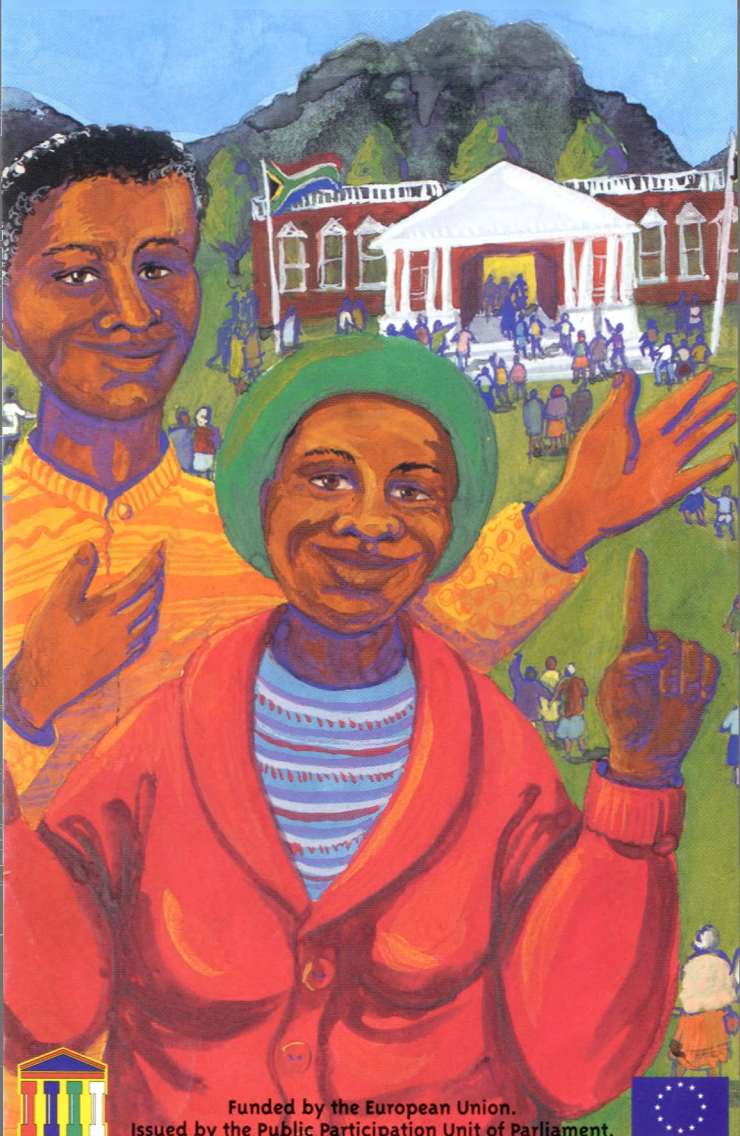


SA Government & Politics
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Parliament for the people Take part in Parliament



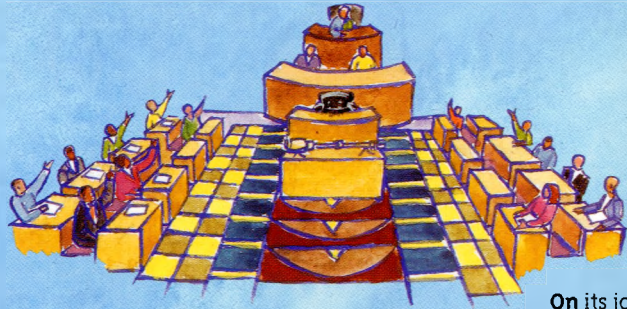
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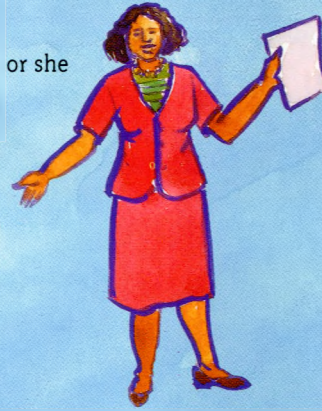
How a law is made

When a law is made, it goes on a journey through Parliament. The path it takes through Parliament is not always the same, but it usually goes through certain processes before it can become a law. Here are some of the main steps:

Usually, the journey starts when a government minister thinks there should be a new law. He or she writes the idea in a document called a Bill, which is brought to Parliament.



On its journey to becoming a law, a Bill is usually debated by Members of Parliament in the two houses of Parliament, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. You may attend these meetings and listen to the discussions.



Usually the two houses of Parliament send the bill to committees of Parliament, where it is discussed and debated in more detail. You can get involved in shaping the law by telling the committee what you think the law should be. This is called making a submission. You can make a submission in writing, or by speaking to a member of the committee, or by speaking to the whole committee at what we call a Public Hearing.



A Public Hearing can take place inside Parliament in Cape Town, or in different areas of the country.



Finally, Parliament votes to pass the Bill. When the President of South Africa signs it, it becomes a law which everybody must obey.



What is Parliament?

Our Constitution says that South Africa must have an independent body, called Parliament, to make the laws of the country.

Parliament is made up of our political representatives who are called Members of Parliament (MPs). We choose the MPs by voting in elections.

Parliament has two main parts, called the Houses of Parliament. They are the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).

The MPs discuss and debate the new laws and make changes to existing laws.

Parliament also has many committees where they discuss the laws in detail.

Members of Parliament also make sure that the government departments do their work properly.

What does it mean?

Bill: A bill is what we call a draft law while it is still being discussed in Parliament. When a bill is passed and signed by the President, it becomes an Act of Parliament.

Committee: A group of MPs set up by Parliament to discuss and debate specific issues.

MP: This stands for Member of Parliament.

National Assembly (NA): This is the House of Parliament where our representatives meet to discuss and make new laws and change existing ones.

National Council of Provinces (NCOP): This is the House of Parliament where representatives from each province look after the needs of provinces in the making of laws.

Submission: This is a statement by a member of the public to Parliament about a specific issue. It can be done by phoning, speaking at a Public Hearing or in writing.

How you can take part in Parliament

Let your Member of Parliament (MP) know what your concerns and wishes are. No matter where you live, there is an MP dedicated to look after your area. To find out who your Member of Parliament is, phone 021 403 2911.



If you feel strongly about an issue, don't keep quiet! Make your opinion known by making a submission to Parliament. Here are some of the ways in which you can do this:

- You can write a letter to Parliament, PO Box 15, Cape Town, 8000
- You can phone Parliament and speak to a Member of Parliament. Contact the Head of Committees in Parliament at (021) 403 3777.
- You can speak at a Public Hearing of a committee of Parliament.



Vote in the elections. Every five years, everybody older than 18 years has a chance to choose the Members of Parliament by voting for political parties. The more votes a party gets, the more representatives they can send to Parliament.



Find out more:

Phone Parliament. Call Parliament at (021) 403 2911 or The Public Participation Unit at (021) 403 8200.

Visit Parliament. Arrange a tour for yourself or your organisation by phoning (021) 403 2201. You can sit in and listen when the MPs meet to debate and discuss laws.

Stay informed! Follow the debates in Parliament in the newspapers, and on the radio and TV.

