

Are MPs choosing their Speaker or confirming a party decision?

As Uganda prepares for the formation of the 12th Parliament, attention is turning to the race for Speaker. A few politicians have openly declared interest, while others are quietly being mentioned in corridors and talk shows.

On paper, that sounds like healthy democracy: Members of Parliament weighing options and choosing a leader. But many observers are asking a harder question.

When MPs finally vote, will they truly be choosing their Speaker, or confirming a decision already shaped within party structures?

The Constitution states that after a new Parliament is sworn in, MPs elect the Speaker by secret ballot. In theory, this method protects independence.

The person in the chair should command the confidence of the whole House and act as a neutral referee during debate.

Reality, however, is rarely that tidy. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) holds a comfortable majority in Parliament, giving the party enormous influence over leadership positions, including the Speakership.

Once party organs rally behind one candidate, the outcome of the parliamentary vote often feels predictable.

Recent signals of support for the incumbent Speaker from senior party figures have only sharpened the debate.

Endorsements from powerful leaders are common in politics, especially within dominant party systems.

Still, they raise an uncomfortable question about how free MPs feel when the moment to vote arrives.

Even with a secret ballot, politics rarely dis-

Parties will always influence outcomes



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Speaker race



appears. Party loyalty, personal ambition, and the need to remain in good standing with leadership all weigh heavily. For many legislators, the calculation is not only about who would make the best Speaker, but also about political survival.

Yet the issue goes beyond personalities. The election of a Speaker is often the first moment a new Parliament can demonstrate institutional independence.

It is a chance for legislators to show that the House can organise itself without quiet instructions from elsewhere.

In Uganda, that independence has long been debated. Critics warn that close ties between party leadership and parliamentary leadership weaken Parliament's ability to check the Executive.

Supporters respond that parties are central to democracy and that the majority party naturally leads the House.

The truth probably sits somewhere in be-

tween. Parties will always influence outcomes, particularly where discipline is strong.

Still, Parliament's credibility depends on whether its leaders appear capable of rising above narrow partisan interests.

The Speaker's office carries real authority. The person in the chair decides who speaks, interprets the rules, and keeps debate moving.

During tense political moments, those decisions can shape national conversation and the strength of parliamentary oversight.

Because of that power, the individual holding the gavel must earn trust across the aisle. When members believe the Speaker is fair, they are more willing to accept rulings, even when those decisions frustrate them.

As the race for the next Speakership gathers pace, the country is watching closely. Will MPs study the candidates and judge their experience, temperament, and commitment to neutrality? Or will internal party calculations settle the matter long before the ballot boxes appear?

The answer will say much about the future of Parliament. If MPs exercise real independence, public confidence in the Legislature could grow stronger. If the vote is seen as a mere formality, doubts about Parliament's autonomy will deepen.

When legislators rise to cast their ballots, they will not only be choosing a Speaker. They will be declaring how independent their Parliament is willing to be.

In the end the Speakership vote will test whether loyalty or judgment carries greater weight inside Uganda's Parliament truly today.

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