

National News

Power of numbers gives NRM grip on House, laws

The NRM growing dominance in Parliament has steadily weakened Opposition influence and reshaped the legislative power balance.

BY BUSEIN SAMILU

As the number of MPs from the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party continues to grow by tens over the last five terms, the tally of their Opposition counterparts only minimally fluctuates.

An analysis by *Daily Monitor* of the Parliament and Electoral Commission (EC) documents revealed that the number of NRM party MPs has, since the return of multiparty democracy in 2005, been increasing by between 30 and 50 new members each new term.

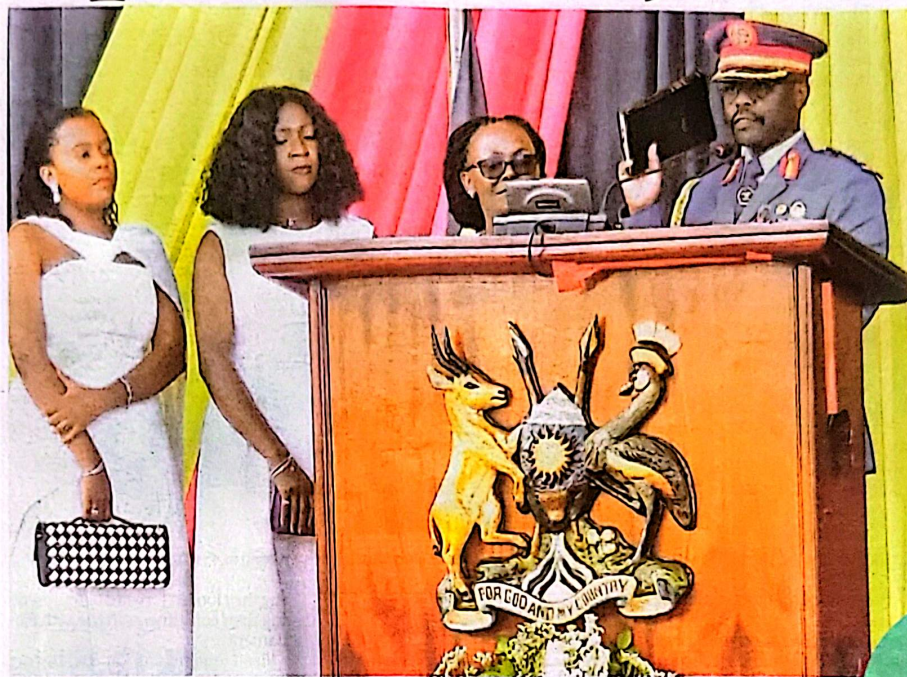
Data from the two documents show the NRM party has, in the last five terms, enjoyed the majority, followed by Independents, with the leading Opposition political party at every election cycle coming third.

The data also reveal that the Opposition, combined with the Independents, has never formed half of the House. On their part, the NRM party officials, who talked to this newspaper yesterday credited their growing numbers to effective mobilization, and good governance.

In both the outgoing 11th Parliament and the new one, whose members started swearing-in yesterday, the National Unity Platform (NUP) party has enjoyed the majority Opposition numbers, while the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party was the leading opposition party in the 8th, 9th, and 10th Parliaments.

Numbers over the years

In the 2006 elections, in which the NRM candidate and incumbent President Museveni won, the party took the majority of parliamentary seats after winning 213 out of the total 319 slots.



Brig David Robert Gonyi takes oath. PHOTO/PARLIAMENT X HANDLE

The FDC party, whose presidential candidate, the now incarcerated Dr Kizza Besigye, came second, scooped 37 seats while the Independents won 40. The combined Opposition then occupied 17 percent of the House members.

The game of numbers became even more imbalanced in the subsequent 2016 and 2021 Parliament, where the NRM took 72 percent of the 365 parliamentary slots, with the e Opposition,

together with the Independents, securing 101 seats, representing only percent.

It was a similar situation in the 10th Parliament as NRM won 293 of the total 416 seats, translating into 70 percent, while the entire Opposition and Independents shared the rest.

When NUP party took over from the FDC as the leading Opposition in 2021, its numbers grew, but did not surpass the number of Independents.

The party, despite retaining its Opposition numerical strength, had its legislators reduced from the current 57 in the 2021 polls to 49, who are part of those swearing-in this week.

In the incoming House, the NRM party secured 372 of the 519-elective seats, with 353 direct constituency, 146 District Women representatives, and the 20 Special Needs Groups. These are followed by NUP with 49, the Uganda

Peoples Congress (UPC) with 09, Democratic Party (DP) with 01, Alliance for National Transformation (ANT) with 01.

In the outgoing Parliament, NRM had 337 members, followed by NUP with 57, FDC 32, UPC 10, DP 1, People's Progressive Party (PPP) 1, the Justice Forum with one member each.

Dr Juma Kakuba Sultan, a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Kyambogo University, said the growing number of Opposition legislators is a deliberate effort by the NRM, which he says suffocates the Opposition.

"Standing on an NRM ticket gives you an automatic facilitation. It is not the case with other parties. Everyone will like to associate with such a party. Secondly, the government does not allow the Opposition to freely conduct their activities in the country and this has adversely affected the Opposition," he said.

He added, "There is also a lack of civic education, for example, the people don't know the advantage of voting and keeping the values of a political party; that's why a few individuals keep the values, and the majority is running away."

Why numbers matter

During the second and third reading of any Bill, it requires at least three-quarters of House members to pass it.

Despite the Opposition putting up formidable debates in the past, NRM has been taking the day to its numerical strength. This has seen controversial Bills such as the Protection of Special Powers Bill, 2020, and the Amendment Bill, 2021, among others, being passed.

Dr Sultan said similar laws are destined to shrink further. Mr Fred Ebil, the UPC secretary general, said despite their small numbers they will still influence the debate in the House by swaying the majority.

"We have trained our legislators and asked them to stand with what the people of Uganda want. We asked them to always debate and ensure they sway the majority of NRM members to their side so that they formulate pro-people laws," he said.

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372
NRM MPs
VOTED IN 2026
POLLS

Year	Parliament	Total MPs	NRM	Independents	Leading Opposition	Total Opposition
2026-2031	12th	529	372	68	NUP - 49	79
2021-2026	11th	529	337	73	NUP - 57	110
2016-2021	10th	416	293	66	FDC - 36	57
2011-2016	9th	365	263	43	FDC - 34	58
2006-2011	8th	319	213	40	FDC - 37	56

What some MPs say...

Godfrey Alenya, Joseph Ganyu, MP