



CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION LAUNCHES AS WATCHDOG OVER POLITICAL PARTY FUNDING

Recent history in South Africa has laid bare how money and narrow interests have captured the state, influenced our politics, derailed service delivery, weakened our institutions, and threatened our democracy. We have recently faced one of the greatest moments of upheaval in our country since the dawn of democracy. The protests in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal have exposed the extent to which looting of state resources can deeply affect the lives of ordinary people. It is the people and communities living in townships and rural areas, facing widespread unemployment and little or no access to basic services such as food, water and housing, who have paid the biggest price. Even as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to ravage communities across all provinces, corruption and malfeasance have continued relentlessly, limiting our ability to provide an effective response to this and future crises.

In this context and after more than two years of campaigning by civil society, the country celebrated the enactment of the Political Party Funding Act (PPFA) on 1 April 2021, which ushered in a new era in our democracy. The Act creates a much-needed transparency framework that aims to ensure that political parties disclose information about who funds them.

The Act also provides for the establishment and management of a public and private fund, while prohibiting donations to parties by foreign governments or agencies, foreign persons or entities, organs of state or state-owned enterprises. In addition, it makes provision for the regulation on disclosure of accepted donations and assigns powers and duties to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to administer and manage funds.

The creation of a coalition of civil society organisations and activists, supported by the work of journalists, has been prompted by an interest in and commitment to deepening our democracy and holding leaders of political parties to account. The purpose of the Coalition on Party Funding is to advocate for a transparent and accountable political funding space through collective action. This is to deter corruption and inept governance that has historically been shown to be a consequence of unregulated private money in politics. The Coalition's purpose is to demand accountability and take steps to ensure it. The Coalition will focus on ensuring that the political party funding regulatory framework created by the Act will facilitate the transparency and accountability that it promises. The Coalition will work alongside the Act to engender political practices that work in the best interests of all in South Africa.

The Coalition launched today recognises that political parties are essential vehicles through which people can participate in our democracy, and that effective implementation of the Act will deter government corruption, enhance transparency and accountability and, ultimately, contribute to a stronger and more robust democratic order.

Ahead of the first set of party funding disclosures by political parties under the Act, the proposed Local Government Elections, the first task of the Coalition is to focus its campaigning on ensuring that the Act is implemented effectively, does what it purports to do and supports the IEC in its mandate to administer the Act ensuring that they are adequately capacitated.

The Coalition pledges to work collectively to:

- Monitor and evaluate compliance with the funding disclosure process.
- Make information on who funds and influences political parties more accessible to the public.
- Provide voters with information to help make informed voting decisions.
- Advocate around the limitations in the existing PPFA legislation that hamper its ability to ensure that political parties are transparent and accountable and
- Work towards changing our political space so that it is not influenced by money and narrow interests but is owned by all.

The Coalition calls on all other members of civil society organisations, academia, the media and the public to closely follow the upcoming disclosures and to advocate for full transparency in the process. We invite interested parties to join the Coalition in pushing for the effective implementation of the PPFA, as a matter of primary importance in our democracy, and of significant public interest.

It is time for transparency in our political systems, and accountable mechanisms that provide voters with information. The Coalition provides another tool to hold political parties to accounts, expose corruption and undue political influence when it occurs.

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Endorsed by:

- 1. My Vote Counts**
- 2. Corruption Watch**
- 3. Right 2 Know**
- 4. Helen Suzman Foundation**
- 5. Ahmed Kathadra Foundation**