



# THE ADVOCACY BULLETIN

*The Nigerian Physicians Advocacy Group*



## WHAT'S IN THE NEW ELECTORAL BILL

*Susan Edionwe MD, FACS*

February 25, 2022 marks the official day President Muhammadu Buhari signed the reworked Electoral Act Amendment bill. This move has drawn wide-spread praise. Just what is in this bill that Nigerians at home and in the diaspora should be thrilled about? Here are some key provisions to know:

The bill makes a push to decrease voter fraud and manipulation such as with:

- *Clause 65 which states that INEC, which is the electoral body that oversees elections in Nigeria, can review results declared under duress AND*
- *Clause 51 which says that the total number of accredited voters will become a factor in determining over-voting at election tribunals.*

There is also:

- *Clause 84 which stipulates that anyone holding a political office – ministers, commissioners, special advisers and others – must relinquish the position before they can be eligible to participate in the electoral process either as a candidate or as a delegate.*

### IN THIS ISSUE

**WHAT'S IN THE NEW ELECTORAL BILL**

**ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL**

**THE LOBBY(IST): NPAG'S IMPACT ON THE SIGNING OF THE ELECTORAL BILL**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

This amendment seeks to prevent candidates from the improprieties of using a public office position to influence the voting process.

The amendment bill also allows for improved voter and election preparedness such as with:

- Clause 3(3) which provides early release of election funds to INEC AND
- Clause (28)1 which mandates INEC to issue a Notice of Election not later than 360 days before the day appointed for an election AND
- Clause 94 which allows for early commencement of the campaign season. By this provision, the campaign season will now start 150 days to the election day and end 24 hours before the election.

"A Notice of Election is the official declaration by INEC to electorates and political parties of the dates of elections; the timelines for the conduct of party primaries, submission of party nomination forms; and list of candidates. The publication of the Notice of Election is important to the electoral process as it marks the official flag-off and commencement of electoral activities". (Premium Times) By increasing this from 90 days to 360 days, there is more time for eligible candidates to be nominated, for primaries to be held and for voters to be aware of who is running.



Plus, by providing funds earlier, INEC would be more financially equipped to run a sooner and longer electioneering process.

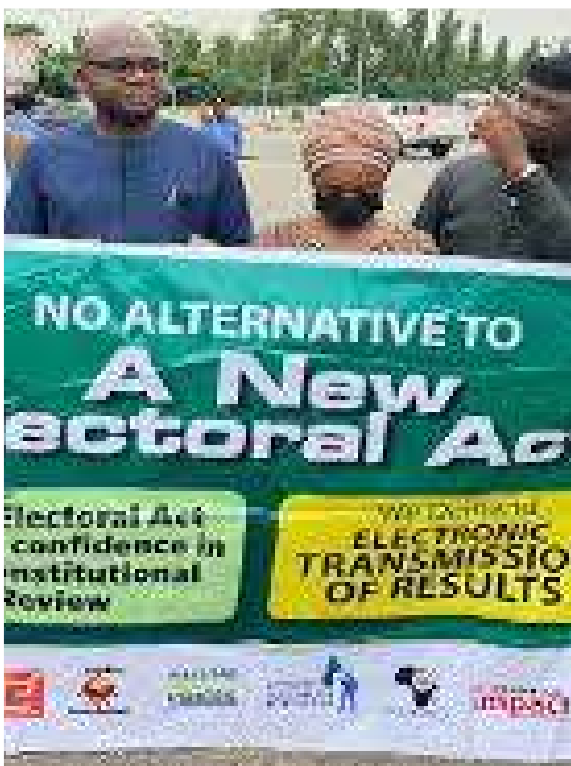
The amendment bill also touts provisions that appeal to the use of technology to improve the voting process and give it better legal support.

- Clause 47 gives legislative backing for smart card readers and any other voter accreditation technology that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) deploy.
- Clause 50 gives INEC the legal backing for electronic transmission of election results.

Increasing the use of modern technology also serves to decrease voter fraud and manipulation.

Lastly, to ensure a nonpartisan INEC, there is:

- Clause 8(5): Political Neutrality of INEC Personnel which proposes that any INEC official who is affiliated to a political party, if caught, is liable on conviction to a fine of N5 million or imprisonment for two years or both.



***What is one provision notably absent from the Electoral Act Amendment Bill? DIASPORA VOTING.***

While 2/25/22 marks a day of success, the lack of diaspora voting remains a significant sore spot that ensures advocacy for electoral reform must persist.

## ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

***Biodun Ogungbo, MBBS, FRCSEd, FRCS(SN), MSc***

I do not like to play politics. I do not like to even play with politics. I stay away from politicians as much as I can. I cannot stand them for they are like shifting sands; or should I say they are like quicksand which could very quickly change and swallow you. Shifting mud really...they stain you and taint you. It is not easy to relate to them for they are only ever interested in what benefits them now.

Yet, they control our very life and existence.

So, one cannot really run away from politics and politicians! Politics affects our lives whether one recognizes it or not. Paying top Naira for clearing your medical equipment at the port is influenced by the politician. Paying multiple taxes is from the politician's table. I could go on and on.

***So, not engaging with politics is increasingly no longer an option. It is only to ones' detriment in the long run.***

So, we all have a way to influence politics that may benefit us in the future.

The politician who comes to the office to bare his soul and share his health issues has your ears and vice versa. So, how can you bend his ears? This is called earwiggling. How can you ignore the opportunity to educate him or her and send a message? The fact is that the message may not be acted upon immediately but stored in a repository



for use later: when the benefit to the politician comes to the fore.

This is important.

They will only do what benefits them. But we can educate them and shine a light on how what benefits them can also be beneficial to the majority. How doing good for the majority is in their best interest too. It is time to look the devil in the eye and get a shorter spoon. In whatever capacity we find ourselves, in proximity to a politician, do not hold your nose and hope the smell goes away, spray some perfume and engage.

They may indeed like the fragrance and buy some for themselves.

Start today. Right in your own home, talk politics and stop saying politics is not for you. It is for everyone and affects our lives in more ways than we care to realize. Get registered and collect your voting card. Then, understand what is happening in your own local government and get involved. Let your vote influence what is happening in your backyard. It will translate to what is happening at a higher level.

***All politics is local.***



# The LOBBY(IST)

## NPAG'S IMPACT ON THE SIGNING OF THE ELECTORAL BILL

Iyore James MD/MALD, FACS

NPAG sponsored RTLA in lobbying engagement to facilitate the passage of the electoral Bill at the level of the National Assembly. There are several CSO's also working in this space that have really engaged in a coordinated fashion to push this agenda. Success would have been impossible without this coordinated effort.

In the US: I was honored to present our case to Dana Banks during a virtual meeting organized by Constituency for Africa (CFA) on 2/10/22. My specific ask was to let Mr. President Biden know that we the Nigerian American Physicians group need external pressure from the WH to Aso Rock to have the Bill signed. Dana Banks promised to flag the issue. She is the Special Assistant and Special Counsel to President Biden on Africa.

Through a relationship with NiDPAC- I wrote letters to Senator Bob Menendez, Congressman Brendan Boyle, and Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester. These are individuals that NiDPAC supported financially.

**CHECK OUT PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE NPAG ADVOCACY BULLETIN**

**WWW.NPAGROUP.ORG**



**Time to RENEW your dues for 2022!**

**WWW.NPAGROUP.ORG**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Whether we like to admit it or not, politics affects our lives daily. Imagine if the American civil rights movement didn't happen; imagine if the fight for apartheid didn't happen; imagine a world led by authoritarians.

We are not asking you to leave your comfort zone but we could use the financial resources. Check out <https://www.npagroup.org> for up to date information on all the exciting things NPAG is doing. Sponsor a project.

Iyore James MD/MALD, FACS