

Introduction to Petitions

The establishment of the petitions system enables greater citizen interaction with the parliamentary system on matters of general public concern or interest. Politicians may not themselves submit petitions but otherwise there are no restrictions on who can submit a petition.

Only one signature is needed to submit a petition.

The Joint sub-Committee on Public Petitions

The Joint sub-Committee on Public Petitions ('the Committee') is a Parliamentary Committee consisting of TDs and Senators. It is an influential new committee which has been given the ambitious task of charting a course for a petitions system in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

This parliamentary petitions system presents an important new avenue for individuals to participate in the democratic process. For the first time, through the petitions process, members of the public will be able to take their policy concerns directly to the heart of Parliament and to influence the parliamentary agenda.

At the end of its consideration of a Petition, the Committee will usually produce a report setting out its findings and making recommendations to the Government or the relevant public body.

Consideration of Petitions by the Committee

The Committee in considering a petition may invite a petitioner to appear before it to speak on the subject matter of the petition. It may also seek oral or written evidence from the relevant Government Department, as well as other appropriate bodies or stakeholders.

The Committee, in considering a petition may also:

- refer the petition to any other Committee with a request for further consideration and report back to the Committee;
- refer the petition to the Ombudsman, another Ombudsman or a regulatory public body or a body established for the purpose of redress.

Following consideration of the oral and/or written evidence received, the Committee will make a decision on what further action it wishes to take. This action can include reporting to the Dáil/Seanad with recommendations, including a request that the report be debated by the Dáil/Seanad.

If the Committee considers that no further action is required the petition will be closed. The petitioner will be notified of the Committee's consideration of the matter and its final decision.

Admissibility of Petitions

Petitions may be addressed to the Houses of the Oireachtas on a matter of general public concern or interest in relation to their legislative powers or an issue of public policy.

A petition is admissible if it:

- relates to matters on which the Houses of the Oireachtas have the power to act;
- complies with Standing Orders and is in proper form;
- is not sub-judice, i.e. does not relate to a case where court proceedings have been initiated and which is to be heard before a jury or is then being heard before a jury;
- does not contain the name or names of individuals;
- does not contain language which is offensive or defamatory;

- is not the same as, or is not in substantially similar terms to, a petition brought by or on behalf of the same person, body corporate or unincorporated association during the lifetime of that Dáil/Seanad and which was closed by agreement of the Committee;
- is not frivolous, vexatious or otherwise does not constitute an abuse of the petitions system;
- does not require the Committee to consider an individual complaint which has been the subject of a decision by the Ombudsman, by another Ombudsman, or by a regulatory public body or a body established for the purpose of redress.

Petitioners should demonstrate that they have already taken steps to resolve the issue raised in their petition, for example, through raising it with the Ombudsman, public bodies, or directly with the relevant Government Department.

Advice on admissibility can be obtained from the secretariat to the Committee whose contact details are provided at the end.

Submitting a petition

Petitioners are encouraged to submit their petition online by completing the template form [here](#).

Petitioners wishing to submit their petition by e-mail or post can download and complete the petition form available on the web site and submit it:

- by e-mail to submitpetition@oireachtas.ie or
- by post to the Clerk to the Joint sub-Committee on Public Petitions, Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

The Committee secretariat can also provide copies of the form, on request.

When submitting a petition, please ensure you use the form supplied and that all parts of the form are complete.

Contact details

Further information and advice on the petitions process to the Houses of the Oireachtas can be obtained from:

Leo Curley

Clerk to the Joint sub-Committee on Public Petitions

Houses of the Oireachtas

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

Petitions Tel: 01-6184216

E-mail: submitapetition@oireachtas.ie