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THE CONSTITUTION OF FINLAND AND PARLIAMENT'S RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Constitution of Finland

(731/1999, amendments up to 1112/2011 included)

and

Parliament's Rules of Procedure

(40/1999, amendments up to 1272/2010 included)

NB: Unofficial translations

Parliament of Finland
2013

On the cover: The facade of Parliament House

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The 2000 Constitution – Continuity and Strengthened Parliamentarism

"Whereas now that Finland has become an independent, sovereign state, it has become necessary to develop and establish its form of government with new constitutional provisions that while ensuring the Government the necessary strength also expand Parliament's rights and ensure citizens' rights and freedom under law ..."

(Beginning of the preamble to the 1919 Constitution Act, independent Finland's first constitution.)

Constitutions reflect, establish and shape the organization, division of powers and limits of a society's public activities. In addition to the objectives in the enactment stage, constitutions – including those created at turning points – in many ways carry with them a country's history and political culture. The constitution that Finland enacted a year and a half after declaring independence in December 1917 also had long roots in the political history of the region and country. To understand the new republic's constitution – the choices apparent in it – a glance at the historical background is in order.

Brief background

Up to the war that was fought between Sweden and Russia in 1808–1809, Finland was part of the kingdom of Sweden. The country was an integral part of the realm, subject to its laws and administered as part of the kingdom. This essential matter from the viewpoint of political development is not altered by the fact that the Gulf of Bothnia and the population's different linguistic background created a real separation with regard to Finland's position in the kingdom. From this period of Swedish rule, Finnish society inherited a significant tradition from the viewpoint of later political development.

As essential elements of this tradition, the country had a free peasantry and the Diet of the Four Estates had a recognized position particularly in enacting legislation. Another important element was that the country had a concept that had already been established in the 18th century of the need for special laws concerning supreme rule and the position of the Estates and the "constitutional" position of such laws. From the viewpoint of Finland's future administration and position, concretely significant was the state of the country's legislation at the end of the period of Swedish rule. In 1734 Sweden had adopted a legal code that covered all other matters besides the

position of the ruler, the order of succession and the Estates. Constitutional laws in force were the 1772 Form of Government and the 1789 Act of Association and Security, which supplemented it. These laws gave the ruler a very strong position.

In 1808–1809 Russia and Sweden waged war in Finland – as a side theatre to the conflict between Napoleon and England – and as a result Sweden lost Finland to Russia. Finland was not made an integral part of the Russian Empire but was annexed as a grand duchy, to be governed on the basis of its own laws with the emperor as ruler. The reasons for giving such an autonomous position to a conquered land were political, but the arrangement was no doubt influenced by the fact that the above–mentioned constitutional laws in force in the country gave the ruler broad powers. These constitutional laws from the period of Swedish rule, enacted in 1772 and 1789, remained in force in Finland up to independence – formally until the enactment of the 1919 Constitution Act.

The period during which Finland was a grand duchy in the Russian Empire (1809–1917) is usually referred to in Finland as the period of autonomy. In the imperial capital's willingness to observe Finland's own constitutional laws and laws in general, there were different stages. Generally speaking, however, constitutional laws were respected during the period of autonomy, and authorities observed the country's own laws. The period of autonomy was a very important period from the viewpoint of the country's social and economic development, the development of public institutions and culture and the formation of a national identity. Here, however, it should suffice to mention a few matters in development related to the country's constitutional laws.

Political preconditions for changing constitutional laws dating from the period of Swedish rule were not created during the period of autonomy. Two constitutional laws concerning the country's legislature were nevertheless enacted. The 1869 Diet Act – the first actual Finnish constitutional law – was still based on representation of the four Estates. In a single leap Finland made the transition from this outdated and undemocratic system to a very democratic representative body when a new Parliament Act calling for a unicameral Parliament elected for three years and based on equal and universal suffrage was enacted in 1906 – while Russia was in a weakened state as a result of its defeat at the hands of Japan and a general strike. The radical nature of this reform is also demonstrated by the fact that Finnish women became the first in the world to receive both the right to vote and the right to stand for election and that 19 women were elected to the 200–seat Parliament when the first elections were held in 1907. Despite its democratic features the new political system did not change the position of the ruler, which in the grand duchy was according to the old constitutional laws dating from the period of Swedish rule. All the same the new and well recognized democratic nature of the Parliament still strengthened its role significantly. What was essential was that in Finland the emperor was not an absolute ruler as in Russia, but a constitutional monarch.

Independent Finland's constitutional laws

When Finland gained independence in 1917, in addition to a political break from Russia this signified an institutional break from the empire's bureaucratic machinery and the forms in which the monarch had acted as the country's ruler. Preparing a new constitution was largely also about continuity, however. The features of the "starting situation" can briefly be described as follows.

A new constitutional law that was considered quite democratic – the 1906 Parliament Act – was in force regarding the legislative body, its formation and activities. The powers of the executive and the role of representation were set out in two old constitutional laws dating from 1772 and 1789, which gave the ruler broad powers. The ruler's representative in the country was the governor general. Concrete administration was directed by the Imperial Senate, which was dependent on the ruler. Laws were drafted by the Senate, they required Parliament's approval, and their final approval or dismissal was up to the ruler. The constitutional laws did not include any real provisions concerning individuals' fundamental rights.

The advent of independence was not regarded as requiring urgent changes in the 1906 Parliament Act. One very significant change should be mentioned, however. The principle of Parliamentarism – the requirement that a member of the government must enjoy the confidence of the legislative body – had not been applied at all to the Imperial Senate, which was dependent on the ruler. The requirement of Parliamentary confidence was added to the Parliament Act in an amendment that was made on the last day of 1917. The main law setting out the form of government was, however, the new Constitution Act that was approved in July 1919. Key solutions that were adopted in the Constitution Act are discussed below.

One key question, which perhaps caused the most disagreement, concerned the arrangement of executive power. There was significant support for both a monarchy and a republic. Interwoven in the question of the form of government was the question of how strong executive power should be. The end result was a republic in which the president had broad independent powers and was tied to cooperation with the government, which was responsible for the country's general administration and accountable to Parliament. In a way the system thus combined two elements that were alien to each other – a Parliamentary form of government and independent presidential power. The different political and historical reasons leading to this model cannot be examined here. Several matters that have often been pointed out can be mentioned briefly, however. The experiences of the brutal civil war that was waged in winter 1918 underlined the significance of strong executive power, and a government dependent on Parliament was not considered a sufficient solution in this respect in all groups. The framers of the new constitution also had experience from the period of autonomy of a "model" in which significant decisions were made by the head of state and in addition there was the Senate, which acted both as the drafter of the ruler's decisions and as the domestic executive body in charge of day–to–day administration. In early 20th century Europe it was not at all unusual for a written constitution to give significant powers to the head of state.

According to the Constitution Act the president submitted the government's legislative proposals to Parliament and decided whether to approve legislation approved by Parliament – or not, in which case legislation was returned to Parliament to be reconsidered after elections. The president issued administrative provisions concerning the implementation of legislation, submitted budget proposals to Parliament, appointed and released the members of the government, could dissolve Parliament and call for new elections, and appointed all high–level civil servants. The president also decided on Finland's relations with foreign states and was the commander–in–chief of the defence forces. Importantly, the president acted on the basis of the government's preparation and could generally exercise power only in government sessions. Taking care of the country's general administration was up to the government and ministries.

With regard to the other content of the Constitution Act, it should be mentioned that it contained a separate chapter on fundamental rights, guaranteeing citizens key liberties quite extensively for the times. It required that the members of the government must enjoy the confidence of Parliament and ensured the independence of courts of law, municipal self–government and the special position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The question of ministers' legal responsibility was left up to separate legislation. Two brief constitutional laws were approved for this purpose in 1922. After Finland gained independence four constitutional laws were thus in force: the 1919 Constitution Act – *primus inter pares* – the two laws that were approved in 1922, and the 1906 Parliament Act, which prescribed rights related to elections and the formation of Parliament, Parliament's organization and Parliament's forms of activities.

Features of constitutional development in the last century

Constitution–level norms can change through both formal amendments to constitutional laws and changes in the way they are applied. From the viewpoint of changes – or the lack of changes – in the way constitutional laws are applied, the most interesting questions again concern the president's independent powers. As will be discussed later in more detail, the president's powers have been substantially reduced from what they originally were under the 1919 Constitution Act. One basic feature of the system that has nevertheless remained unchanged is that the president can make decisions falling within the scope of his or her powers that are contrary to the position taken by the government, unless the Constitution states otherwise. This is still true, although in a substantially narrower framework. We can ask why this is so – why in a system that emphasizes Parliamentarism the president's constitutional powers have never been completely "Parliamentarized", i.e. why as a result of either an amendment to the Constitution or a change in the way it is interpreted has it not been decided that the president can no longer exercise the powers mentioned in the

Constitution contrary to the position taken by the government, which is accountable to Parliament.

Without going into political history, some of the factors that have influenced this can be mentioned here. The new Constitution Act was applied within the framework of the nation's legalistic political culture, and a statement that was made in the 1920s by the respected first President of the Republic, K.J. Ståhlberg, according to which the president is tied to the presence of the members of the government but not to their opinion, gained a canonical position of sorts. Even more importantly, the president's independent exercise of power never challenged the system's Parliamentary features on a broad front; rather, solutions differing from the government's positions remained rare exceptions. Perhaps the most significant factor, however, was the president's role as the leader of foreign policy and especially relations with Finland's eastern neighbour, which took shape and became established in the 1940s–1970s and which the political system's Parliamentary elements did not even strive to challenge.

President Urho Kekkonen's long period in office (1956–1981) signified the strong underlining of the president's role in political life. This led to constitutional amendments in the 1980s and 1990s that reduced the president's role. The number of consecutive terms that a president can serve was limited to two, the right to dissolve Parliament was tied to an initiative put forward by the prime minister, and the significance of the right to veto legislation was weakened. When Finland in the mid–1990s joined the European Economic Area and then the European Union, matters regarding the preparation and implementation of EEA and EU decisions were shifted from the sphere of the president's foreign policy power to the government. With the growth of the EU's significance this shift, which continued in the 2000 Constitution, has meant a very substantial narrowing of the president's position in directing foreign policy. Amendments to the Constitution Act and the Parliament Act concerning the handling of EU matters also included provisions on linking Parliament to the national preparation of Union matters. In practice amendments have gradually led to the activation of Parliament's role more broadly in questions regarding foreign relations.

Some of the amendments that were made to constitutional laws in the last century should still be mentioned. In 1928 the 1906 Parliament Act was replaced by a new Parliament Act, though it did not bring significant reforms to Parliament's position or work. A technical amendment to the Parliament Act that was made in 1954, which extended the electoral term from three to four years, was quite significant in political life. The length of the electoral term has not caused discussion since then. In 1995 the fundamental rights provisions in the Constitution Act were reformed. Of greatest significance in this reform were the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights in the fundamental rights system and the extension of the protection of fundamental rights – with the exception of election and residence rights – to all individuals and not just citizens.

The Constitution that entered into force in 2000

At the end of the century conditions in Finland were quite different from those in the second decade of the century, when the Constitution Act was approved. The need to make changes could have been handled with partial reforms, but some of the special features of the Finnish constitutional system, together with the times, clearly underlined the inadequacy of such an approach. On the one hand constitutional norms had been divided into two broad constitutional laws (ignoring here the two brief constitutional laws that were approved in 1922), sizable changes often required amendments to both the Constitution Act and the Parliament Act, and placing provisions concerning the same matter in two separate Acts made keeping the clarity of constitutional regulation quite difficult. On the other hand the Parliament Act was quite detailed and the precise regulation of procedures and organization at the constitutional level clearly obstructed the development of Parliament's forms of operation.

In the mid–1990s the time was thus ripe. In connection with a partial reform in 1995, the Constitutional Law Committee proposed that the government should start a project to rewrite constitutional laws with the objective of combining them into a new constitution in 2000. Brisk progress was subsequently made in drafting and considering the new legislation, and the new Constitution was finally approved in June 1999 and entered into force on 1 March 2000.

The key outcome of the new Constitution for the Finnish political system can be divided into three things. Over the long term it is important that a quite complicated whole formed by multiple constitutional laws has been replaced by a new Constitution that is uniform, clear and written in understandable language. It is also important that the Constitution has been written in a spirit of strengthening the position of Parliament and the government, which is accountable to it. In this regard key changes were shifting the formation of the government to Parliament and effectively outside the president's sphere of influence and making the submission of government proposals (laws, the budget and proposals concerning international treaties to Parliament) ultimately dependent on the government's position. It is also significant that provisions at the constitutional level concerning Parliament's forms of operation and organization have been substantially lightened and that Parliament's autonomy has been strengthened by shifting the regulation of Parliament's activities to Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The new Constitution has now been in force for over ten years. An Act that was approved in 2011 and entered into force on 1 March 2012 made a number of amendments to the Constitution. These include a provision stating that Finland is a member of the European Union and a provision concerning a citizens' initiative, which at least 50,000 persons with the right to vote can submit to Parliament in a matter concerning legislation. Concretely more significant, however, are certain amendments that, following the line taken in approving the 2000 Constitution, have further strengthened the position of Parliament and the government, which is accountable to it. Government proposals – concerning laws, the budget or international treaties – and government reports are submitted to Parliament by

the government instead of the president, as was the case before. The Constitution now expressly states that Finland is represented at European Union summits by the prime minister. The president's possibility to deviate from the position taken by the government in a decision has now been restricted mainly in issues regarding the direction of foreign policy so that, if the president does not approve the government's proposal, the government can ask for Parliament to decide the matter.

Parliament's Rules of Procedure

The shift from the Diet of the Estates to a unicameral Parliament as a result of the 1906 Parliament Act also signified the harmonization of the more detailed regulation of forms of operation. According to the Parliament Act, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council Parliament by a majority vote approved rules that were needed in arranging Parliamentary work. Rules of Procedure were approved in 1907. In connection with the enactment of the 1928 Parliament Act, new Rules of Procedure were also prepared and approved, and these entered into force together with the new Parliament Act. The content of the Rules of Procedure can be described as technical in nature. One significant matter worth mentioning is a final provision according to which the Rules of Procedure had to be followed until Parliament decided to change or supplement them. This provision meant that Parliament even by a unanimous vote could not deviate from the Rules of Procedure, but first – by a majority decision – had to change the relevant part of the Rules of Procedure.

The relinquishing of a separate Parliament Act in the 2000 constitutional reform and the shift to a unified Constitution signified, as was pointed out earlier, a substantial lightening of the constitutional–level regulation of Parliament's activities. Such a change necessarily meant an increase in the significance of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, since matters that had previously been prescribed in the Parliament Act were left up to regulation in the Rules of Procedure. The increase in the significance of the Rules of Procedure is also visible in the fact that, as expressly stipulated in the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure are now adopted by Parliament following the procedure for the consideration of legislative proposals and published in the Statute Book of Finland. The reference to the procedure for the consideration of legislative proposals concerns only the procedure in Parliament and executive organs play thus no role in preparing or implementing decisions concerning the Rules of Procedure. Proposals concerning the Rules of Procedure are prepared by the Speaker's Council, and proposals are prepared for the plenary session by the Constitutional Law Committee. The current Rules of Procedure entered into force together with the new Constitution in 2000.

Mikael Hidén

The Constitution of Finland

11 June 1999

(731/1999, amendments up to 1112/2011 included)

NB: Unofficial translation

Ministry of Justice, Finland

CHAPTER 1

FUNDAMENTAL PROVISIONS

Section 1
The Constitution

Finland is a sovereign republic.

The constitution of Finland is established in this constitutional act. The constitution shall guarantee the inviolability of human dignity and the freedom and rights of the individual and promote justice in society.

Finland participates in international co-operation for the protection of peace and human rights and for the development of society. Finland is a Member State of the European Union (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012).

Section 2
Democracy and the rule of law

The powers of the State in Finland are vested in the people, who are represented by the Parliament.

Democracy entails the right of the individual to participate in and influence the development of society and his or her living conditions.

The exercise of public powers shall be based on an Act. In all public activity, the law shall be strictly observed.

Section 3
Parliamentarism and the separation of powers

The legislative powers are exercised by the Parliament, which shall also decide on State finances.

The governmental powers are exercised by the President of the Republic and the Government, the members of which shall have the confidence of the Parliament.

The judicial powers are exercised by independent courts of law, with the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court as the highest instances.

Section 4
The Territory of Finland

The territory of Finland is indivisible. The national borders can not be altered without the consent of the Parliament.

Section 5
Finnish citizenship

A child acquires Finnish citizenship at birth and through the citizenship of its parents, as provided in more detail by an Act. Citizenship may also be granted upon notification or application, subject to the criteria determined by an Act.

No one can be divested of or released from his or her Finnish citizenship except on grounds determined by an Act and only if he or she is in possession of or will be granted the citizenship of another State.

CHAPTER 2

BASIC RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

Section 6
Equality

Everyone is equal before the law.

No one shall, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the ground of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns his or her person.

Children shall be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.

Equality of the sexes is promoted in societal activity and working life, especially in the determination of pay and the other terms of employment, as provided in more detail by an Act.

Section 7
The right to life, personal liberty and integrity

Everyone has the right to life, personal liberty, integrity and security.

No one shall be sentenced to death, tortured or otherwise treated in a manner violating human dignity.

The personal integrity of the individual shall not be violated, nor shall anyone be deprived of liberty arbitrarily or without a reason prescribed by an Act. A penalty involving deprivation of liberty may be imposed only by a court of law. The lawfulness of other cases of deprivation of liberty may be submitted for review by a court of law. The rights of individuals deprived of their liberty shall be guaranteed by an Act.

Section 8
The principle of legality in criminal cases

No one shall be found guilty of a criminal offence or be sentenced to a punishment on the basis of a deed, which has not been determined punishable by an Act at the time of its commission. The penalty imposed for an offence shall not be more severe than that provided by an Act at the time of commission of the offence.

Section 9
Freedom of movement

Finnish citizens and foreigners legally resident in Finland have the right to freely move within the country and to choose their place of residence.

Everyone has the right to leave the country. Limitations on this right may be provided by an Act, if they are necessary for the purpose of safeguarding legal proceedings or for the enforcement of penalties or for the fulfillment of the duty of national defence.

Finnish citizens shall not be prevented from entering Finland or deported or extradited or transferred from Finland to another country against their will. However, it may be laid down by an Act that due to a criminal act, for the purpose of legal proceedings, or in order to enforce a decision concerning the custody or care of a child, a Finnish citizen can be extradited or transferred to a country in which his or her human rights and legal protection are guaranteed. (802/2007, entry into force 1.10.2007)

The right of foreigners to enter Finland and to remain in the country is regulated by an Act. A foreigner shall not be deported, extradited or returned to another country, if in consequence he or she is in danger of a death sentence, torture or other treatment violating human dignity.

Section 10
The right to privacy

Everyone's private life, honour and the sanctity of the home are guaranteed. More detailed provisions on the protection of personal data are laid down by an Act.

The secrecy of correspondence, telephony and other confidential communications is inviolable.

Measures encroaching on the sanctity of the home, and which are necessary for the purpose of guaranteeing basic rights and liberties or for the investigation of crime, may be laid down by an Act. In addition, provisions concerning limitations of the secrecy of communications which are necessary in the investigation of crimes that jeopardise the security of the individual or society or the sanctity of the home, at trials and security checks, as well as during the deprivation of liberty may be laid down by an Act.

Section 11
Freedom of religion and conscience

Everyone has the freedom of religion and conscience.

Freedom of religion and conscience entails the right to profess and practice a religion, the right to express one's convictions and the right to be a member of or decline to be a member of a religious community. No one is under the obligation, against his or her conscience, to participate in the practice of a religion.

Section 12
Freedom of expression and right of access to information

Everyone has the freedom of expression. Freedom of expression entails the right to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone. More detailed provisions on the exercise of the freedom of expression are laid down by an Act. Provisions on restrictions relating to pictorial programmes that are necessary for the protection of children may be laid down by an Act.

Documents and recordings in the possession of the authorities are public, unless their publication has for compelling reasons been specifically restricted by an Act. Everyone has the right of access to public documents and recordings.

Section 13
Freedom of assembly and freedom of association

Everyone has the right to arrange meetings and demonstrations without a permit, as well as the right to participate in them.

Everyone has the freedom of association. Freedom of association entails the right to form an association without a permit, to be a member or not to be a member of an association and to participate in the activities of an association. The freedom to form trade unions and to organise in order to look after other interests is likewise guaranteed.

More detailed provisions on the exercise of the freedom of assembly and the freedom of association are laid down by an Act.

Section 14
Electoral and participatory rights

Every Finnish citizen who has reached eighteen years of age has the right to vote in national elections and referendums. Specific provisions in this Constitution shall govern the eligibility to stand for office in national elections.

Every Finnish citizen and every other citizen of the European Union resident in Finland, having attained eighteen years of age, has the right to vote in the European Parliamentary elections, as provided by an Act. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012).

Every Finnish citizen and every foreigner permanently resident in Finland, having attained eighteen years of age, has the right to vote in municipal elections and municipal referendums, as provided by an Act. Provisions on the right to otherwise participate in municipal government are laid down by an Act.

The public authorities shall promote the opportunities for the individual to participate in societal activity and to influence the decisions that concern him or her.

Section 15
Protection of property

The property of everyone is protected.

Provisions on the expropriation of property, for public needs and against full compensation, are laid down by an Act.

Section 16
Educational rights

Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. Provisions on the duty to receive education are laid down by an Act.

The public authorities shall, as provided in more detail by an Act, guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship.

The freedom of science, the arts and higher education is guaranteed.

Section 17
Right to one's language and culture

The national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.

The right of everyone to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts of law and other authorities, and to receive official documents in that language, shall be guaranteed by an Act. The public authorities shall provide for the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations of the country on an equal basis.

The Sami, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Provisions on the right of the Sami to use the Sami language before the authorities are laid down by an Act. The rights of persons using sign language and of persons in need of interpretation or translation aid owing to disability shall be guaranteed by an Act.

Section 18
The right to work and the freedom to engage in commercial activity

Everyone has the right, as provided by an Act, to earn his or her livelihood by the employment, occupation or commercial activity of his or her choice. The public authorities shall take responsibility for the protection of the labour force.

The public authorities shall promote employment and work towards guaranteeing for everyone the right to work. Provisions on the right to receive training that promotes employability are laid down by an Act.

No one shall be dismissed from employment without a lawful reason.

Section 19
The right to social security

Those who cannot obtain the means necessary for a life of dignity have the right to receive indispensable subsistence and care.

Everyone shall be guaranteed by an Act the right to basic subsistence in the event of unemployment, illness, and disability and during old age as well as at the birth of a child or the loss of a provider.

The public authorities shall guarantee for everyone, as provided in more detail by an Act, adequate social, health and medical services and promote the health of the population. Moreover, the public authorities shall support families and others responsible for providing for children so that they have the ability to ensure the wellbeing and personal development of the children.

The public authorities shall promote the right of everyone to housing and the opportunity to arrange their own housing.

Section 20
Responsibility for the environment

Nature and its biodiversity, the environment and the national heritage are the responsibility of everyone.

The public authorities shall endeavour to guarantee for everyone the right to a healthy environment and for everyone the possibility to influence the decisions that concern their own living environment.

Section 21
Protection under the law

Everyone has the right to have his or her case dealt with appropriately and without undue delay by a legally competent court of law or other authority, as well as to have a decision pertaining to his or her rights or obligations reviewed by a court of law or other independent organ for the administration of justice.

Provisions concerning the publicity of proceedings, the right to be heard, the right to receive a reasoned decision and the right of appeal, as well as the other guarantees of a fair trial and good governance shall be laid down by an Act.

Section 22
Protection of basic rights and liberties

The public authorities shall guarantee the observance of basic rights and liberties and human rights.

Section 23
Basic rights and liberties in situations of emergency (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012).

Such provisional exceptions to basic rights and liberties that are compatible with Finland's international human rights obligations and that are deemed necessary in the case of an armed attack against Finland or in the event of other situations of emergency, as provided by an Act, which pose a serious threat to the nation may be provided by an Act or by a Government Decree to be issued on the basis of authorisation given in an Act for a special reason and subject to a precisely circumscribed scope of application. The grounds for provisional exceptions shall be laid down by an Act, however.

Government Decrees concerning provisional exceptions shall without delay be submitted to the Parliament for consideration. The Parliament may decide on the validity of the Decrees.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARLIAMENT AND THE REPRESENTATIVES

Section 24
Composition and term of the Parliament

The Parliament is unicameral. It consists of two hundred Representatives, who are elected for a term of four years at a time.

The term of the Parliament begins when the results of the parliamentary elections have been confirmed and lasts untilthe next parliamentary elections have been held.

Section 25
Parliamentary elections

The Representatives shall be elected by a direct, proportional and secret vote. Every citizen who has the right to vote has equal suffrage in the elections.

For the parliamentary elections, the country shall be divided, on the basis of the number of Finnish citizens, into atleast twelve and at most eighteen constituencies. In addition, the Åland Islands shall form their own constituency forthe election of one Representative.

The right to nominate candidates in parliamentary elections belongs to registered political parties and, as provided byan Act, to groups of persons who have the right to vote.

More detailed provisions on the timing of parliamentary elections, the nomination of candidates, the conduct of theelections and the constituencies are laid down by an Act.

Section 26
Extraordinary parliamentary elections

The President of the Republic, in response to a reasoned proposal by the Prime Minister, and after having heard theparliamentary groups, and while the Parliament is in session, may order that extraordinary parliamentary electionsshall be held. Thereafter, the Parliament shall decide the time when it concludes its work before the elections.

After extraordinary parliamentary elections, the Parliament shall convene in session on the first day of the calendarmonth that begins ninety days after the election order, unless the Parliament has decided on an earlier date ofconvocation.

Section 27
Eligibility and qualifications for the office of Representative

Everyone with the right to vote and who is not under guardianship can be a candidate in parliamentary elections.

A person holding military office cannot, however, be elected as a Representative.

The Chancellor of Justice of the Government, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, a Justice of the Supreme Court or the Supreme Administrative Court, and the Prosecutor-General cannot serve as representatives. If a Representative is elected President of the Republic or appointed or elected to one of the aforesaid offices, he or she shall cease to be a Representative from the date of appointment or election. The office of a Representative shall cease also if the Representative forfeits his or her eligibility.

Section 28
Suspension of the office of a Representative and release or dismissal from office

The office of a Representative is suspended for the time during which the Representative is serving as a Member of the European Parliament. During that time a deputy of the Representative shall replace the Representative. The tenure of office of a Representative is suspended also for the duration of military service.

The Parliament may grant a release from office for a Representative upon his or her request if it deems there is an acceptable reason for granting such release.

If a Representative essentially and repeatedly neglects his or her duties as a Representative, the Parliament may, after having obtained the opinion of the Constitutional Law Committee, dismiss him or her from office permanently or for a given period by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

If a person elected as a Representative has been sentenced by an enforceable judgement to imprisonment for a deliberate crime or to a punishment for an electoral offence, the Parliament may inquire whether he or she can be allowed to continue to serve as a Representative. If the offence is such that the accused does not command the trust and respect necessary for the office of a Representative, the Parliament may, after having obtained the opinion of the Constitutional Law Committee, declare the office of the Representative terminated by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

Section 29
Independence of Representatives

A Representative is obliged to follow justice and truth in his or her office. He or she shall abide by the Constitution and no other orders are binding on him or her.

Section 30
Parliamentary immunity

A Representative shall not be prevented from carrying out his or her duties as a Representative.

A Representative shall not be charged in a court of law nor be deprived of liberty owing to opinions expressed by the Representative in the Parliament or owing to conduct in the consideration of a matter, unless the Parliament has consented to the same by a decision supported by at least five sixths of the votes cast.

If a Representative has been arrested or detained, the Speaker of the Parliament shall be immediately notified of this. A Representative shall not be arrested or detained before the commencement of a trial without the consent of the Parliament, unless he or she is for substantial reasons suspected of having committed a crime for which the minimum punishment is imprisonment for at least six months.

Section 31
Freedom of speech and conduct of Representatives

Each Representative has the right to speak freely in the Parliament on all matters under consideration and on how they are dealt with.

A Representative shall conduct himself or herself with dignity and decorum, and not behave offensively to another person. If a Representative is in breach of such conduct, the Speaker may point this out or prohibit the Representative from continuing to speak. The Parliament may caution a Representative who has repeatedly breached the order or suspend him or her from sessions of the Parliament for a maximum of two weeks.

Section 32
Conflict of interest

A Representative is disqualified from consideration of and decision-making in any matter that concerns him or her personally. However, he or she may participate in the debate on such matters in a plenary session of the Parliament. In addition, a Representative shall be disqualified from the consideration in a Committee of a matter pertaining to the inspection of his or her official duties.

CHAPTER 4

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY

Section 33
Parliamentary session

The Parliament convenes in session every year at a time decided by the Parliament, after which the President of the Republic shall declare the parliamentary session open.

The parliamentary session continues until the time when the Parliament convenes for the following parliamentary session. However, the last parliamentary session of an electoral term shall continue until the Parliament decides to conclude its work. Thereafter, the President shall declare the work of the Parliament finished for that electoral term. However, the Speaker of the Parliament has the right to reconvene the Parliament, when necessary, before new elections have been held.

Section 34
The Speaker and the Speaker's Council

The Parliament elects from among its members a Speaker and two Deputy Speakers for each parliamentary session.

The election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers is conducted by secret ballot. The Representative receiving more than one half of the votes cast is deemed elected. If no one has received the required majority of the votes cast in the first two ballots, the Representative receiving the most votes in the third ballot is deemed elected.

The Speaker, the Deputy Speakers and the chairpersons of parliamentary Committees form the Speaker's Council. The Speaker's Council issues instructions on the organisation of parliamentary work and decides, as specifically provided in this Constitution or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, on the procedures to be followed in the consideration of matters in the Parliament. The Speaker's Council may put forward initiatives for the enactment or amendment of Acts governing parliamentary officials or the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, as well as proposals for other provisions governing the work of the Parliament.

Section 35
Committees of the Parliament

For each electoral term, the Parliament appoints the Grand Committee, the Constitutional Law Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee, the Audit Committee and the other standing Committees provided in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure. In addition, the Parliament appoints Committees ad hoc for the preparation of, or inquiry into, a given matter. (596/2007, entry into force 1.6.2007)

The Grand Committee shall have twenty-five members. The Constitutional Law Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Finance Committee shall have at least seventeen members each. The other standing Committees shall have at least eleven members each. In addition, each Committee shall have the necessary number of alternate members.

A Committee has a quorum when at least two thirds of its members are present, unless a higher quorum has been specifically required for a given matter.

Section 36
Other bodies and delegates to be elected by the Parliament

The Parliament elects the trustees for monitoring the administration and operations of the Social Insurance Institution, as provided in more detail by an Act.

The Parliament elects the other necessary bodies, as provided in this Constitution, in another Act or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The election of the parliamentary delegates in a body established under an international agreement or in another international body shall be governed by an Act or by the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Section 37
Election of the parliamentary organs

The Committees and the other parliamentary organs are appointed during the first parliamentary session of an electoral term for the duration of that term, unless otherwise provided in this Constitution, or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure or in the specific rules of procedure laid down by the Parliament for a given parliamentary organ. However, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, the Parliament may agree to the reappointment of a committee or organ during the electoral term.

The Parliament elects the members of the Committees and the other organs. Unless the election is by consensus, it is held by proportional vote.

Section 38
Parliamentary Ombudsman

The Parliament appoints for a term of four years a Parliamentary Ombudsman and two Deputy Ombudsmen, who shall have outstanding knowledge of law. A Deputy Ombudsman may have a substitute as provided in more detail by an Act. The provisions on the Ombudsman apply, in so far as appropriate, to a Deputy Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman's substitute. (802/2007, entry into force 1.10.2007)

The Parliament, after having obtained the opinion of the Constitutional Law Committee, may, for extremely weighty reasons, dismiss the Ombudsman before the end of his or her term by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

Section 39
How matters are initiated for consideration in the Parliament

Matters are initiated for consideration in the Parliament on the basis of a Government proposal or a motion submitted by the Government or a motion submitted by a Representative, or in another manner provided in this Constitution or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

Representatives may put forward:

1) Legislative motions, containing a proposal for the enactment of an Act;

2) Budgetary motions, containing a proposal for an appropriation to be included in the budget or a supplementary budget, or for another budgetary decision; and

3) Petitionary motions, containing a proposal for the drafting of a law or for taking other measures.

Section 40
Preparation of matters

Government proposals, motions by Representatives, reports submitted to the Parliament and other matters, as provided for in this Constitution or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, shall be prepared in Committees before their final consideration in a plenary session of the Parliament.

Section 41
Consideration of matters in plenary session

A legislative proposal and a proposal on the Parliament's Rules of Procedure are considered in plenary session in two readings. However, a legislative proposal left in abeyance and an Act left unconfirmed are considered in one reading only. Other matters are considered in the plenary session in a single reading.

Decisions in plenary session are made by a simple majority of the votes cast, unless specifically otherwise provided in this Constitution. In the event of a tie, the decision is made by drawing lots, except where a qualified majority is required for the adoption of a motion. More detailed provisions on voting procedure are laid down in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Section 42
Duties of the Speaker in a plenary session

The Speaker convenes the plenary sessions, presents the matters on the agenda, oversees the debate and ensures that the Constitution is complied with in the consideration of matters in plenary session.

The Speaker shall not refuse to include a matter on the agenda or a motion in a vote, unless he or she considers it to be contrary to the Constitution, another Act or a prior decision of the Parliament. In this event, the Speaker shall explain the reasons for the refusal. If the Parliament does not accept the decision of the Speaker, the matter is referred to the Constitutional Law Committee, which shall without delay rule whether the action of the Speaker has been correct.

The Speaker does not participate in debates or votes in plenary sessions.

Section 43
Interpellations

A group of at least twenty Representatives may address an interpellation to the Government or to an individual Minister on a matter within the competence of the Government or the Minister. The interpellation shall be replied to in a plenary session of the Parliament within fifteen days of the date when the interpellation was brought to the attention of the Government.

At the conclusion of the consideration of the interpellation, a vote of confidence shall be taken by the Parliament, provided that a motion of no confidence in the Government or the Minister has been put forward during the debate.

Section 44
Statements and reports of the Government

The Government may present a statement or report to the Parliament on a matter relating to the governance of the country or its international relations.

At the conclusion of the consideration of a statement, a vote of confidence in the Government or a Minister shall be taken, provided that a motion of no confidence in the Government or the Minister has been put forward during the debate. No decision on confidence in the Government or its Member shall be made in the consideration of a report.

Section 45
Questions, announcements and debates

Each Representative has the right to address questions to a Minister on matters within the Minister's competence. Provisions on the questions and the answers are laid down in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The Prime Minister or a Minister designated by the Prime Minister may present an announcement to the Parliament on any topical issue.

A debate on any topical issue may be held in a plenary session, as provided in more detail in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The Parliament makes no decisions on matters referred to in this section. In the consideration of these matters, exceptions may be made to the provision in section 31(1) on the right to speak.

Section 46
Reports to be submitted to the Parliament

The Government shall submit to the Parliament annual reports on governmental activities and on the measures undertaken in response to parliamentary decisions, as well as annual reports on State finances and adherence to the budget. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

Other reports shall be submitted to the Parliament, as provided in this Constitution, or in another Act or in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Section 47
Parliamentary right to receive information

The Parliament has the right to receive from the Government the information it needs in the consideration of matters. The appropriate Minister shall ensure that Committees and other parliamentary organs receive without delay the necessary documents and other information in the possession of the authorities.

A Committee has the right to receive information from the Government or the appropriate Ministry on a matter within its competence. The Committee may issue a statement to the Government or the Ministry on the basis of the information.

A Representative has the right to information which is in the possession of authorities and which is necessary for the performance of the duties of the Representative, in so far as the information is not secret or it does not pertain to a State budget proposal under preparation.

In addition, the right of the Parliament to information on international affairs is governed by the provisions included elsewhere in this Constitution.

Section 48
Right of attendance of Ministers, the Ombudsman and the Chancellor of Justice

Minister has the right to attend and to participate in debates in plenary sessions of the Parliament even if the Minister is not a Representative. A Minister may not be a member of a Committee of the Parliament. When performing the duties of the President of the Republic under section 59, a Minister may not participate in parliamentary work.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Chancellor of Justice of the Government may attend and participate in debates in plenary sessions of the Parliament when their reports or other matters taken up on their initiative are being considered.

Section 49
Continuity of consideration

Consideration of matters unfinished in one parliamentary session continues in the following parliamentary session, unless parliamentary elections have been held in the meantime. When necessary, the consideration of an international matter pending in the Parliament may continue in the parliamentary session following parliamentary elections. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

Section 50
Public nature of parliamentary activity

The plenary sessions of the Parliament are open to the public, unless the Parliament for a very weighty reason decides otherwise for a given matter. The Parliament publishes its papers, as provided in more detail in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The meetings of Committees are not open to the public. However, a Committee may open its meeting to the public during the time when it is gathering information for the preparation of a matter. The minutes and other related documents of the Committees shall be made available to the public, unless a Committee for a compelling reason decides otherwise for a given matter.

The members of a Committee shall observe the level of confidentiality considered necessary by the Committee. However, when considering matters relating to Finland's international relations or European Union affairs, the members of a Committee shall observe the level of confidentiality considered necessary by the Foreign Affairs Committee or the Grand Committee after having heard the opinion of the Government.

Section 51
Languages used in parliamentary work

The Finnish or Swedish languages are used in parliamentary work.

The Government and the other authorities shall submit the documents necessary for a matter to be taken up for consideration in the Parliament both in Finnish and Swedish. Likewise, the parliamentary replies and communications, the reports and statements of the Committees, as well as the written proposals of the Speaker's Council, shall be written in Finnish and Swedish.

Section 52
Parliament's Rules of Procedure and other instructions and rules of procedure

More detailed provisions on the procedures to be followed in the Parliament, as well as on parliamentary organs and parliamentary work are issued in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure. The Parliament's Rules of Procedure shall be adopted in plenary session following the procedure for the consideration of legislative proposals and published in the Statutes of Finland.

The Parliament may issue instructions for the detailed arrangement of internal administration, for elections to be carried out by the Parliament and for other parliamentary work. In addition, the Parliament may issue rules of procedure for the organs appointed by it.

Section 53
Referendum and citizens' initiative (new title, 1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

The decision to organise a consultative referendum is made by an Act, which shall contain provisions on the time of the referendum and on the choices to be presented to the voters.

Provisions concerning the conduct of a referendum are laid down by an Act.

At least fifty thousand Finnish citizens entitled to vote have the right to submit an initiative for the enactment of an Act to the Parliament, as provided by an Act. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

CHAPTER 5

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE GOVERNMENT

Section 54
Election of the President of the Republic

The President of the Republic is elected by a direct vote for a term of six years. The President shall be a native-born Finnish citizen. The same person may be elected President for no more than two consecutive terms of office.

The candidate who receives more than half of the votes cast in the election shall be elected President. If none of the candidates has received a majority of the votes cast, a new election shall be held between the two candidates who have received most votes. In the new election, the candidate receiving the most votes is elected President. If only one presidential candidate has been nominated, he or she is appointed President without an election.

The right to nominate a candidate in the election for President is held by any registered political party from whose candidate list at least one Representative was elected to the Parliament in the most recent parliamentary elections, as well as by any group of twenty thousand persons who have the right to vote. The time of the election and the procedure in the election of a President are laid down by an Act.

Section 55
The presidential term

The President of the Republic assumes office on the first day of the calendar month following his or her election into office.

The term of the President ends when the President elected in the next election assumes office.

If the President dies or if the Government declares that the President is permanently unable to carry out the duties of the presidency, a new President shall be elected as soon as possible.

Section 56
Solemn affirmation of the President

When the President of the Republic assumes office, he or she shall make the following solemn affirmation before the Parliament:

"I,– –, elected by the people of Finland as the President of the Republic, hereby affirm that in my presidential duties I shall sincerely and conscientiously observe the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, and to the best of my ability promote the wellbeing of the people of Finland."

Section 57
Duties of the President

The President of the Republic carries out the duties stated in this Constitution or specifically stated in another Act.

Section 58
Decisions of the President

The President of the Republic makes decisions in Government on the basis of motions proposed by the Government.

If the President does not make the decision in accordance with the motion proposed by the Government, the matter is returned to the Government for preparation. In such a case, in matters other than those concerning confirmation of an Act or appointment to an office or position, the Government may present to the Parliament a report on the matter. Thereafter, the matter will be decided in accordance with the position adopted by the Parliament on the basis of the report, if this is proposed by the Government. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

Notwithstanding the provision in paragraph (1), the President makes decisions on the following matters without a motion from the Government:

1) The appointment of the Government or a Minister, as well as the acceptance of the resignation of the Government or a Minister;
2) The issuance of an order concerning extraordinary parliamentary elections;
3) Presidential pardons and other matters, as specifically laid down by Acts, concerning private individuals or matters not requiring consideration in a plenary meeting of the Government; and
4) Matters referred to in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands, other than those relating to the finances of the Åland Islands.

The appropriate Minister presents matters to the President. However, the appropriate government rapporteur presents a proposal concerning the alteration of the composition of the Government, where this concerns the entire Government.

The President makes decisions on matters relating to military orders in conjunction with a Minister, as provided for in more detail by an Act. The President makes decisions on military appointments and matters pertaining to the Office of the President of the Republic as provided by an Act.

Decisions on Finland's participation in military crisis management are made as specifically provided by an Act. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

Section 59
Substitutes of the President

When the President of the Republic is prevented from carrying out of his or her duties, these are taken over by the Prime Minister or, if the Prime Minister too is incapacitated, by the Minister acting as Deputy Prime Minister.

Section 60
The Government

The Government consists of the Prime Minister and the necessary number of Ministers. The Ministers shall be Finnish citizens known to be honest and competent.

The Ministers are responsible before the Parliament for their actions in office. Every Minister participating in the consideration of a matter in a Government meeting is responsible for any decision made, unless he or she has expressed an objection that has been entered in the minutes.

Section 61
Formation of the Government

The Parliament elects the Prime Minister, who is thereafter appointed to the office by the President of the Republic. The President appoints the other Ministers in accordance with a proposal made by the Prime Minister.

Before the Prime Minister is elected, the groups represented in the Parliament negotiate on the political programme and composition of the Government. On the basis of the outcome of these negotiations, and after having heard the Speaker of the Parliament and the parliamentary groups, the President informs the Parliament of the nominee for Prime Minister. The nominee is elected Prime Minister if his or her election has been supported by more than half of the votes cast in an open vote in the Parliament.

If the nominee does not receive the necessary majority, another nominee shall be put forward in accordance with the same procedure. If the second nominee fails to receive the support of more than half of the votes cast, the election of the Prime Minister shall be held in the Parliament by open vote. In this event, the person receiving the most votes is elected.

The Parliament shall be in session when the Government is being appointed and when the composition of the Government is being essentially altered.

Section 62
Statement on the programme of the Government

The Government shall without delay submit its programme to the Parliament in the form of a statement. The same applies when the composition of the Government is essentially altered.

Section 63
Ministers' personal interests

While holding the office of a Minister, a member of the Government shall not hold any other public office or undertake any other task which may obstruct the performance of his or her ministerial duties or compromise the credibility of his or her actions as a Minister.

A Minister shall, without delay after being appointed, present to the Parliament an account of his or her commercial activities, shareholdings and other significant assets, as well as of any duties outside the official duties of a Minister and of other interests which may be of relevance when his or her performance as a member of the Government is being evaluated.

Section 64
Resignation of the Government or a Minister

The President of the Republic grants, upon request, the resignation of the Government or a Minister. The President may also grant the resignation of a Minister on the proposal of the Prime Minister.

The President shall in any event dismiss the Government or a Minister, if either no longer enjoys the confidence of Parliament, even if no request is made.

If a Minister is elected President of the Republic or the Speaker of Parliament, he or she shall be considered to have resigned the office of Minister as from the day of election.

Section 65
Duties of the Government

The Government has the duties specifically provided in this Constitution, as well as the other governmental and administrative duties which have been assigned to the Government or a Minister or which have not been attributed to the competence of the President of the Republic or another public authority.

The Government implements the decisions of the President.

Section 66
Duties of the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister directs the activities of the Government and oversees the preparation and consideration of matters that come within the mandate of the Government. The Prime Minister chairs the plenary meetings of the Government.

The Prime Minister represents Finland on the European Council. Unless the Government exceptionally decides otherwise, the Prime Minister also represents Finland in other activities of the European Union requiring the participation of the highest level of State.(1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

When the Prime Minister is prevented from attending to his or her duties, the duties are taken over by the Minister designated as Deputy Prime Minister and, when the Deputy Prime Minister is prevented from attending to his other duties, by the most senior ranking Minister.

Section 67
Decision-making in the Government

The matters within the authority of the Government are decided at the plenary meetings of the Government or at the Ministry to which the matter belongs. Matters of wide importance or matters that are significant for reasons of principle, as well as matters whose significance so warrants, are decided by the Government in plenary meeting. More detailed provisions relating to the decision-making powers of the Government are laid down by an Act.

The matters to be considered by the Government shall be prepared in the appropriate Ministry. The Government may

have Committees of Ministers for the preparation of matters.

The plenary meeting of the Government is competent with a quorum of five Ministers present.

Section 68
The Ministries

The Government has the requisite number of Ministries. Each Ministry, within its proper purview, is responsible for the preparation of matters to be considered by the Government and for the appropriate functioning of administration.

Each Ministry is headed by a Minister.

Provisions on the maximum number of Ministries and on the general principles for the establishment of Ministries are laid down by an Act. Provisions on the purviews of the Ministries and on the distribution of matters among them, as well as on the other forms of organisation of the Government are laid down by an Act or by a Decree issued by the Government.

Section 69
The Chancellor of Justice of the Government

Attached to the Government, there is a Chancellor of Justice and a Deputy Chancellor of Justice, who are appointed by the President of the Republic, and who shall have outstanding knowledge of law. In addition, the President appoints a substitute for the Deputy Chancellor of Justice for a term of office not exceeding five years. When the Deputy Chancellor of Justice is prevented from performing his or her duties, the substitute shall take responsibility for them.

The provisions on the Chancellor of Justice apply, in so far as appropriate, to the Deputy Chancellor of Justice and the substitute.

CHAPTER 6

LEGISLATION

Section 70
Legislative initiative

The proposal for the enactment of an Act is initiated in the Parliament through a government proposal submitted by the Government or through a legislative motion submitted by a Representative. Legislative motions can be submitted when the Parliament is in session.

Section 71
Supplementation and withdrawal of a government proposal

A government proposal may be supplemented through a new complementary proposal or it may be withdrawn. A complementary proposal cannot be submitted once the Committee preparing the matter has issued its report.

Section 72
Consideration of a legislative proposal in the Parliament

Once the relevant report of the Committee preparing the matter has been issued, a legislative proposal is considered in two readings in a plenary session of the Parliament.

In the first reading of the legislative proposal, the report of the Committee is presented and debated, and a decision on the contents of the legislative proposal is made. In the second reading, which at the earliest takes place on the third day after the conclusion of the first reading, the Parliament decides whether the legislative proposal is accepted or rejected.

While the first reading is in progress, the legislative proposal may be referred to the Grand Committee for consideration.

More detailed provisions on the consideration of a legislative proposal are laid down in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Section 73
Procedure for constitutional enactment

A proposal on the enactment, amendment or repeal of the Constitution or on the enactment of a limited derogation of the Constitution shall in the second reading be left in abeyance, by a majority of the votes cast, until the first parliamentary session following parliamentary elections. The proposal shall then, once the Committee has issued its report, be adopted without material alterations in one reading in a plenary session by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

However, the proposal may be declared urgent by a decision that has been supported by at least five sixths of the votes cast. In this event, the proposal is not left in abeyance and it can be adopted by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

Section 74
Supervision of constitutionality

The Constitutional Law Committee shall issue statements on the constitutionality of legislative proposals and other matters brought for its consideration, as well as on their relation to international human rights treaties.

Section 75
Special legislation for the Åland Islands

The legislative procedure for the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands and the Act on the Right to Acquire Real Estate in the Åland Islands is governed by the specific provisions in those Acts.

The right of the Legislative Assembly of the Åland Islands to submit proposals and the enactment of Acts passed by the Legislative Assembly of Åland are governed by the provisions in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands.

Section 76
The Church Act

Provisions on the organisation and administration of the Evangelic Lutheran Church are laid down in the Church Act.

The legislative procedure for enactment of the Church Act and the right to submit legislative proposals relating to the Church Act are governed by the specific provisions in that Code.

Section 77
Confirmation of Acts

An Act adopted by the Parliament shall be submitted to the President of the Republic for confirmation. The President shall decide on the confirmation within three months of the submission of the Act. The President may obtain a statement on the Act from the Supreme Court or the Supreme Administrative Court.

If the President does not confirm the Act, it is returned for the consideration of the Parliament. If the Parliament readopts the Act without material alterations, it enters into force without confirmation. If the Parliament does not readopt the Act, it shall be deemed to have lapsed.

Section 78
Consideration of an unconfirmed Act

If the President of the Republic has not confirmed an Act within the time provided, it shall without delay be taken up for reconsideration in the Parliament. Once the pertinent report of the Committee has been issued, the Act shall be adopted without material alterations or rejected. The decision is made in plenary session in one reading with the majority of the votes cast.

Section 79
Publication and entry into force of Acts

If an Act has been enacted in accordance with the procedure for constitutional enactment, this is indicated in the Act.

An Act which has been confirmed or which enters into force without confirmation shall be signed by the President of the Republic and countersigned by the appropriate Minister. The Government shall thereafter without delay publish the Act in the Statutes of Finland.

The Act shall indicate the date when it enters into force. For a special reason, it may be stated in an Act that it is to enter into force by means of a Decree. If the Act has not been published by the date provided for its entry into force, it shall enter into force on the date of its publication.

Acts are enacted and published in Finnish and Swedish.

Section 80
Issuance of Decrees and delegation of legislative powers

The President of the Republic, the Government and a Ministry may issue Decrees on the basis of authorisation given to them in this Constitution or in another Act. However, the principles governing the rights and obligations of private individuals and the other matters that under this Constitution are of a legislative nature shall be governed by Acts. If there is no specific provision on who shall issue a Decree, it is issued by the Government.

Moreover, other authorities may be authorised by an Act to lay down legal rules on given matters, if there is a special reason pertinent to the subject matter and if the material significance of the rules does not require that they be laid down by an Act or a Decree. The scope of such an authorisation shall be precisely circumscribed.

General provisions on the publication and entry into force of Decrees and other legal norms are laid down by an Act.

CHAPTER 7

STATE FINANCES

Section 81
State taxes and charges

The state tax is governed by an Act, which shall contain provisions on the grounds for tax liability and the amount of the tax, as well as on the legal remedies available to the persons or entities liable to taxation.

The general criteria governing the charges to be levied on the official functions, services and other activities of State authorities and on the amount of the charges are laid down by an Act.

Section 82
State debt and guarantees

The incurrence of State debt shall be based on the consent of the Parliament, which indicates the maximum level of new debt or the total level of State debt.

A State security and a State guarantee may be given on the basis of the consent of the Parliament.

Section 83
State budget

The Parliament decides on the State budget for one budgetary year at a time. It is published in the Statute Book of Finland.

The government proposal concerning the State budget and the other proposals pertaining to it shall be submitted to the Parliament well in advance of the next budgetary year. The provisions in section 71 apply to the supplementation and withdrawal of the budget proposal.

A Representative may, on the basis of the budget proposal, through a budgetary motion initiate a proposal for an appropriation or other decision to be included in the State budget.

Once the pertinent report of the Finance Committee of the Parliament has been issued, the budget is adopted in a single reading in a plenary session of the Parliament. More detailed provisions on the consideration of the budget proposal in the Parliament are laid down in the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

If the publication of the State budget is delayed beyond the new budgetary year, the budget proposal of the Government shall be applied as a provisional budget in a manner decided by the Parliament.

Section 84
Contents of the budget

Estimates of the annual revenues and appropriations for the annual expenditures of the State, the reasons for the appropriations and other justifications of the budget shall be included in the State budget. It may be provided by an Act that, for certain revenues and expenditures immediately linked one to another, a revenue forecast or appropriation corresponding to their difference may be included in the budget.

The revenue forecasts in the budget shall cover the appropriations included in it. When covering the appropriations, the surplus or deficit in the State's final accounts may be taken into account, as provided by an Act.

The revenue forecasts or appropriations pertaining to linked revenues and expenditures may be included in the budget for several budgetary years, as provided by an Act.

The general principles on the functions and finances of state enterprises are laid down by an Act. As regards state enterprises, revenue forecasts or appropriations are taken into the budget only in so far as they are provided by an Act. When considering the budget, the Parliament approves the most important service objectives and other objectives of state enterprises.

Section 85
Appropriations in the budget

The appropriations are taken up in the budget as fixed appropriations, estimated appropriations or transferable appropriations. An estimated appropriation may be exceeded and a transferable appropriation transferred to be used in later budgetary years, as provided by an Act. A fixed appropriation and a transferable appropriation shall not be exceeded nor a fixed appropriation transferred, unless this has been allowed by an Act.

An appropriation shall not be moved from one budget item to another, unless this has been allowed in the budget. However, the transfer of an appropriation to a budget item to which its use is closely linked may be allowed by an Act.

An authorisation, limited in its amount and purpose, may be given in the budget for the incurrence of expenditure, the appropriations for which are to be taken from budgets of following budgetary years.

Section 86
Supplementary budget

A proposal of the Government for a supplementary budget shall be submitted to the Parliament, if there is a justified reason for amending the budget.

A Representative may submit budgetary motions for a budget amendment immediately linked to the supplementary budget.

Section 87
Extra-budgetary funds

An extra-budgetary fund may be created by an Act, if the performance of a permanent duty of the State requires this in an essential manner. However, the decision of the Parliament to adopt a legislative proposal for the creation of an extra-budgetary fund or the extension of such a fund or its purpose must be supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast.

Section 88
Legitimate receivables from the State to private parties

Regardless of the budget, everyone has the right to collect his or her legitimate receivables from the State.

Section 89
Approval of the terms of service of State officials and employees

The appropriate Committee of the Parliament accepts, in the name of the Parliament, agreements on the terms of service of State officials and employees, in so far as this requires the consent of the Parliament.

Section 90
Supervision and audit of State finances

The Parliament supervises State finances and compliance with the State budget. For this purpose, the Parliament shall have an Audit Committee. The Audit Committee shall report any significant supervisory findings to the Parliament. (596/2007, entry into force 1.6.2007)

For the purpose of auditing State finances and compliance with the State budget, there shall be an independent National Audit Office in connection with the Parliament. More detailed provisions on the status and duties of the National Audit Office are laid down by an Act.

The Audit Committee and the National Audit Office have the right to receive information needed for the performance of their duties from public authorities and other entities that are subject to their control. (596/2007, entry into force 1.6.2007)

Section 91
The Bank of Finland

The Bank of Finland operates under the guarantee and supervision of the Parliament, as provided by an Act. For the purpose of supervising the operations of the Bank of Finland, the Parliament elects its governors.

The appropriate Committee of the Parliament and the governors have the right to receive the information needed for the supervision of the operations of the Bank of Finland.

Section 92
State assets

Provisions on the competence and procedure in the use of shareholder authority in companies effectively controlled by the State are laid down by an Act. Provisions on the necessity for the consent of the Parliament for the acquisition or relinquishment of effective control by the State in a company are likewise laid down by an Act.

State real estate may be conveyed only with the consent of the Parliament or as provided by an Act.

CHAPTER 8

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Section 93
Competence in the area of foreign policy issues

The foreign policy of Finland is directed by the President of the Republic in co-operation with the Government. However, the Parliament accepts Finland's international obligations and their denouncement and decides on the bringing into force of Finland's international obligations in so far as provided in this Constitution. The President decides on matters of war and peace, with the consent of the Parliament.

The Government is responsible for the national preparation of the decisions to be made in the European Union, and decides on the concomitant Finnish measures, unless the decision requires the approval of the Parliament. The Parliament participates in the national preparation of decisions to be made in the European Union, as provided in this Constitution.

The communication of important foreign policy positions to foreign States and international organisations is the responsibility of the Minister with competence in foreign affairs.

Section 94
Acceptance of international obligations and their denouncement

The acceptance of the Parliament is required for such treaties and other international obligations that contain provisions of a legislative nature, are otherwise significant, or otherwise require approval by the Parliament under this Constitution. The acceptance of the Parliament is required also for the denouncement of such obligations.

A decision concerning the acceptance of an international obligation or the denouncement of it is made by a majority of the votes cast. However, if the proposal concerns the Constitution or an alteration of the national borders, or such transfer of authority to the European Union, an international organisation or an international body that is of significance with regard to Finland's sovereignty, the decision shall be made by at least two thirds of the votes cast. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

An international obligation shall not endanger the democratic foundations of the Constitution.

Section 95
Bringing into force of international obligations

The provisions of treaties and other international obligations, in so far as they are of a legislative nature, are brought into force by an Act. Otherwise, international obligations are brought into force by a Decree. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

A Government bill for the bringing into force of an international obligation is considered in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure pertaining to an Act. However, if the proposal concerns the Constitution or a change to the national territory, or such transfer of authority to the European Union, an international organisation or an international body that is of significance with regard to Finland's sovereignty, the Parliament shall adopt it, without leaving it in abeyance, by a decision supported by at least two thirds of the votes cast. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

An Act may state that for the bringing into force of an international obligation its entry into force is provided by a Decree. General provisions on the publication of treaties and other international obligations are laid down by an Act.

Section 96
Participation of the Parliament in the national preparation of European Union matters

The Parliament considers those proposals for acts, agreements and other measures which are to be decided in the European Union and which otherwise, according to the Constitution, would fall within the competence of the Parliament.

The Government shall, for the determination of the position of the Parliament, communicate a proposal referred to in paragraph (1) to the Parliament by a communication of the Government, without delay, after receiving notice of the proposal. The proposal is considered in the Grand Committee and ordinarily in one or more of the other Committees that issue statements to the Grand Committee. However, the Foreign Affairs Committee considers a proposal pertaining to foreign and security policy. Where necessary, the Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee may issue to the Government a statement on the proposal. In addition, the Speaker's Council may decide that the matter be taken up for debate in plenary session, during which, however, no decision is made by the Parliament.

The Government shall provide the appropriate Committees with information on the consideration of the matter in the European Union. The Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee shall also be informed of the position of the Government on the matter.

Section 97
Parliamentary right to receive information on international affairs

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament shall receive from the Government, upon request and when otherwise necessary, reports of matters pertaining to foreign and security policy. Correspondingly, the Grand Committee of the Parliament shall receive reports on the preparation of other matters in the European Union. The Speaker's Council may decide on a report being taken up for debate in plenary session, during which, however, no decision is made by the Parliament.

The Prime Minister shall provide the Parliament or a Committee with information on matters to be dealt with in a European Council beforehand and without delay after a meeting of the Council. The same applies when amendments are being prepared to the treaties establishing the European Union.

The appropriate Committee of the Parliament may issue a statement to the Government on the basis of the reports or information referred to above.

CHAPTER 9

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Section 98
Courts of law

The Supreme Court, the Courts of Appeal and the District Courts are the general courts of law.

The Supreme Administrative Court and the regional Administrative Courts are the general courts of administrative law.

Provisions on special courts of law, administering justice in specifically defined fields, are laid down by an Act.

Provisional courts shall not be established.

Section 99
Duties of the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court

Justice in civil, commercial and criminal matters is in the final instance administered by the Supreme Court. Justice in administrative matters is in the final instance administered by the Supreme Administrative Court.

The highest courts supervise the administration of justice in their own fields of competence. They may submit proposals to the Government for the initiation of legislative action.

Section 100
Composition of the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court

The Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court are composed of the President of the Court and the requisite number of Justices.

The Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court have a competent quorum when five members are present, unless a different quorum has been laid down by an Act.

Section 101
High Court of Impeachment

The High Court of Impeachment deals with charges brought against a member of the Government, the Chancellor of Justice, the Parliamentary Ombudsman or a member of the Supreme Court or the Supreme Administrative Court for unlawful conduct in office. The Court of Impeachment deals also with the charges referred to in section 113 below.

The High Court of Impeachment consists of the President of the Supreme Court, presiding, and the President of the Supreme Administrative Court, the three most senior-ranking Presidents of the Courts of Appeal and five members elected by the Parliament for a term of four years.

More detailed provisions on the composition, quorum and procedure of the Court of Impeachment are laid down by an Act.

Section 102
Appointment of judges

Tenured judges are appointed by the President of the Republic in accordance with the procedure laid down by an Act. Provisions on the appointment of other judges are laid down by an Act.

Section 103
The right of judges to remain in office

A judge shall not be suspended from office, except by a judgement of a court of law. In addition, a judge shall not be transferred to another office without his or her consent, except where the transfer is a result of a reorganisation of the judiciary.

Provisions on the duty of a judge to resign at the attainment of a given age or after losing capability to work are laid down by an Act.

More detailed provisions on the other terms of service of a judge are laid down by an Act.

Section 104
The prosecutors

The prosecution service is headed by the highest prosecutor, the Prosecutor-General, who is appointed by the President of the Republic. More detailed provisions on the prosecution service are laid down by an Act.

Section 105
Presidential pardon

In individual cases, the President of the Republic may, after obtaining a statement from the Supreme Court, grant full or partial pardon from a penalty or other criminal sanction imposed by a court of law.

A general amnesty may be provided only by an Act.

CHAPTER 10

SUPERVISION OF LEGALITY

Section 106
Primacy of the Constitution

If, in a matter being tried by a court of law, the application of an Act would be in evident conflict with the Constitution, the court of law shall give primacy to the provision in the Constitution.

Section 107
Subordination of lower-level statutes

If a provision in a Decree or another statute of a lower level than an Act is in conflict with the Constitution or another Act, it shall not be applied by a court of law or by any other public authority.

Section 108
Duties of the Chancellor of Justice of the Government

The Chancellor of Justice shall oversee the lawfulness of the official acts of the Government and the President of the Republic. The Chancellor of Justice shall also ensure that the courts of law, the other authorities and the civil servants, public employees and other persons, when the latter are performing a public task, obey the law and fulfill their obligations. In the performance of his or her duties, the Chancellor of Justice monitors the implementation of basic rights and liberties and human rights.

The Chancellor of Justice shall, upon request, provide the President, the Government and the Ministries with information and opinions on legal issues.

The Chancellor of Justice submits an annual report to the Parliament and the Government on his or her activities and observations on how the law has been obeyed.

Section 109
Duties of the Parliamentary Ombudsman

The Ombudsman shall ensure that the courts of law, the other authorities and civil servants, public employees and other persons, when the latter are performing a public task, obey the law and fulfil their obligations. In the performance of his or her duties, the Ombudsman monitors the implementation of basic rights and liberties and human rights.

The Ombudsman submits an annual report to the Parliament on his or her work, including observations on the state of the administration of justice and on any shortcomings in legislation.

Section 110
The right of the Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman to bring charges and the division of responsibilities between them

A decision to bring charges against a judge for unlawful conduct in office is made by the Chancellor of Justice or the Ombudsman. The Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman may prosecute or order that charges be brought also in other matters falling within the purview of their supervision of legality.

Provisions on the division of responsibilities between the Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman may be laid down by an Act, without, however, restricting the competence of either of them in the supervision of legality.

Section 111
The right of the Chancellor of Justice and Ombudsman to receive information

The Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman have the right to receive from public authorities or others performing public duties the information needed for their supervision of legality.

The Chancellor of Justice shall be present at meetings of the Government and when matters are presented to the President of the Republic in a presidential meeting of the Government. The Ombudsman has the right to attend these meetings and presentations.

Section 112
Supervision of the lawfulness of the official acts of the Government and the President of the Republic

If the Chancellor of Justice becomes aware that the lawfulness of a decision or measure taken by the Government, a Minister or the President of the Republic gives rise to a comment, the Chancellor shall present the comment, with reasons, on the aforesaid decision or measure. If the comment is ignored, the Chancellor of Justice shall have the comment entered in the minutes of the Government and, where necessary, undertake other measures. The Ombudsman has the corresponding right to make a comment and to undertake measures.

If a decision made by the President is unlawful, the Government shall, after having obtained a statement from the Chancellor of Justice, notify the President that the decision cannot be implemented, and propose to the President that the decision be amended or revoked.

Section 113
Criminal liability of the President of the Republic

If the Chancellor of Justice, the Ombudsman or the Government deem that the President of the Republic is guilty of treason or high treason, or a crime against humanity, the matter shall be communicated to the Parliament. In this event, if the Parliament, by three fourths of the votes cast, decides that charges are to be brought, the Prosecutor-General shall prosecute the President in the High Court of Impeachment and the President shall abstain from office for the duration of the proceedings. In other cases, no charges shall be brought for the official acts of the President.

Section 114
Prosecution of Ministers

A charge against a Member of the Government for unlawful conduct in office is heard by the High Court of Impeachment, as provided in more detail by an Act.

The decision to bring a charge is made by the Parliament, after having obtained an opinion from the Constitutional Law Committee concerning the unlawfulness of the actions of the Minister. Before the Parliament decides to bring charges or not it shall allow the Minister an opportunity to give an explanation. When considering a matter of this kind the Committee shall have a quorum when all of its members are present.

A Member of the Government is prosecuted by the Prosecutor-General.

Section 115
Initiation of a matter concerning the legal responsibility of a Minister

An inquiry into the lawfulness of the official acts of a Minister may be initiated in the Constitutional Law Committee on the basis of:

1) A notification submitted to the Constitutional Law Committee by the Chancellor of Justice or the Ombudsman;

2) A petition signed by at least ten Representatives; or

3) A request for an inquiry addressed to the Constitutional Law Committee by another Committee of the Parliament.

The Constitutional Law Committee may open an inquiry into the lawfulness of the official acts of a Minister also on its own initiative.

Section 116
Preconditions for the prosecution of a Minister

A decision to bring charges against a Member of the Government may be made if he or she has, intentionally or through gross negligence, essentially contravened his or her duties as a Minister or otherwise acted clearly unlawfully in office.

Section 117
Legal responsibility of the Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman

The provisions in sections 114 and 115 concerning a member of the Government apply to an inquiry into the lawfulness of the official acts of the Chancellor of Justice and the Ombudsman, the bringing of charges against them for unlawful conduct in office and the procedure for the hearing of such charges.

Section 118
Official accountability

A civil servant is responsible for the lawfulness of his or her official actions. He or she is also responsible for a decision made by an official multi-member body that he or she has supported as one of its members.

A rapporteur shall be responsible for a decision made upon his or her presentation, unless he or she has filed an objection to the decision.

Everyone who has suffered a violation of his or her rights or sustained loss through an unlawful act or omission by a civil servant or other person performing a public task shall have the right to request that the civil servant or other person in charge of a public task be sentenced to a punishment and that the public organisation, official or other person in charge of a public task be held liable for damages, as provided by an Act. However, there is no such right to bring charges, if, under the Constitution, the charges are to be heard by the High Court of Impeachment. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

CHAPTER 11

ADMINISTRATION AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

Section 119
State administration

In addition to the Government and the Ministries, the central administration of the State may consist of agencies, institutions and other bodies. The State may also have regional and local public authorities. More detailed provisions on the administration subordinate to the Parliament are laid down by an Act.

The general principles governing the bodies of State administration shall be laid down by an Act, if their duties involve the exercise of public powers. The principles governing the regional and local authorities of the State shall likewise be governed by an Act. In other respects, provisions on the entities of State administration may be laid down by a Decree.

Section 120
Special Status of the Åland Islands

The Åland Islands have self-government in accordance with what is specifically stipulated in the Act on the Autonomy of the Åland Islands.

Section 121
Municipal and other regional self-government

Finland is divided into municipalities, whose administration shall be based on the self-government of their residents.

Provisions on the general principles governing municipal administration and the duties of the municipalities are laid down by an Act.

The municipalities have the right to levy municipal tax. Provisions on the general principles governing tax liability and the grounds for the tax as well as on the legal remedies available to the persons or entities liable to taxation are laid down by an Act.

Provisions on self-government in administrative areas larger than a municipality are laid down by an Act. In their native region, the Sami have linguistic and cultural self-government, as provided by an Act.

Section 122
Administrative divisions

In the organisation of administration, the objective shall be suitable territorial divisions, so that the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations have an opportunity to receive services in their own language on equal terms.

The principles governing the municipal divisions are laid down by an Act.

Section 123
Universities and other education providers

The universities are self-governing, as provided in more detail by an Act.

Provisions on the principles governing the other educational services arranged by the State and the municipalities, as well as on the right to arrange corresponding education in private educational institutions, are laid down by an Act.

Section 124
Delegation of administrative tasks to others than the authorities

A public administrative task may be delegated to others than public authorities only by an Act or by virtue of an Act, if this is necessary for the appropriate performance of the task and if basic rights and liberties, legal remedies and other requirements of good governance are not endangered. However, a task involving significant exercise of public powers can only be delegated to public authorities.

Section 125
General qualifications for public office and other grounds for appointment

It may be stated in an Act that only Finnish citizens are eligible for appointment to certain public offices or duties.

The general qualifications for public office shall be skill, ability and proven civic merit.

Section 126
Appointment to State offices (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

The Government appoints state officials unless the appointment has been designated as a prerogative of the President of the Republic, a Ministry or another public authority.

The President appoints the permanent secretary of the Office of the President of the Republic and the heads of Finnish diplomatic missions abroad.

CHAPTER 12

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Section 127
National defence obligation

Every Finnish citizen is obligated to participate or assist in national defence, as provided by an Act.

Provisions on the right to exemption, on grounds of conscience, from participation in military national defence are laid down by an Act.

Section 128
Commander-in-chief of the defence forces

The President of the Republic is the commander-in-chief of the defence forces. On the proposal of the Government in situations of emergency, the President may relinquish this task to another Finnish citizen. (1112/2011, entry into force 1.3.2012)

The President appoints the officers of the defence forces.

Section 129
Mobilisation

On the proposal of the Government, the President of the Republic decides on the mobilisation of the defence forces. If the Parliament is not in session at that moment, it shall be convened at once.

CHAPTER 13

FINAL PROVISIONS

Section 130
Entry into force

This Constitution shall enter into force on 1 March 2000.

Detailed provisions necessary for the implementation of the Constitution are laid down by an Act.

Section 131
Repeal of Constitutional Acts

This Constitution repeals the following constitutional Acts, as amended:

1) The Constitution Act of Finland, of 17 July 1919;

2) The Parliament Act, of 13 January 1928;

3) The Act on the High Court of Impeachment, of 25 November 1922 (273/1922); and

4) The Act on the Right of Parliament to Inspect the Lawfulness of the Official Acts of the Members of the Council of State, the Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, of 25 November 1922 (274/1922).

Parliament's Rules Of Procedure

17 December 1999 (40/2000, amendments up to 895/2012 included)

NB: Unofficial translation

CHAPTER 1

PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

Section 1
Convocation in session

The Parliament shall convene in session every year on the first day of February, at noon, unless the Parliament has decided on another date and time of convocation. The opening of the parliamentary session shall take place within three days of the convocation of the Parliament.

The Parliament shall convene in the Parliament House. The Speaker may decide on another place of convocation, if there are unavoidable reasons for the same.

Section 2
Examination of Credentials

Before the first plenary session of an electoral term, the Chancellor of Justice of the Government shall examine the credentials of the Representatives. A list shall be drawn up on the Representatives who have presented valid credentials. The first plenary session of the electoral term shall begin with a roll call in accordance with the list.

The Chancellor of Justice shall examine also the credentials presented later. Before a Representative takes office, he or she shall present the examined credentials to the Speaker, who then makes an announcement of the same in plenary session.

Section 3
Interruption of the parliamentary session

The Parliament may, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, decide to interrupt the parliamentary session and set the time of reconvocation and resumption of parliamentary work. While the parliamentary session is interrupted, parliamentary activities may be carried out only in so far as there is a specific statutory authorisation to this effect.

The Speaker may summon the Parliament to resume an interrupted parliamentary session.

CHAPTER 2

BODIES ELECTED BY THE PARLIAMENT

Section 4
Election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers

In the first plenary session of a parliamentary session, the elections of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers shall be held, with the oldest Member of the Parliament presiding. Before taking office, the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers shall make the following solemn affirmation before the Parliament:

" I affirm that in my office as Speaker I shall to the best of my ability defend the rights of the people of Finland and of the Parliament in accordance with the Constitution."

The term in office of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers elected for the last parliamentary session of an electoral term shall continue until after the next parliamentary election has been held.

If the Speaker or a Deputy Speaker dies or resigns from office during the parliamentary session, a new Speaker or Deputy Speaker shall be elected without delay. If the Speaker or a Deputy Speaker is temporarily prevented from attending to his or her duties, the Parliament may, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, decide on the election of a temporary Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

Section 5
Speaker and the Presidency

The Speaker, together with the Speaker's Council, shall lead parliamentary activity in accordance with the Constitution and these Rules of Procedure. The Speaker and the Deputy Speakers form the Presidency.

If the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers are prevented from attending to the duties of Speaker, plenary sessions shall be presided over by the oldest member of the Speaker's Council present in the session. In this event, the session shall deal with announcements only, including an announcement of the time of the next plenary session, but no decisions shall be made on other matters, unless there is an especially pressing reason for the contrary.

Section 6
Duties of the Speaker's Council

The Speaker's Council shall:

1. make proposals and issue instructions on the arrangement of parliamentary work;

2. make a proposal on the Committee to which to refer a matter for preparation, and on the Committee which is to issue a statement on the matter;

3. Repealed (895/2012).

4. propose the plenary session for which a matter is to be deferred;

5. adopt the schedule of plenary sessions;

6. make a proposal to the plenary session on the full or partial forfeiture of a Representative's remuneration by virtue of the Act on the Remuneration Payable to Representatives (328/1947), and on the obtainment of the statement of the Constitutional Law Committee by virtue of section 28(3) of the Constitution;

7. put forward initiatives for the enactment of legislation governing parliamentary officials, of the Parliament's Rules of Procedure and of the Parliament's Election Rules;

8. make proposals for the adoption of instructions for the internal administration of the Parliament, in so far as the right to make such proposals has not been assigned to the Office Commission;

9. make proposals for rules of procedure governing the organs appointed by the Parliament;

10. issue general guidelines on the sectors of competence and the activities of the Committees;

11. where necessary, decide on the participation of Representatives in international co-operation other than that referred to in section 10, and to issue general instructions on the same;

12. make proposals on the seating arrangements of the parliamentary groups in the plenary hall;

13. make proposals on the establishment of temporary Committees and on the number of members and alternate members to be elected in a temporary Committee;

14. make decisions and proposals on other matters, as has been provided elsewhere; and

15. act as a consultative body in matters within the competence of the Speaker.

If there is a tied vote in the Speaker's Council, the Speaker shall have the casting vote.

If a matter within the competence of the Speaker's Council cannot be presented to the Speaker's Council by reason of urgency, the Speaker may decide the matter on a provisional basis upon presentation by an official charged with presenting matters to the Speaker's Council for decision. The provisional decision shall be presented to the Speaker's Council for ratification as soon as possible. (118/2003)

Section 7
Committees

The Parliament shall have the following standing Committees: The Grand Committee and, as specialized Committees, the Constitutional Law Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee, the Audit Committee, the Administration Committee, the Legal Affairs Committee, the Transport and Communications Committee, the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, the Defence Committee, the Education and Culture Committee, the Social Affairs and Health Committee, the Commerce Committee, the Committee for the Future, the Employment and Equality Committee, and the Environment Committee. (609/2007)

The Parliament may establish temporary Committees. The term of a temporary Committee shall continue until it has completed its task.

The Grand Committee shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

Section 8
Membership in Committees

The Grand Committee shall have 25 members and 13 alternate members. The standing special Committees shall have 17 members and 9 alternate members, save for the Finance Committee, which shall have 21 members and 19 alternate members and the Audit Committee, which shall have 11 members and 6 alternate members (609/2007).

The Parliament shall decide on the number of members and alternate members in a temporary Committee.

Where necessary, the Parliament may, on the proposal of the Committee in question, decide to increase the number of alternate members in the Grand Committee or the number of members or alternate members in another Committee.

Section 9
Excuse from membership

A Representative who has already been elected a member of two Committees shall have the right to refuse membership in additional Committees.

For a valid reason, the Parliament may, on the request of a Representative, excuse him or her from membership in a Committee.

Section 10
Representation of the Parliament in international bodies

The Parliament shall elect from among its members:

1. for each parliamentary session, 18 members and an equal number of alternate members for the Finnish delegation to the Nordic Council;

2. during the first annual session in a parliamentary term, five members of the Finnish delegation to the Council of Europe and the same number of alternate members; as well as (1190/2006)

3. for each electoral term, six delegates and an equal number of alternate delegates for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, said delegates forming the Finnish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly.

If, under an international agreement, the Parliament is to participate in the activities of another body, the Parliament shall decide on the election of its representatives therein.

The representatives of the Parliament, referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2), shall submit annual reports to the Parliament on their activities. The Speaker's Council may issue general instructions on how the representatives referred to in paragraph 2 shall be in contact with Parliament and its organs. (1023/2009)

Section 11
Parliamentary Ombudsman

A vacancy for the position of Parliamentary Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman shall be announced in the manner decided by the Speaker's Council. The election shall take place after the Constitutional Law Committee has evaluated the candidates.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman shall submit an annual report to the Parliament, as referred to in section 109 of the Constitution; where necessary, the Ombudsman may submit also special reports to the Parliament.

Section 12 —Repealed (9.5.2007/609)

Section 13
Governors of the Bank of Finland and auditors of the Bank of Finland (1190/2006)

For each electoral term, the Parliament shall elect nine governors to supervise the operations of the Bank of Finland and the administration of the funds for which the Parliament is responsible. The governors shall submit an annual report to the Parliament; where necessary, they may submit also special reports to the Parliament. Every year, the Parliament shall elect the auditors of the Bank of Finland, in accordance with the specific provisions thereon. The auditors shall serve at the same time as the auditors responsible for the Parliament's funds.

Section 14
Auditors of the Parliament

The Parliament shall elect from among its members three auditors and a designated deputy for each auditor. The auditors elected by the Parliament shall then select a fourth auditor and his or her deputy, as provided in more detail in the Parliament's Finance Rules.

The auditors of the Parliament shall audit the finances and administration of the Parliament. The auditors shall submit an annual audit report to the Parliament.

Section 15
Board of the Library of Parliament

For each electoral term, the Parliament shall elect the board of the Library of Parliament, in accordance with the specific provisions thereon.

The board shall submit an annual report to the Parliament.

Section 16
Elections

The Parliament shall hold elections as provided in more detail in the Parliament's Election Rules. A personal election shall be held in the same manner as the election of the Speaker, unless otherwise provided elsewhere. There shall be no debate during an election.

The Parliament shall elect the Secretary General after the vacancy has been announced and the Office Commission has submitted its opinion on the candidates. If there are several candidates, an election of the Secretary General shall be held.

The Parliament shall elect the Director of the State Audit Office after the vacancy has been announced and the Finance Committee has evaluated the candidates. If there are several candidates, an election of the Director of the State Audit Office shall be held.

Section 17
Appointment and organisation of committees (1190/2006)

The Parliament shall appoint the permanent committees without delay after it has assembled for the first annual session of a parliamentary term. On the proposal of the Speaker's Council, a committee may be re-appointed after the Council of State has been appointed following a general election. (1190/2006)

Committees shall constitute themselves without delay after they have been appointed.

For its term, each Committee shall elect from among its members a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. Unless the Committee unanimously decides otherwise, the provisions on the election of the Speaker apply, in so far as appropriate, to the election. The outcome of the election of the chairperson and the deputy chairperson shall be announced to the Parliament.

The first meeting of a Committee shall be convened by its oldest member. That member shall preside until the chairperson has been elected.

If the chairperson and the deputy chairperson of the Committee are disqualified from the consideration of a matter or prevented from attending a meeting of the Committee, a temporary chairperson shall be elected for the Committee. The election shall be held in the same manner as the election of the chairperson.

The provisions of this section apply, in so far as appropriate, also to the organisation of the other parliamentary organs.

Section 18
Rules of procedure of the parliamentary organs (609/2007)

The Parliament shall adopt, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, the rules of procedure of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the governors of the Bank of Finland and the trustees of the Social Insurance Institution. In addition, the Parliament may adopt other necessary rules of procedure.

CHAPTER 3

THE INITIATION OF MATTERS IN THE PARLIAMENT

Section 19
Announcement of matters

The Speaker shall announce, in a plenary session, the arrival of a government proposal, a communication, a statement, a report, an annual report, a decree or another subordinate act or decision and citizens' initiative for consideration by the Parliament. (1272/2011)

The Speaker shall also announce the withdrawal of a government proposal or a parliamentary motion. If a government proposal or motion is withdrawn, its consideration shall cease.

Section 20
Parliamentary motions

Parliamentary motions shall be submitted to the Central Office. The motion shall include brief justifications. A single motion may not include unconnected matters, nor may a budget motion propose more than one budget item or other decision. (71/2011)

A parliamentary motion may be submitted when the Parliament is in session. A budgetary motion may be put forward only on the basis of a budget proposal submitted to the Parliament; the motion must be put forward at the latest at noon on the tenth day after the announcement of the arrival of the proposal. A budgetary motion on the basis of a supplementary budget proposal or a proposal complementing a budget proposal shall be put forward at the latest at noon on the fourth day after the announcement of the arrival of the proposal. (118/2003)

The first signatory of a parliamentary motion may withdraw the motion in writing.

Section 21
Proposals on parliamentary work (71/2011)

A Representative shall have the right to propose the amendment of the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the establishment of a temporary Committee and other matters within the competence of the Parliament, unless there are specific provisions on the initiation of such matters. The proposal shall be submitted to the Central Office. Where necessary, the Speaker's Council may issue a statement on the proposal.

Section 22
Interpellations (71/2011)

An interpellation shall be submitted to the Central Office. The interpellation shall then be presented in plenary session and sent, without debate, to the Government for a reply.

The reply to the interpellation shall be given, at a time agreed with the Speaker, within 15 days of the interpellation having been made known to the Government.

A vote on confidence in the Government or a Minister shall be conducted if, in the course of the debate on an interpellation, a vote of no confidence in the Government or a Minister has been proposed. The Parliament may decide to refer the matter to a Committee, which shall make a proposal concerning the decision to be made by the Parliament.

Section 23
Government statements and government reports (71/2011)

A Government statement and a Government report shall be presented to the Parliament, after which it shall be taken up for deliberation in a plenary session.

A vote on confidence in the Government or a Minister shall be conducted if, in the course of the debate on a Government statement, a vote of no confidence in the Government or a Minister has been proposed. The Parliament may decide to refer the matter to a Committee, which shall make a proposal concerning the decision to be made by the Parliament.

When a debate on a Government report has been concluded, the Parliament shall decide to which Committee the matter is to be referred as well as whether one or more Committees shall submit their statement(s) on the matter to the Committee preparing the matter. The Committee shall propose the wording of statement of opinion on the Government report. However, Parliament may decide not to refer the matter to a Committee, in which case the Parliament does not adopt an opinion on the Government report.

Section 24
Prime Minister's announcements

An announcement by the Prime Minister, or a Minister designated by the Prime Minister, on a topical issue shall be presented to Parliament at a time agreed with the Speaker. (71/2011)

The Speaker shall decide whether to allow debate on the announcement. The floor may be given notwithstanding the provisions in section 50. When the Speaker deems that there has been sufficient debate, he or she shall close the debate. (895/2012)

Section 25
Question time (895/2012)

The Speaker's Council may decide that a debate be held in plenary session to allow for the Representatives to put questions to Ministers (question time).

In the debate during a question time, the floor may be given notwithstanding the provisions in section 50. The Speaker shall give the floor to Representatives for brief questions and to Ministers for responses as he or she sees fit. When the Speaker deems that there has been sufficient debate, he or she shall close the debate.

The Speaker's Council shall issue more detailed instructions on the matter.

Section 26
Topical debates

A Representative may propose to the Speaker's Council that a debate be held in plenary session on a given topical issue. (71/2011)

The Speaker's Council shall decide on whether to hold a topical debate. The floor may be given notwithstanding the provisions in section 50. When the Speaker deems that there has been sufficient debate, he or she shall close the debate. (895/2012)

The Speaker's Council shall issue more detailed instructions on the matter.

Section 27
Written questions

A Representative may pose a written question to a Minister on a matter within the competence of the Minister. The question, which must have a defined content, shall be submitted to the Speaker, who shall then send it to the Government. A question can be posed also during an interruption of the parliamentary session.

The answer to a written question shall be given within 21 days of the question being sent to the Government. The receipt of replies to written questions shall be recorded in the minutes of the plenary session. (71/2011)

The first signatory of a question may withdraw the question in writing.

For a special reason, the Parliament may, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, decide that each Representative may pose only a limited number of written questions during a parliamentary session or a part of a session.

Section 28
Certain matters of criminal liability

The initiation, in the Constitutional Law Committee, of a matter concerning the legal responsibility of a Minister, as referred to in section 115 of the Constitution, shall be announced in plenary session.

A communication pertaining to the President of the Republic, as referred to in section 113 of the Constitution, shall be presented to the Parliament and referred, without debate, to the Constitutional Law Committee for an opinion.

Section 29
Declarations of personal interests (118/2003)

A communication of the Government, containing an account of the personal interests of a Minister, as referred to in section 63(2) of the Constitution, shall be presented to the Parliament. A debate on the matter shall be held in plenary session. The Parliament shall not make a decision on the basis of the communication. The same provisions apply when someone else than a Minister makes a statutory declaration of personal interests to the Parliament.

Section 30
European Union matters. (1023/2009)

The Speaker shall refer a communication of the Government, referred to in section 96(2) of the Constitution to the Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee, depending on the nature of the matter. At the same time, the Speaker shall designate the Committee that is to provide a statement to the Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee. The Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee may set a deadline for the statement of that Committee.

The referral of the communication of the Government to the Committees shall be announced in plenary session.

Documents supplied to Parliament by the European Union's institutions according to the Treaty on European Union that was concluded in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 (EU Treaty), that contain a proposal for a legislative act shall be recorded as received by the Grand Committee, which shall send them to the appropriate special committees as well as the Legislative Assembly of Åland so that they may express to the Grand Committee their opinion on the legislative proposal from the viewpoint of the principle of subsidiarity as defined in Article 5 of the EU Treaty. (1023/2009)

Parliament may, on the proposal of the Grand Committee, decide to send a reasoned opinion as referred to in Article 6 of the protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality attached to the EU Treaty and decide on Parliament's position regarding an action as referred to in Article 8 of the protocol. In cases referred to in Article 6 of the protocol, Parliament's decision

and the report of the Grand Committee shall be forwarded to the European Union's institutions. (1023/2009)

The examination of an initiative taken by the European Council on the basis of Article 48(7) of the EU Treaty shall be subject to the provisions in section 32. (1023/2009)

Section 30 a
Information received by a Committee (895/2012)

On the motion of a Committee, the Speaker's Council may decide that information referred to in section 47(2) of the Constitution be debated in plenary session; in this event, the Parliament shall not make a decision on the matter. The floor may be given notwithstanding the provisions in section 50. When the Speaker deems that there has been sufficient debate, he or she shall close the debate.

Section 31
Supplementary government proposals

A proposal that supplements an earlier government proposal shall be referred to the Committee which is dealing with the original proposal. That Committee shall deal with the original government proposal and the supplementary proposal jointly.

Section 31a
Audit Committee´s right of initiative (609/2007)

The audit committee may on its own initiative raise issues that are within the committee's remit according to section 90, paragraph 1 of the Constitution and may issue reports on them for the plenary session.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARATION OF MATTERS FOR PLENARY SESSION

Section 32
Referral to Committee

Government proposals, parliamentary motions, legislative proposals left in abeyance, Acts not confirmed, citizens' initiatives, reports submitted to the Parliament, decrees and other subordinate acts and decisions subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, and proposals for the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, proposals for acts governing parliamentary officials, Parliament's Election Rules and other instructions and rules of procedure, Initiatives taken by the European Council on the basis of Article 48(7) of the EU Treaty as well as the other matters so ordained, shall be prepared in Committee before they are taken up for a decision in plenary session. In addition, other matters shall be referred to Committee for preparation when the Parliament so decides. (1272/2011)

A debate (introductory debate) shall be held in plenary session for the purpose of referring these matters to Committee. At the conclusion of the introductory debate, the Parliament shall decide, on the proposal of the Speaker's Council, to which Committee the matter is referred. The Speaker's Council may decide on the referral of a supplementary government proposal to Committee without an introductory debate; such a decision shall be announced in plenary session. Section 33 contains provisions on the referral of petitionary motions to Committee.

At the same time, the Parliament may decide that one or more other Committees shall issue a statement to the Committee preparing the matter.

A proposal on the enactment, amendment or repeal of the Constitution shall be referred for preparation to the Constitutional Law Committee. The report on the activities of the Government shall be referred for preparation to the Constitutional Law Committee. However, in so far as the report concerns foreign and security policy, it shall be referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee. An initiative taken by the European Council as referred to in paragraph 1 shall be sent to the Grand Committee or the Foreign Affairs Committee for preparatory examination. (1023/2009)

The Parliament may issue instructions to the Committees on the preparation of the matter.

Section 33
Referral of petitionary motions to Committee

The Speaker's Council shall decide on the referral of a petitionary motion to Committee. An announcement of the referral of a petitionary motion to Committee shall be made in plenary session.

The Speaker's Council may assign the decision on the referral of a petitionary motion to Committee to be made by the Parliament; in this event, an introductory debate on the matter shall be held in plenary session.

Section 34
Order of business (10/2006)

A Committee shall without delay deal with the matters referred thereto and, as the case may be, issue its report to the plenary session or its statement to another Committee.

Matters relating to the confidence in the Government or a Minister shall be dealt with as urgent. In general, a Committee shall deal first with government proposals and government communications on European Union affairs. (71/2011)

Government proposals and parliamentary motions concerning the same matter shall be dealt with in conjunction with each other shall be the subject of a joint report, unless special reasons require a different procedure to be followed. Committees shall, however, ensure that reports on Government proposals are not delayed by matters being joined. (10/2006)

The Speaker's Council may issue more detailed instructions on the order of business to be followed in the Committees.

Section 35
Meetings of the Committees

The Committees shall meet according to their workload. When the Parliament is in session, the Committees shall meet primarily on weekdays other than Monday or Saturday. The chairperson of a Committee shall call the Committee to a meeting.

When the parliamentary session is interrupted or when the Parliament has concluded its work, a Committee shall meet on the initiative of the chairperson or if at least one third of the members of the Committee so request from the chairperson. The chairperson shall call the Committee to a meeting also on the request of the Government. (71/2011)

When the chairperson of a Committee is prevented from attending to his or her duties, the provisions in paragraphs (1) and (2) above apply to the deputy chairperson of the Committee. If a member of a Committee is prevented from attending a meeting of the Committee or disqualified from dealing with the matter at hand, an alternate member shall take his or her place.

Section 36
Right to be present in Committee meetings

The Speaker and the Deputy Speakers have the right to be present in Committee meetings.

When the Grand Committee is considering a legislative matter, every Representative has the right to be present in the meeting. However, the Representative elected from the constituency of the Åland Islands has always the right to be present in the meetings of the Grand Committee.

Section 37
Hearing of experts

A Committee may hear expert opinions.

When a citizens' initiative is being considered, the Committee shall reserve the representatives of the initiative's authors an opportunity to be heard. When a legislative proposal or another matter specifically involving the Sámi is being considered, the Committee shall reserve the representatives of the Sámi an opportunity to be heard, unless there are special reasons for the contrary. (1272/2011)

Section 38
Statement of another Committee

A Committee may request the statement of another Committee on a matter under its preparation or on information referred to in section 47(2) of the Constitution. In addition, the Grand Committee and the Foreign Affairs Committee may request the statement of another Committee on a proposal or report referred to in sections 96 and 97 of the Constitution. (118/2003)

If, in respect of a legislative proposal or another matter under preparation in a Committee, a question arises as to its constitutionality or relation to human rights treaties, the Committee shall request a statement on the matter from the Constitutional Law Committee.

As regards its own field of competence, a Committee may, on its own initiative, issue a statement on the State budget proposal to the Finance Committee within 30 days of the referral of the proposal to the Finance Committee

Section 39
Consideration in Committee (10/2006)

Having received the information necessary for a decision in the matter, Committees shall conduct a preparatory discussion, at which its members have the opportunity to express their views on the matter in all respects and on the basis of which the secretary of the Committee prepares a draft of a report or statement. A general discussion shall be conducted on the basis of the draft and the matter given a detailed reading, at which a decision is made on the Committee's proposals as well as on the reasons to be presented in support of the report or statement.

The Committee may decide unanimously to regard the detailed reading as the one in which the final decision in the matter is made. In other cases, the matter shall be given a separate decisive reading, based on the report or statement adopted by the Committee. In that case, the members of the Committee shall be accorded the opportunity to conduct a general discussion and a detailed reading shall be conducted.

A proposal for rejection shall be decided on after proposals concerning the contents of the matter have been dealt with.

Upon seconded proposal, a matter shall be deferred once to a subsequent meeting of the Committee. After this, the matter shall be deferred if the Committee so decides. (71/2011)

A Committee may choose a representative from among its own number to substitute for its chairperson in presenting a report or statement at a plenary session or at the Grand Committee when a statement is made to it.

Section 40
Voting in a Committee (10/2006)

The Committee shall decide on the voting procedure to be used in a given matter. However, an open vote, in accordance with the roll call, shall be taken if the chairperson deems this necessary or a member of the Committee so demands.

In the event of a tied vote, the decision shall be made by drawing lots. However, if the Constitutional Law Committee votes in a matter referred to in section 28 and there is a tie, the more lenient position shall be the decision of the Committee.

Section 41
Committee sections

A Committee may assign a section, from among its members, to prepare a matter under consideration and to draw up a draft report or statement.

The provisions on the consideration of matters in a Committee apply, in so far as appropriate, to the consideration of matters in a Committee section.

Section 42
Committee reports and statements (10/2006)

The reports and statements of a Committee shall be concise. The proposals of the Committee shall be formulated as resolutions. The same applies to reservations and dissenting opinions, unless these are limited to the expression of a position different from that of the Committee.

A report and a statement shall bear the names of the members participating in the decisive reading of the matter. If a member has participated only partially, this shall also be indicated.

A reservation concerning a report and a dissenting opinion relating to a statement shall be submitted g to the secretary of the Committee within the time determined by the Committee. A protest and a dissenting opinion shall correspond to the stance of the signatories when the matter was decided. (71/2011)

A report, a statement and the appended reservations and dissenting opinions shall be scrutinised by the secretary of the Committee, unless the Committee decides otherwise.

Section 43
Committee minutes (10/2006)

Minutes shall be kept at Committee meetings, indicating the members present and the experts heard as well as the proposals and decisions made, with votes. The secretary of the Committee shall validate the minutes with his or her signature.

Committee minutes and other documents shall be archived in accordance with separate instructions confirmed by the Speaker's Council.

Section 43a
Publicity of Committee documents (10/2006)

Committee minutes shall be stored in an information network accessible by the public. Preparatory documents concerning a matter shall become public when consideration of the matter by the Committee has been concluded. However, a parliamentary group not represented on a Committee or a section of a Committee shall have the right to receive copies of the documents relating to a pending matter, unless they are secret.

A Committee's documents shall be kept secret if divulging information about them would cause significant harm to Finland's international relations or to capital or financial markets. Documents containing confidential commercial or professional information or details of a person's state of health or financial situation shall be kept secret if divulging information on them would cause significant harm or damage, unless a compelling public interest requires their publication. A Committee may, for a comparable compelling reason, decide that a document is to be kept secret.

Documents declared confidential by a Committee in accordance with Section 50.3 of the Constitution shall also be kept secret. A request by the Government that a Committee observe confidentiality in a matter relating to Finland's international relations or European Union matters shall be complied with until the Committee in question has made a decision concerning the request.

The provisions of Section 31 of the Act on Openness of Government Activities (621/1999) shall apply, where appropriate, to the length of the period for which a Committee's documents shall be kept secret, unless the Committee decides on a shorter period.

The Speaker's Council may issue more detailed instructions concerning the publicity of committee documents.

Section 44
Grand Committee (10/2006)

Unless otherwise provided in the Rules of Procedure of the Grand Committee, the provisions in sections 34, 35, 37 and 39—43 and 43a apply, in so far as appropriate, to the consideration of matters in the Grand Committee.

CHAPTER 5

CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS IN PLENARY SESSION

Section 45
Plenary sessions

Plenary sessions shall be held according to the workload of the Parliament. The Speaker shall convene the plenary sessions, where possible in accordance with a schedule of plenary sessions adopted by the Speaker's Council. Plenary sessions shall primarily be held on weekdays other than Monday or Saturday.

Section 46
Agendas of plenary sessions

The agendas of plenary sessions shall contain a list of the matters to be considered, their stage of consideration and the pertinent documents.

The Speaker shall determine the agendas of plenary sessions. When matters are being included in the agenda, the earlier decisions of the Parliament and the schedule of plenary sessions adopted by the Speaker's Council shall be taken into account.

The Speaker has the right to alter a posted agenda and to interrupt the consideration of a matter.

Section 47
Presence

The roll shall be called in the beginning of each plenary session. In a plenary session held later on the same day, the roll need not be called, at the discretion of the Speaker; in this event, the Representatives present in the earlier plenary session shall be deemed present.

A Representative who appears in plenary session within 15 minutes of the roll call, shall be deemed to have been present in the roll call. A Representative appearing later than this shall be deemed to have been present as from the time when he or she announces himself or herself to the Speaker.

Subsection 3 repealed (895/2012)

Section 48
Recording absence (219/2007)

A record of an absence from a plenary session because of a task associated with parliamentary work or due to illness, maternity, paternity or parental leave shall be entered in the minutes of the plenary session.

The Speaker's Council shall issue guidelines concerning the tasks to be deemed as associated with parliamentary work as well as concerning the recording of attendances and absences.

Section 49
Speaker's duties in plenary sessions

The Speaker shall chair the plenary session and maintain order therein, as well as make the proposals for decisions and for voting. The Speaker shall make proposals only as is required for the implementation of the Constitution, the Parliament's Rules of Procedure and the decisions of the Parliament.

The Speaker shall see to it that those who have the floor keep to the issue under consideration. If a person who has the floor digresses, the Speaker shall exhort him or her to keep to the issue. If the exhortation is not heeded, the Speaker may deny the floor to the person in question.

Section 50
Giving the floor

In plenary session, the Representatives shall be given the floor in the order of requests.

Before the floor is given to others who request it, it shall be granted to the spokesperson of a Committee and, in the case of a parliamentary motion during an introductory debate, to the first signatory of the motion, or to the chairperson of a Parliament-appointed body that has given its report, if this person is a Representative, or to a Representative designated by the body. The Speaker may give the floor also to a spokesperson of a Committee that has presented its statement and, when a special ground exists, to the first signatory of a reservation, after the other presentations have been made. After an interpellation has been replied to, the floor shall be given first to the first signatory of the interpellation. (10/2006)

The Speaker may, at his or her discretion, give the floor to a Minister, the Chancellor of Justice of the Government or the Parliamentary Ombudsman before others requesting the floor.

The Speaker's Council may reserve a part of a debate in advance for speeches, which shall have a maximum duration fixed by the Speaker's Council.

Sections 24–26 and 30a apply to the giving of the floor during topical debates, question times and the debates arising from the Prime Minister's announcements. (895/2012)

The Speaker's Council shall issue more detailed instructions on requesting the floor and on speaking.

Section 51
Group speeches

When the debate concerns the State bud get, a government statement or report or an interpellation, the floor shall be given for group speeches, unless the Speaker's Council decides otherwise. The Speaker's Council may decide that the floor is to be given for group speeches also when other significant matters are being considered. However, the provisions in section 50 (2) and (3) apply to the giving of the floor for group speeches.

The order of the group speeches shall correspond to the size of the parliamentary groups constituted in the beginning of an electoral term, from the largest to the smallest. The order of groups of the same size shall be determined by the Speaker's Council by drawing lots. The Speaker's Council may alter the order of group speeches if, during the electoral term, a parliamentary group of at least three Representatives has been constituted or if there is another persuasive reason for the alteration of the order.

The Speaker's Council may decide that, after the group speeches, other requests for the floor made before the session can be granted in the order referred to in paragraph (2).

The Speaker's Council shall decide the stage of the debate at which the Representatives in parliamentary groups not included in the order referred to in paragraph (2) can make their speeches.

The Speaker's Council may issue more detailed instructions on the application of paragraphs (1)–(4).

Section 52
Responses

Notwithstanding the provisions in sections 50 and 51, the Speaker may give the floor for brief responses at his or her discretion. (895/2012)

The Speaker's Council shall issue more detailed instructions on responses.

Section 53
Consideration of a legislative proposal (895/2012)

A matter containing a legislative proposal shall be considered in the plenary session in two readings on the basis of the report of a Committee.

In the first reading, the report of the Committee shall be presented and a general debate held. The content of the legislative proposal shall then be considered in detail and decided. During the consideration in detail, the contents of the legislative proposal may be adopted on the basis of the Committee report without going into the text of the actual sections, in so far as the documents on the matter do not contain proposals for alterations diverging from the report and no such proposals have been made in accordance with the procedure provided in section 58, either. In the first reading, no proposal shall be made for the rejection of the legislative proposal.

If the content of the legislative proposal is adopted according to the Committee report, the first reading of the matter shall be concluded. If this is not the case, the matter shall be referred to the Grand Committee in the form contained in the decision of the Parliament. The Grand Committee may concur with the decision of the Parliament or propose alterations to it. If the Grand Committee proposes alterations, the Parliament shall decide on whether these are adopted or not. Thereafter, the first reading of the matter shall be concluded.

In the second reading, which shall take place not earlier than on the third day after the conclusion of the first reading, the Parliament shall decide to adopt or reject the legislative proposal as well as on any statements it may wish to make.

A proposal for declaring a legislative proposal urgent, unless made in the Committee report, shall be made in the second reading of the matter before the conclusion of the debate.

During the first reading, the Parliament may re-refer the matter to the Committee which prepared it or to another special Committee, or during the general debate to the Grand Committee. The reading shall resume on the basis of the new report once it has been completed.

Section 54
Consideration of a legislative proposal left in abeyance and an unconfirmed Act

A legislative proposal left in abeyance and an unconfirmed Act shall be considered in plenary session in one reading. In the beginning of the reading, the report of the Committee shall be presented and a debate on the matter held. Thereafter, a decision shall be made on the adoption of the legislative proposal or the Act without material alterations, or on its rejection.

Section 55
Single reading

Matters on the agenda of the plenary session, other than those referred to in sections 53 and 54, to be decided on by the Parliament and not subject to different provisions elsewhere, shall be considered in the plenary session in a single reading. (895/2012)

Section 59 contains provisions on the consideration of a State budget proposal.

Section 56
Acceptance of international obligations and their denouncement

A matter of the acceptance of international obligations or their denouncement shall be considered in a single reading on the basis of a Committee report.

If the Committee report comprises proposals on both the acceptance of an international obligation and its implementing Act, the proposal on the obligation shall be presented for the single reading at the same time as the legislative proposal is presented for the second reading. The Parliament shall first decide on the proposal on the obligation.

Section 57
Deferral (71/2011)

A matter shall be deferred from an introductory debate to one of the closest following plenary sessions, if a Representative so requests. Thereafter, the matter may not be deferred from the introductory debate.

A Committee report shall first be presented for deferral to a session that is held on the next day at the earliest. However, for a special reason Parliament may decide to defer the matter to a plenary session held later on the same day.

In a first reading and in the reading referred to in sections 54 and 55, the matter shall upon seconded proposal be deferred once. Otherwise the matter shall be deferred if Parliament so decides.

Once the debate on a government statement or report or an interpellation has begun, the matter shall not be deferred. The provisions on deferral do not apply to the Prime Minister's announcements or to topical debates.

Section 58
Proposals for amendment

A proposal made by a Representative in plenary session and not included in the documents shall be handed in to the Speaker in writing, if the Speaker so requests.

A proposal for amendment to be made in the first reading of a legislative matter and not included in the documents shall, if possible, be provided to the Central Office without a statement of reasons, at least two hours before the plenary session. The proposal shall be distributed to the Representatives before a decision is made on the matter. For a special reason, the Speaker may present a proposal for voting even if it is proposed later. (71/2011)

The provisions in paragraph (2) apply to a proposal made in the second reading of a legislative matter, as well as to a proposal made in a reading referred to in sections 54 and 55, where not concerning rejection.

Section 59(2) contains provisions on the making of proposals for amendment during the consideration of the State budget proposal.

Section 59
Consideration of a budget proposal

The State budget proposal shall be considered in a single reading in a plenary session on the basis of a report of the Finance Committee according to the procedure approved by the Parliament. A class or section in the budget proposal or a chapter thereof shall be noted to have been adopted as it appears in the report, if no proposals for amendment thereto have been made as provided for later in this paragraph. (895/2012)

A proposal to amend the report of the Finance Committee shall be submitted to the Central Office within the time determined by the Parliament, even if it is included in the documents. A proposal made later shall not be taken up for consideration, unless the Speaker for a special reason deems its consideration necessary. (71/2011)

A proposal concerning the inclusion of a new appropriation or other decision in the budget, not included in the Government proposal, can be taken into account when a decision on the budget is being made, only if it has been initiated by way of a budgetary motion. (71/2011)

If the Parliament has not adopted the report of the Finance Committee without alterations, the matter shall be re-referred to the Finance Committee. The Committee may concur with the position of the Parliament or propose amendments thereto. If the Committee proposes amendments, the Parliament shall decide whether to adopt or reject them.

If the publication of the State budget is delayed into the new budgetary year, the Finance Committee shall propose to the Parliament how the State budget proposal be applied as a provisional budget. The proposal of the Committee shall be considered, in so far as appropriate, in accordance with the same procedure as the budget proposal.

The provisions on the consideration of the budget proposal apply, in so far as appropriate, to the consideration of the supplementary budget proposal.

Section 60
Proposals for decision and for voting

When the debate on the matter at hand has been concluded, the Speaker shall present a summary on the proposals made. If an objection is made against the summary of the Speaker, and the Speaker considers the objection justified, he or she shall rectify the summary. If the Speaker considers that the objection does not warrant a change in the summary, the Parliament shall decide on the summary. (895/2012)

After presenting the summary, the Speaker shall make a proposal for the order of voting on the proposals. If there is a call for the alteration of the Speaker's proposal for the order of voting, but the Speaker considers the call unwarranted, the Parliament shall decide on the order of voting.

Once the order of voting has been decided, the Speaker shall present the matter for voting so that the reply "Yes" or "No" expresses the decision of the Parliament. If there are several proposals for decision, they shall be voted on one against another, until a vote has been taken on all of them.

A proposal made by a Representative, but not seconded, shall not be taken up for a vote.

There shall be no other debate on the matters covered by this section. There shall likewise be no vote taken on whether a vote should be taken.

Section 61
Mode of voting

A vote shall be taken by the voting apparatus, by standing up or by open ballot. The Speaker shall announce the mode of voting. There shall be no debate on the mode of voting.

A vote shall be taken by the voting apparatus, regardless of whether a vote has already been taken by standing up, if the Speaker deems this necessary, if the vote by standing up has in the opinion of the Speaker not yielded a clear result or if a Representative so requests.

A vote shall be taken by open ballot if the voting apparatus is out of order, if the vote by using the voting apparatus has in the opinion of the Speaker not yielded a clear result or if there is a tie. However, if there is a tie in a vote not pertaining to the final decision of the Parliament at the current stage of consideration, the vote shall be retaken by the voting apparatus, and a vote by open ballot shall be taken only if there is a tie also in this second vote by using the voting apparatus.

The Parliament's Election Rules contain more detailed provisions on the voting procedure in elections.

Section 62
Vote by open ballot

A vote by open ballot shall be taken in accordance with the roll call, by using ballots of various colours. A ballot shall bear the pre-printed name of the Representative and the word "Yes", "No" or "Abstention". A ballot not conforming to this provision shall be void. The Representatives shall put their ballots into the ballot-box in the order that their names are called. The ballots shall be read out aloud and counted.

Section 63
Result of a vote

The Speaker shall declare the result of a vote.

The results of all votes shall be archived and published. (895/2012)

There shall be no debate on this matter. (895/2012)

Section 64
Reasons in a Committee report

The reasons contained in a Committee report shall be deemed to have been adopted, unless the Parliament decides otherwise.

Section 65
Election of the Prime Minister

The notification of the President of the Republic to the Parliament concerning the nominee for Prime Minister shall be introduced in the Parliament and deferred to one of the following sessions. A vote on the election of the nominee as Prime Minister shall be taken by the voting apparatus or by open ballot. The Speaker shall announce the mode of voting.

An election of the Prime Minister, as referred to in section 61(3) of the Constitution, shall be held in accordance with the roll call, by using ballots bearing only the preprinted name of the Representative. The Representative shall write in the ballot the name of the person voted for, so clearly that there is no doubt as to who that person is, or cast a blank ballot. A ballot not conforming to this provision shall be void. The ballots shall be read out aloud and counted.

The minutes shall contain a note on how everyone has voted.

There shall be no debate on matters referred to in this section.

Section 66
Maintenance of order in plenary sessions

There shall be no open expressions of approval or disapproval in plenary sessions of the Parliament.

The persons following the plenary session in the gallery shall abide by the instructions issued by the Office Commission and the other rules for the maintenance of order. If necessary for a return to order, the Speaker may have the gallery cleared.

Section 67
Closed sessions

If the Speaker deems that a matter is by nature such that it cannot be considered in open session, or if 25 Representatives move that a matter be considered in closed session, the Speaker shall have the gallery cleared and propose that the Parliament decide, in accordance with section 50(1) of the Constitution, whether the matter is to be considered in closed session.

The Parliament shall decide on the access to, or secrecy of, the minutes of a closed session and the documents dealt with during the session.

CHAPTER 6

PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS

Section 68
Parliamentary replies and communications

The decision of the Parliament on a government proposal shall be notified to the Government by way of a parliamentary reply. However, the State budget, as adopted by the Parliament, and the other decisions and notifications by the Parliament shall be notified by way of a parliamentary communication.

A list shall be drawn up, for the final parliamentary session of an electoral term, on the government proposals, decrees and other subordinate acts and decisions, and reports, whose consideration has not been concluded and which have therefore lapsed. The lapsed matters in the list shall be notified by way of a communication to the Government or, if a report was not submitted by the Government, to the party which submitted the report.

The Speaker and the Secretary General of the Parliament shall sign the parliamentary replies and communications.

Where necessary, the Speaker's Council shall decide on the revision of the wording of a parliamentary reply or communication.

Section 69
Minutes of plenary sessions (895/2012)

Minutes shall be kept on plenary sessions, containing notes on the consideration of matters and debates held in plenary session. Notes on the decisions made in plenary shall be published without delay in an information network.

A speech to be noted in the minutes shall be subjected to the scrutiny of the speaker. No material alterations shall be made in the speech.

If a Representative has not concurred with the decision of the plenary session, he or she has the right to have a dissenting opinion noted in the minutes.

The minutes shall be signed by the Secretary General. The minutes shall be made available to the public without delay in an information network.

Section 70
Protocols of plenary sessions

A protocol shall be drawn up of each plenary session without delay; the protocol shall contain notes on the decisions made.

The protocol shall be public once the Secretary General has signed it.

Section 71
Publication of parliamentary documents (71/2011)

Parliamentary documents shall be made available to the public in an information network. The parliamentary documents shall contain the minutes of the plenary sessions of the Parliament and the abridged Swedish editions of the minutes, the government proposals, the communications on the withdrawal of government proposals, the Government communications to the Parliament, the decrees and other subordinate acts and decisions subjected to parliamentary scrutiny, citizens' initiatives, reports, government statements and reports, the list of legislative proposals left in abeyance, the reports and statements of the Committees, the parliamentary replies and communications, the parliamentary motions, interpellations and written questions with replies. (1272/2011)

The documents referred to in paragraph (1) can additionally be published in print or in other form.

The Speaker's Council shall issue more detailed guidelines on publication of parliamentary documents.

CHAPTER 7

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARLIAMENT

Section 72
Office Commission

The Office Commission shall see to the administration of the Parliament. The Office Commission shall be composed of the Speaker, the Deputy Speakers and four members elected by the Parliament from among its members, and four alternates for the members elected by the Parliament.

The Office Commission shall have a quorum with five members present. In the event of a tied vote, the Speaker shall have the casting vote. The Office Commission may make decisions also with four members present, if these are unanimous.

Matters shall be presented to the Office Commission by the Secretary General of the Parliament, by the Director of Administration in the Parliament, as well as by the other officials in the Parliamentary Office designated by the Office Commission as presenting officials.

Where necessary, the Office Commission may convene also when the parliamentary session is interrupted and when the Parliament has concluded its work.

If a matter within the competence of the Office Commission is so urgent that there is no time to present it to the Office Commission, the Speaker shall make a provisional decision on the matter upon the presentation of a presenting official. The provisional decision shall be presented for the approval of the Office Commission as soon as possible.

Section 73
Duties of the Office Commission

The Office Commission shall:

1. manage, supervise and develop the administration and finances of the Parliament, and consider pertinent plans and development proposals;

2. make proposals on the administration and finances of the Parliament;

3. decide, in so far as specifically so provided, on the appointments to a position or a temporary position in the Parliamentary Office, as well as on the dismissal of officials or the termination of their position;

4. decide, in so far as specifically so provided, on leave of absence for officials in the Parliamentary Office and on their temporary replacements;

5. after having heard the Committees in question, appoint the secretaries of the Committees;

6. decide the other matters pertaining to the administration and finances of the Parliament, where these have not been assigned to the Speaker or an official in the Parliamentary Office;

7. put forward initiatives for the adoption of the Parliament's Finance Rules;

8. decide on the Archive Rules of the Parliament; and

9. decide on the other matters that are assigned to it by an Act, these Rules of Procedure, other instructions, or other rules of procedure.

Section 74
The Parliamentary Office

The Parliamentary Office shall create and maintain the conditions in which the Parliament can perform its tasks as an organ of the State.

The Parliamentary Office shall operate under the supervision of the Office Commission.

Section 75
Secretary General of the Parliament

The Secretary General, elected by the Parliament, shall act as the secretary of the Parliament and as the head of the Parliamentary Office.

If the office of Secretary General is vacant or the Secretary General is prevented from attending to his or he r duties, the Deputy Secretary General shall perform the duties of Secretary General. If also the Deputy Secretary General is prevented, the Speaker shall invite a suitable person to perform the duties of Secretary General.

CHAPTER 8

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 76
Languages used in parliamentary work

The consideration of a matter in the Parliament shall be based on its Finnish text; the Swedish text shall be drawn up by the Parliamentary Office.

A citizens' initiative submitted for Parliament's consideration shall be translated into Finnish or Swedish at the Parliamentary Office. (1272/2011)

The proposals of the Office Commission to the plenary session shall be translated into Swedish.

The Speaker's summary of proposals made, as well as the notification referred to in section 42(2) of the Constitution, shall be made both in Finnish and in Swedish. Also the other notifications of the Speaker shall be made in Swedish, if he or she deems this necessary. The contents of a speech made in plenary session in Swedish shall be summarised in Finnish.

The contents of speeches made in Finnish, the Speaker's proposals for voting and the notifications made by the Speaker only in Finnish, shall be privately interpreted to Swedish-speaking Representatives, if they so wish.

The Committees shall decide on the interpretation needed in their meetings. However, the course of a meeting shall be privately interpreted to a member of the Committee, if he or she so wishes.

Section 77
Suspension of the office of Representative

A Representative who has been elected as a Member of the European Parliament shall notify the Speaker whether he or she will choose to serve as a Representative or whether he or she will serve as a Member of the European Parliament. After an election to the European Parliament, the notification shall be made before the European Parliament convenes in its first plenary session. After parliamentary elections, the notification shall be made at the latest at noon on the third day after the scrutiny of the Representative's credentials. If the Representative has chosen to serve as a Member of the European Parliament, his or her office of Representative shall be suspended as from the date when the credentials of the substitute Representative have been examined.

Section 78
Notifications to constituency electoral boards

If a Representative dies or ceases to exercise the office of a Representative, the Secretary General shall without delay notify the same to the electoral board of the appropriate constituency.

If a Representative serves as a Member of the European Parliament, the Secretary General shall without delay notify the same to the electoral board of the appropriate constituency.

Section 79
Calculation of time limits in parliamentary work

If a statutory fixed date or the date of expiration of a statutory deadline falls on a holiday, Independence Day, the First of May, Christmas Eve, Midsummer Eve or a Saturday, the following weekday shall be deemed to be the fixed date or the date of expiration.

The time limit for a measure to be taken during a parliamentary session shall not run while the session is interrupted. The remainder of the time limit shall begin to run on the day when the Parliament reconvenes in session.

The provision in paragraph (2) does not apply to the time limit for the reply to a written question.

Section 80
Notices of plenary sessions and Committee meetings (71/2011)

A notice of a plenary session and of the agenda thereof shall be made as well in advance of the plenary session as possible. The Speaker's Council shall decide the mode of notice.

A notice of a Committee meeting shall be announced in good time before the meeting

CHAPTER 9

ENTRY INTO FORCE

Section 81
Entry into force

These Rules of Procedure enter into force on 1 March 2000.

These Rules of Procedure repeal the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure of 19 December 1927, as later amended.

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The amendment 118/2003 enters into force on 1 March 2003.

The amendment 10/2006 enters into force on 1 February 2006.

The amendment 1190/2006 enters into force on 22 March 2007.

The amendment 219/2007 enters into force on 22 March 2007.

The amendment 609/2007 enters into force on 1 June 2007.

The amendment 1023/2009 enters into force on 15 December 2009.

The amendment 71/2011 enters into force on 1 May 2011.

The amendment 1272/2011 enters into force on 1 March 2012.

The amendment 895/2012 enters into force on 1 January 2013.

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