

Tory MPs Stop Public Submitting Petitions To Government Until At Least September

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UK

7/17/2017

Members of the public are unable to submit any petitions to Parliament this summer thanks to Tory MPs.

Conservative backbenchers are delaying elections to Parliamentary committees until September - including the one which runs the petition website.

No new petitions have been allowed since Parliament broke up for the election on May 3, and all those open at the time were closed.

Mark Hunt, Communications Director at the charity Meningitis Now, is frustrated this vital tool for the public to put pressure on MPs is unavailable.

The charity helped sign up [more than 823,000 people to a petition](#) calling for the meningitis B vaccine to be given to all children [after two-year-old Faye Burdett died just 11 days after contracting the illness](#).

Hunt said: "For us, the e-petition provided an open and transparent process for challenging government thinking around a topical and genuine issue, and whilst the petition didn't succeed in its stated aim, it made the process of democracy more open and transparent.

"Having witnessed and been part of the e-petition process and the way that it gave the general public the chance to express its views, it would seem to be a retrograde step to postpone or deny them this opportunity even in the short term."



 **Petitions**
UK Government and Parliament

 **We're waiting for a new Petitions Committee**
Petitions had to stop because of the recent general election.
After a new Petitions Committee is set up by the House of Commons, petitions will start again.
Find out more on the [Petitions Committee website](#)

[Get involved with the UK Parliament](#)

Parliament

The elections to parliamentary committees are organised by the Tories backbench 1922 Committee - but that body only held its own vote today on who should fill the officer positions needed to run the elections.

Should the Tories wish, they could hold the parliamentary committee elections before the summer recess - which

starts on Thursday - but it has been reported the whips office are delaying the process.

Tory MP Julian Lewis - re-elected chair of the Defence Select Committee - last week resorted to asking Commons Speaker John Bercow for his help in moving the process along.

Bercow replied: "If memory serves me correctly, what the officers of the 1922 Committee usually do in respect of their party—perhaps something similar operates in other parties—is simply oversee the count.

"Whether the officers of the 1922 Committee have or have not been elected is not a matter for the Chair—that is a party matter—but, frankly, overseeing the count does not require Einsteinian qualities; it is a pretty prosaic task.

"I do not think it would be right to say that the resources of the House could be made available in what is essentially the oversight of a matter undertaken by parties.

"However, it would seem to be perfectly feasible, if my colleagues, the Deputy Speakers, were so willing, that they and I could volunteer our services to oversee the count, if the House thought that that would be helpful.

"My basic point stands: do colleagues want these Committees to be set up sooner rather than later?

"If they do not, that is a pity, but if they do, those of us who are of good will and can be relied upon to conduct the count perfectly fairly, would, I suspect, be very happy to offer our services.

Labour MP Helen Jones was re-elected chairman of the Petitions Committee last week, and spoke of her frustration that the system is in limbo.

She said: "The petitions site had to close when Parliament stopped unexpectedly for the general election. I know that this has been frustrating for many people.

"The site will open again once the new Petitions Committee is set up, so it's essential that the Committee is established as soon as possible.

"This isn't something that I can control, but I'll be doing everything I can make sure that petitioners don't have to wait longer than is absolutely necessary."

Labour is holding its elections to the committees later this week.

Since the system was launched in 2015, more than 50 petitions have been debated by MPs, including banning Donald Trump from the UK, introducing a sugar tax and accepting more asylum seekers.

If a petition gets 10,000 signatures, the Government will respond. If it gets 100,000, the Petitions Committee considers having a debate in Parliament on the matter.