parliament consider whether it would be desirable to establish a committee whose function would incorporate oversight over acts or omissions by the President and Presidency, which were not overseen by existing committees.





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# *A Committee on the Presidency*

The **Assembly Rules Committee** requested the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to undertake research into the matter. The PBO concluded that Vote 1 was not excluded from regulatory prescripts. The Rules Committee later undertook a study tour to assess practices in other jurisdictions.

With the evidence of the PBO and the study tour, the matter was again raised in the Seventh Parliament in 2024, when two options were advanced: That an existing portfolio committee be mandated to oversee the Presidency, or that a dedicated committee be established. In October 2024, the Rules Committee endorsed the latter approach.





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# *A Committee on the Presidency*

While the Rules Committee had decided on the need for a specific committee, **questions of procedure remained -**

First, whether the committee should take the form of a portfolio committee, or be otherwise provided for in the rules with a distinct orientation?

Second, whether the committee should delve into matters beyond the budget and administration of the Presidency? Divergent views also emerged about how frequently the President and Deputy President would be expected to appear and the size of the committee.





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# *A Committee on the Presidency*

Following extensive deliberations between parties, the Rules Committee met on 26 November 2025 when it adopted new rules to establish a **Committee on the Presidency** (the Committee).

The Rules Committee also determined that the Committee would consist of eleven members (the same number as portfolio committees) with seven parties represented based on the principle of proportionality.





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# Mandate of Committee

In terms of mandate, new rules were formulated which mandated the Committee to –

- (1) *must maintain oversight **over the budget and work of The Presidency** in accordance with the applicable law, the rules and the delegation of functions in the Executive;*
- (2) *may call upon the member of the Executive **designated by the President** to account for the budget and administration of The Presidency;*
- (3) *may call upon the President and Deputy President once per year within the annual programme of the Assembly to discuss **policy matters of national or international importance;***





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# Mandate of Committee

- (4) *must perform any other function assigned to it by legislation, other provisions of these rules, resolutions of the Assembly or referred by the Speaker; and*
- (5) *may **adopt guidelines** regarding the execution of its mandate including the guidelines to provide for liaisons with the President and Deputy President.”*

In adopting these procedures, the Rules Committee also proposed possible guidelines to support the Committee.



# Draft Guidelines



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- (1) In the determination of its annual programme, the Committee must liaise with The Presidency to prearrange dates for the President and Deputy President to appear before the Committee.*
- (2) The Committee's annual programme must be developed with due regard to the budget and oversight cycle, as determined by the Money Bills and Related Matters Act (2009) and the rules.*
- (3) The Committee must, at least 15 working days before the Committee is scheduled to meet the President or Deputy President, provide notice on the subjects to be discussed in the meeting.*



# Draft Guidelines



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- (4) *The President or Deputy President may, with the approval of the Chairperson, defer a matter for discussion that requires details which are not immediately available. In this event, the Chairperson must make a ruling as to the timeframe in which the President or Deputy President should address the Committee in writing.*
- (5) *The Chairperson may, subject to the principle of proportionality, impose limitations on the time used by political parties to pose questions to the President and Deputy President.*





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## *Concluding Remarks*

The South African Parliament has undertaken meaningful reforms to reinforce its ability to oversee and hold the Executive to account.

Notwithstanding prevailing procedure, the National Assembly has affirmed that articles of procedure should be the subject of constant review to ensure they respond to changing circumstances.

In this context, the Committee on the Presidency must be understood as a novel and important development in Parliament's endeavours to foster accountability.





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## *Concluding Remarks*

The Committee on the Presidency was convened for the first time earlier this year and its composition includes senior and experienced members of Parliament.

One of its initial tasks will be to examine the budget for Vote 1 for the forthcoming year. Concurrently, the Committee can begin liaisons with the offices of the President and Deputy President.

Given that this is a new committee with distinct functions, it is certain **that questions of procedure will arise**; and the resolution thereof will serve to consolidate best practices going forward both for the Seventh Parliament and for the future.





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Thank you  
Ndiyabulela

Ke a leboga  
Ndi ya livhuwa

Ndza nkhensa

Ke a Leboga  
Ngiyabonga

Ndzi khense ngopfu

Ke a leboga kudu  
Gangans

Ndo livhuwa

Dankie

Ngiyathokoza

Enkosi

Braille: 6 4 6 3 6 4 6 3 6 4 6 3