

## **ABSTRACT**

Thesis Title : The Role and Authority of the Speaker of the House  
of Representatives, The Kingdom of Thailand

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Thailand adopts a parliamentary democratic form of government with the King as Head of State. The Constitution has established the rule of law and democratic principles as the foundation of government. The National Assembly, consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate, represents the people and is responsible for legislative matters, monitoring the country's administration, granting approvals in important national affairs, appointing watchdog bodies as required by the Constitution and impeaching high-ranking officials. The National Assembly not only works in accordance with the Constitution and Rules of Procedure, but also relies on traditional norms which it adapts for its own operations.

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate are under the administration of the National Assembly President. The Constitution stipulates that the House of Representatives Speaker also serves as the National Assembly President, with the Senate Speaker as Vice President. The House of Representatives Speaker plays an important role in both parliamentary sessions, Senate and House of Representatives.

The roles and responsibilities of the House Speaker are stipulated by the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure, which the House Speaker relies on when making decisions or issuing orders. He also refers to traditional norms—decisions made or orders issued by his predecessors as his guidance.

Studies have shown differences in roles and responsibilities among the United Kingdom's House of Commons Speaker and his American and French counterparts as a result of their different governmental system. The House of Commons Speaker plays an important role and has a great influence in parliamentary sessions as the country is in the parliamentary system. His French counterpart, however, plays a less significant role as France is in a parliamentary-presidential system, where the House of Representatives has limited power and is under the influence of the executive power. The French House Speaker's responsibilities are under control of a committee consisting of representatives from different political groups of the House. The U.S. House of Representatives Speaker primarily serves as the chairperson in parliamentary sessions since the country adopts the presidential system of government. The U.S. House of Representatives only has the legislative power and the right to impeach civilians. Most of its activities are carried out by House Committees.

Thailand's House of Representatives Speaker, similar to his British counterpart, plays a greater role. Nevertheless, their performances are somewhat different. The House of Commons Speaker is traditionally recognized for his impartiality and is placed above all members of the House. On the contrary, Thailand's House of Representatives has not established good legal, governmental norms and, as a result, its speaker has faced many problems and obstacles when performing his duties. Despite using the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and

traditional norms as guidance, the House Speaker has not been receiving due respect from members of parliament.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 and the House of Representatives' Rules of Procedure have stipulated the roles and authority of the House Speaker. Most of the House Speaker's responsibilities as stipulated by the Constitution are not legally problematic as the Constitution has clearly indicated what the Speaker must do. His duties stipulated by the Rules of Procedure, however, have faced a lot of problems which, coupled with an incomplete application of legal norms, has affected the House Speaker's impartiality and the efficiency of parliamentary sessions.

In order for the House Speaker to perform his duties more efficiently, good legal norms must be established to ensure that members of the House of Representatives speak politely, abide by the Rules of Procedure, respect and abide by the House Speaker's rulings, and make no criticism of the House Speaker's past actions. The House Speaker should be given the authority to ask any members violating his authority to leave the room. At the same time, the House Speaker's approach in issuing rulings and orders should be adapted and systematically applied as good legal norms.

The present Rules of Procedure enforced in parliamentary sessions, particularly those involving the roles and responsibilities of the House Speaker should be amended. These include his responsibilities in scheduling parliamentary session, ordering the inclusion of certain issues into parliamentary sessions' agenda, smoothly running parliamentary sessions by giving permission to members of parliament and cabinet members to speak, ending debates, and determining what actions are considered a violation of the Rules of Procedure. His other responsibilities include

imposing certain regulations to help enforce the Rules of Procedure, and signing off on parliamentary session reports. Such amendment would enable the House Speaker to perform his duties efficiently and impartially, which would be most beneficial to parliamentary sessions. Such amendment notwithstanding, the House Speaker would not be able to maintain his impartiality if he continues to perform political activities with the party he is affiliated with. Therefore, political norms must be established to prevent the House Speaker from giving support to his party's political activities. This can be achieved by amending the Constitution.