



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA

Parliament Buildings

P.O Box 31299

Lusaka

[www.parliament.gov.zm](http://www.parliament.gov.zm)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

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ABSTRACT SERIES

# **CALLING ATTENTION TO SPEAK IN THE HOUSE**

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

## **PREFACE**

This Abstract is among others in a series, describing various aspects of parliamentary procedure. In this Abstract, emphasis is on calling attention to speak in the House. The information is based on the Rules of Parliamentary Procedure, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

However, it should be noted that the information contained herein is not exhaustive.

Roy Ngulube  
**ACTING CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The process of calling attention to speak in the House, sometimes referred to as “catching the Speaker’s eye”, has, for most Legislatures, been derived from the system adopted in the Westminster Parliament. It is one of the general rules of procedure which must be followed in order to ensure that the proceedings of Parliament run smoothly.

## **CATCHING ATTENTION TO SPEAK IN THE HOUSE**

If a Member desires to speak on any motion before the House, he/she indicates on the console of the multi-media system that has been installed in the Chamber. Before the introduction of the system, Members were required to rise in their place and the Presiding Officer would select a Member to speak at that particular time. However, with the multi-media system, the Presiding Officer selects Members to speak by following the order in which the names are displayed on the console of the multi-media system in the House. Despite the foregoing, the Presiding Officer has discretion not to follow the order in which Members are listed on the console in order to balance debate in the House. In the same vein, when two or more Members indicate to speak at the same time, the Presiding Officer has discretion on whom to call upon to speak. The following logical rules help the Presiding Officer to decide which Member should be recognised first:

- 1) preference is given to the proposer of a Motion or to the Committee Chairperson who has presented a report. He/she should be allowed the first opportunity to explain his/her Motion or report and usually, is also allowed to speak last on it;
- 2) a Member who seldomly speaks should be given preference over one who claims the attention of the Assembly frequently; and
- 3) the Presiding Officer should alternate between proponents and opponents of a Motion whenever possible.

With due regard to the foregoing, the Leader of the Opposition is given precedence among backbenchers to speak whenever he or she indicates intention to speak. Suffice to state that when a Minister is debating, he or she should debate in his or her official capacity, and not as a Member of Parliament for a specified constituency.

## **CONCLUSION**

A sound control over the manner in which Members 'call attention' to speak in the House is not, and cannot be a discontinuous process. The ultimate control lies, of course, with the Speaker but that control is of political character; the control exercised by each party represented in the House. At the end of the day, both the public and Parliament should be satisfied that there is a guarantee for order and that there is authority that will watch the process of debate and will give timely warning if that order is not adhered to. Such a continuous and concurrent control is vested in the Speaker of the House and Members of Parliament.

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