

Parliament Rules of Procedure detail the framework and judicial oversight done in the process.

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO

Members of the 12th Parliament convene today at the Kololo Ceremonial Grounds to elect their Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the next five years.

Mr Timothy Chemonges, the executive director of the Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA), which oversees Parliament Watch that in turn monitors House proceedings, says this will be the first business conducted in the 12th Parliament.

This implies no other business shall be conducted until the Speaker and Deputy are elected.

"While politics and party interests usually play a big role, the actual election is supposed to follow a clear constitutional and procedural path," he says.

Who qualifies to vote?

In essence, the exercise will have 528 eligible voters out of the expected 529 new MPs. This means the voting pool will be one member short since Kalangala District Woman MP-elect Helen Nakimuli died on April 19 and has not been replaced.

The voting pool is drawn from the newly elected MPs, who include District and City Woman MPs, plus five MPs representing each of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of Workers, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Youth, Older Persons, and another 10 for the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

The election of the Speaker and Deputy are set out in Chapter Six of the 1995 Constitution, under Article 82(2), which states: "The Speaker and Deputy Speaker shall be elected by Members of Parliament from among their number."

The Administration of Parliament Act sets out the Rules of Procedure of Parliament with a set of guidelines that define the processes and how parliamentary business is conducted.

Rule 5 and 6 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament detail the framework and judicial oversight done in the pro-

How Speaker, Deputy will be elected today



Former Speaker Anita Among presides over the 11th Parliament. Voting for new leaders will be the first business conducted in the 12th Parliament today. PHOTO/FILE

cess, stipulate the nomination grounds of a candidate, and outline the qualities to be met for someone to be deemed eligible.

These rules also show the voting process and how an elected person assumes the office of the Speaker and Deputy. For instance, the rule not only prohibits anyone serving as Vice President, Prime Minister, and Minister from vying for the said position but also bars publicly campaigning or soliciting votes through their agents.

Election of Speaker, Deputy

This process will, according to the dictates in Rule 5(5) of Procedure of Parliament, be presided over by the Chief Justice Flavio Zeija.

The presiding officer will then officially kick-start the election process by inviting nominations of candidates interested in serving as Speaker of the 12th

Parliament. This will be done by MPs present in the House.

For every candidate that will be suggested, the proposer is expected to read out the candidate's background, experience on legislative matters, and show grounds that make the proposed candidate eligible.

This will then be seconded by another MP who supports the nomination.

"Members nominate candidates from among themselves, the nomination must be seconded, and the person nominated must accept," Mr Chemonges said.

Voting process

This process starts with the Clerk to Parliament doing an on-site verification of the exact number of eligible vot-

ers or MPs present.

It is at this stage that ballot boxes are brought, verified to show they are empty, before they are sealed ahead of the voting process. The Clerk proceeds to invite and issue ballot papers to eligible MPs physically present, who then go on and express their secret choice on that ballot before it is cast into the ballot box.

This process goes on for all the available directly elected MPs and ends when the presiding officer declares the voting frame closed.

Once closed, the Clerk to Parliament then does a physical loud count of the votes cast in full view of everyone present and before a candidate's designated agent.

THE VOTING PROCESS

- The House to be presided over by the Chief Justice.
- Invitations for nomination of candidates are done by MPs present.
- Nominated candidate must consent/accept nomination.
- No campaigns allowed.
- Voting is done by secret ballot.
- If the results show there is a tie among the leading top two or three candidates, then the process is repeated until a clear difference is arrived at.
- Oath of Speaker or Deputy Speaker shall be administered by the President or a person authorised by the President.

The tallied results are then announced and the winner declared to all members present.

If there is an equal split of the votes cast between the top two or three candidates in the race for either Speaker or Deputy, Rule 5(13)(k) demands that the candidates in the tie shall be subjected to a repeat of the voting process using fresh ballot papers until the vote causes a split to determine the winner.

"After that, the Speaker takes the oath and assumes office. The new Speaker then presides over the election of the Deputy Speaker, which follows almost the same process," Mr Chemonges said.

The elected speaker will take over the reins of the presiding officer from the Chief Justice. This, therefore, means the elected Speaker will oversee the process of electing his or her deputy this afternoon.

Rule 5(18) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament states: "The oath of Speaker or Deputy Speaker shall be administered by the President or a person authorized by the President."

Upon taking the oath, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker will then be presented with the Mace, the Uganda flag, the Coat of Arms, the Speaker's robes, the Constitution of Uganda, and the Rules of Procedure of Parliament.

Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure dictates that "where one person is nominated, he or she shall be declared elected and conducted to the Speaker's Chair."

528
MPs ELIGIBLE
TO VOTE