

## THE WHIPS

### WHAT IS A WHIP

In Parliamentary language the term applies to:

A member of a particular party in Parliament whose duty is to secure the attendance of members of that party, for the purpose of voting and all other necessary occasions where attendance of the members is important.

Supplier of information to members of his/her party on all forthcoming business; he/she writes appeals or circular notices to members informing them of the Parliamentary business which they should attend.

The office of A whip is Parliament tradition originating from the British Parliamentary System. This office is not determined by law but by precedence. A whip is a member of a party whose responsibility is to carry out the functions of a whip on behalf of the party. He/She is elected by the party caucus as Chief whip, which also selects a Deputy Chief whip. The idea of having a Deputy lies in lightening the heavy responsibilities of the Chief whip.

### WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF WHIP?

The functions of the Chief whip can be summarized as follows:

To organize the party in the House, ensuring the maximum practicable attendance of the members and discipline in the House.

Prompting support for party business and how the party should vote on a particular proposal. They influence voting trends if there is a division in the House.

They are tasked with enlightening new members who have been elected at a by-election in the procedures during the swearing - in ceremony.

Whips advise new members about making their maiden speeches, especially allaying anxiety as to when they will be called to present their speech.

They are also instrumental in naming members chosen for various domestic committees, regional bodies and international forums. In fact whips usually put delegations nominated by political parties forward.

Whips are tasked to find back-benchers who should speak at short notice when debate is running dry or alternatively urging a member to be brief where there are far more wishing to take part other than The President of the Senate /The Speaker of Assembly can possibly call.

To maintain a quorum of supporters for party business, instruct members on how to behave towards the business of Parliament and call the members for Caucus meetings. During these Caucus meetings, party members are consulted and whipped into line too. Overallly, the Office of the Whip is important in that it facilitates communication between the Executive and parties in the House. This calls for a highly competent individual with the ability to swiftly convey information between parties thereby ensuring the smooth flow of Parliamentary business.