

Radio Interview: Understanding Political Party Registration, Membership and the Political Parties Fund



Interviewee: CS Agatha Wahome, Assistant Registrar of Political Parties

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Topic: Political party registration, electoral preparedness, party membership, compliance and the Political Parties Fund

Introduction

On 21 September 2026, CS Agatha Wahome, Assistant Registrar of Political Parties, participated in an interview on Radio Generation to discuss the mandate of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP), preparations for the 2027 General Election, registration and regulation of political parties, political party membership, the Integrated Political Parties Management System (IPMS), civic education and administration of the Political Parties Fund.

The following is an edited transcript of the conversation, prepared for readability and flow.

Political Parties and the Road to the 2027 General Election

Host: What are some of the important timelines for political parties ahead of the 2027 General Election, particularly regarding registration and other matters handled by ORPP?

CS Agatha Wahome: The Office has been registering political parties. There are parties that are already fully registered and therefore ready, as far as registration for participation in elections is concerned. There are also parties that are still in the registration process.

For parties that have not yet received full registration certificates, we are now approaching the final stages because they need to complete the process in time to participate in the 2027 General Election.

There are also timelines relating to the submission of nomination rules. For a political party to submit its nomination rules, it needs to be fully registered and ready to proceed with the electoral process.

Some provisionally registered parties are currently in the final stages, including verification of their offices. Some will successfully complete the process, while others may not.

Host: What other election-related activities is ORPP undertaking?

CS Agatha Wahome: We will be receiving nomination rules from political parties. One of the things we are currently doing is taking political parties through the checklist for nomination rules so that what they submit complies with the Political Parties Act and relevant electoral laws.

We continuously build the capacity of political parties because they are our primary customers, and we want to make the processes as smooth as possible.

We will also prepare political parties for party primaries. The Office trains political parties' internal dispute resolution committees because these are the first point of recourse when disputes arise within parties. We also train party election boards, which are responsible for conducting or overseeing party nominations.

Later, we will monitor the party primaries to ensure they are conducted in accordance with party constitutions. The lessons from that monitoring also inform future capacity building and reforms.

Towards the General Election, we will also train political party agents who will participate in the election on behalf of political parties and their candidates.

How Many Political Parties Are Registered?

Host: How many political parties are currently fully registered?

CS Agatha Wahome: We currently have 99 fully registered political parties. We also have 37 provisionally registered political parties.

The 37 have provisional registration certificates but are still in the process of fulfilling the conditions required for full registration. It is difficult to say how many of them will ultimately complete the process successfully. Some may qualify while others may not.

How a Political Party Is Registered

Host: What is required to register a political party?

CS Agatha Wahome: The registration process broadly has two stages: provisional registration and full registration.

For provisional registration, the process begins with reservation of a party name. If you intend to use an abbreviation, that also needs to be reserved. You also submit the proposed party colours and slogan.

We ask applicants to provide several options or combinations so that we can search our database and identify one that will not cause confusion with an existing registered political party.

Once the name, colours, abbreviation and slogan have been approved, the reservation is valid for a maximum of **90 days**. Within that period, the applicant should proceed with the provisional registration process.

The applicant is required to prepare a party constitution, nomination rules and party ideology. The founding members must also hold their first meeting and formally resolve to establish the political party.

As an Office, we work with applicants during this process. We review documents such as the constitution and nomination rules to ensure that they comply with the Political Parties Act and that the required provisions have been included.

Once all the required documentation is properly prepared and the application is approved, the Office issues a **provisional registration certificate**.

Moving from Provisional to Full Registration

Host: What happens after provisional registration?

CS Agatha Wahome: The next stage is full registration. A provisional registration certificate is valid for 270 days, within which the political party must complete the requirements for full registration.

One requirement is establishing a party website. The website is important for recruitment, providing information and promoting inclusivity because some people prefer to access services and information online while others prefer face-to-face engagement.

Another major requirement is membership. A political party must recruit at least 1,000 registered voters in at least half of Kenya's counties.

That means at least 1,000 members in each of at least 24 counties. Having additional members in one county does not compensate for failing to attain the minimum requirement in another county. The membership should also reflect gender balance and inclusion of other constituencies such as youth.

The party must also establish a head office and branch offices in at least half of the counties. The head office does not necessarily have to be in Nairobi; it can be located anywhere within Kenya.

There are also requirements relating to Chapter Six of the Constitution on Leadership and Integrity, as well as the composition of the party's governing body. The governing body should reflect gender balance and inclusion of special interest groups, including youth and persons with disabilities.

Once these requirements have been fulfilled, the party applies for full registration. ORPP then verifies the membership and physically verifies the party offices. Once the party has successfully met the requirements, it can be issued with a full registration certificate.

Political Party Membership and IPMS

Host: How are political party membership records submitted and maintained?

CS Agatha Wahome: We have a system called the Integrated Political Parties Management System (IPPMS). It is the system through which political party membership records are maintained, and the Registrar of Political Parties is its custodian.

Political parties can integrate their membership registration systems with IPPMS so that when they recruit members, the information is transmitted to the relevant party's records in IPPMS.

The process is now largely digital. Even where a Kenyan walks into a political party office and completes a physical recruitment form, the party must subsequently enter that information into the system.

Most importantly, the person being registered must give **consent** to become a member of that political party.

Host: What other functions does IPPMS perform?

CS Agatha Wahome: IPPMS is used to maintain political party membership information and generate party membership registers for purposes such as party primaries. It is also used in relation to certification of registers for electoral processes.

The system maintains information on political party officials and provides disaggregated data. For example, a party can establish how many women, youth and persons with disabilities are represented in its membership.

The system also helps prevent duplication because a person cannot simultaneously belong to more than one political party.

How Kenyans Can Check Their Political Party Membership

Host: How can someone check whether they are registered as a member of a political party?

CS Agatha Wahome: The process is simple. You can use the USSD code ***509#** to check your political party membership status.

The service also enables eligible users to join or resign from a political party. Political party membership services are also available through eCitizen under the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties.

For certain categories of members, such as elected representatives whose positions are connected to their political party membership, additional controls apply. They cannot simply use the ordinary self-service process to resign. There are procedures that must be followed involving the political party and the Office.

When a Member Supports Another Political Party

Host: We sometimes see people who belong to one political party openly supporting another. How is that handled?

CS Agatha Wahome: The Political Parties Act provides circumstances under which a member may be deemed to have left their political party.

Where a political party considers that one of its members is promoting the ideology of another party, supporting another political party or participating in the formation of another political party, the law provides a process for dealing with such circumstances.

The authority to initiate action against such a member lies with the political party itself. ORPP's role is to ensure that the party follows the proper procedure as provided for in its constitution and the applicable law.

This includes ensuring that fair administrative action is observed and that the affected member is given an opportunity to respond.

Once the required process has been completed and an elected member has been removed from the political party, the relevant political party communicates with the appropriate institution, such as the National Assembly, Senate or County Assembly, depending on the position held by the affected member. The subsequent processes can then take effect.

Civic Education and Political Participation

Host: What role does civic education play in helping Kenyans understand these processes?

CS Agatha Wahome: We need considerable civic education so that Kenyans understand the processes that exist, the applicable laws and the steps available to them when particular circumstances arise.

Political parties themselves have a responsibility to educate their members on political and electoral processes. That is part of civic education as far as political participation is concerned.

As an Office, we also try to reach as many Kenyans as possible through different channels. We conduct forums targeting groups such as youth and women and work with partners who are able to reach communities at the grassroots.

It is something that we need to continue strengthening as a country so that this information reaches as many people as possible.

Reservation of Political Party Names

Host: What happens when someone has been using a particular movement or party name publicly and later discovers that someone else has already reserved it?

CS Agatha Wahome: The process of registering a political party begins with reserving a name, colours, slogan and abbreviation.

Once an individual or group has expressed interest and successfully reserved a name, that name cannot be given to another applicant while the reservation remains valid or while the registration process is ongoing.

This is important because allowing political parties to have very similar names could create confusion, including during elections.

What If Someone Discovers They Are Registered in a Party?

Host: A listener says they have discovered that their name is registered under a political party. How can they leave?

CS Agatha Wahome: Following the introduction of IPMS in 2021, consent became an important part of political party membership registration.

A person who discovers that they are registered in a political party and wishes to resign can use *509# or access the political party membership service through eCitizen.

Maintaining Registration Requirements

Host: What happens if a political party's membership falls below the minimum required after it has already been fully registered?

CS Agatha Wahome: The requirements for registration must be maintained throughout the life of the political party.

ORPP has a compliance function that monitors whether political parties continue meeting those requirements. If a party falls below the prescribed membership threshold or fails to meet another requirement, the Office first issues a notice informing the party of the non-compliance and requiring it to rectify the situation.

If the party does not rectify the matter within the stipulated period, it may face suspension. Continued failure to correct the non-compliance can ultimately lead to deregistration, subject to the applicable processes.

Political Party Funding and Accountability

Host: Does ORPP audit the finances of political parties?

CS Agatha Wahome: Yes. For political parties that qualify for funding from the Political Parties Fund, they are required to submit work plans showing how the funds will be utilised.

There are requirements regarding expenditure, including allocations towards promoting representation of women, persons with disabilities, youth, minorities and marginalised groups, as well as limits relating to administrative expenditure.

ORPP reviews the work plans before releasing funds and subsequently monitors implementation against the approved activities.

Funds are released on a quarterly basis, subject to the availability of government resources.

Who Qualifies for the Political Parties Fund?

Host: Which political parties qualify to receive money from the Political Parties Fund?

CS Agatha Wahome: Eligibility is determined by law.

Among the requirements discussed is that a political party must have at least one elected representative, such as a Member of the National Assembly, Senator, Governor or Member of a County Assembly.

There are also requirements relating to gender representation within the party's governing body. Once the eligibility requirements are met, a political party enters the pool of parties eligible for funding.

The Fund is then distributed according to the formula prescribed in law, including factors relating to electoral performance and representation of special interest groups.

Political parties are also required to prepare financial statements at the end of the financial year and make the required disclosures. ORPP reviews the statements for compliance, and political parties are also subject to external audit.

Funding Shortfalls

Host: There have been reports that political parties are owed substantial amounts of money. How does that arise?

CS Agatha Wahome: The Political Parties Fund is provided for as a proportion of national government revenue. However, because of fiscal constraints, the Government may not always be able to provide the full allocation.

This is not unique to the Political Parties Fund; government institutions may also experience budget reductions and austerity measures depending on the available fiscal space.

The amounts described as being owed may therefore represent the difference between what was actually allocated and what would have been received if the Fund had received the full amount provided for.

Once funds are made available to the Political Parties Fund, however, they are distributed among qualifying political parties according to the prescribed criteria.

Closing Remarks: Participate in Political Processes

CS Agatha Wahome: It is very important for Kenyans to participate in political and electoral processes. Our Constitution gives citizens the right to form, join and participate in the formation of political parties.

Political parties play an important role in producing the country's leaders. Kenyans should therefore seek information about political parties, understand their ideologies and participate meaningfully in political processes.

Participation should go beyond simply joining a political party. Citizens should take an active interest in the processes through which political parties identify and develop their leadership.

Editor's Note: *This transcript has been edited from the original Radio Generation interview for clarity, readability and flow. Repetitions, filler words, unrelated commentary and non-substantive portions of the broadcast have been removed while retaining the substance of the discussion.*