

SOME LAWMAKERS SAY EXTENDING THE TERM OF LEGISLATORS IS A VIOLATION OF THE TRUST OF VOTERS

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The current Members of Parliament and elected local council leaders will remain in office until 2023, under the Constitution Amendment Bill, 2017 passed by Parliament on Wednesday.

Among other things, the Bill that now awaits President Yoweri Museveni's assent has extended the term of the current MPs and all the elected local government leaders from five years to seven years, according to top government officials.

The term of the current legislators was initially scheduled to expire in 2021, having been elected in February and sworn in in May 2016.

According to the Deputy Attorney General, Mwesigwa Rukutana, once the Constitution Amendment Bill, 2017 is assented to by President Museveni, there will be no election for the affected leaders in 2021. The elections will instead take place in 2023.

Rukutana told *New Vision* that with the amendment of the transition provisions in the Constitution, the extension of the term to seven years became effective May 2016, when the 10th Parliament was sworn in.

He said this is to allow the current leadership to have sufficient time to concentrate on work instead of politicking.

However, Rukutana said Parliament did not amend the term of the President because under the Constitution, it can only be changed through a referendum under Article 260.

Asked when the referendum would be conducted, the deputy AG said it is in the interest of Government to ensure that the presidential and Parliament terms rhyme.

"We shall hold it quickly.

# Term of current MPs, local councils extended to 2023

**NRM MPs and cabinet ministers (standing, left to right) Frank Tumwebaze, Mwesigwa Rukutana, Chris Baryomunsi and Ruth Nankabirwa celebrate after getting the majority vote on the age limit Bill on Wednesday.**  
Photo by Miriam Namutebi



We shall go out and ask the voters to endorse the provision and make the two terms run concurrently," Rukutana revealed.

The Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otafiire, confirmed, too, that the term of the current MPs and elected local governments leaders will run up to 2023.

Despite protests from the Opposition, the House passed the Bill, with new provisions that provide for the restoration of two term limits and increasing the term of the current Parliament and local councils to seven years.

The MPs also overwhelmingly

**Justifying the extension of terms, MP Michael Tusiime said legislators need enough time to deliver services to the people**

voted to lift the presidential age limit.

The new provisions were not part of the amendments tabled by Igara West MP Raphael Magyezi. Instead, they were part of the general recommendations contained in the legal and parliamentary

affairs committee report.

However, it was Mbarara Municipality MP Michael Tusiime that officially moved a motion in the House to extend the term of office to seven years.

Tusiime argued that based on research, it does not make

economic sense to carry out both parliamentary and local council elections within a short period of time.

"Through research, we have established that the country spends about sh4 trillion on elections. Uganda is not rich enough to spend that kind of money on elections," he said.

Tusiime argued that members needed sufficient time to deliver service, and seven years would be appropriate.

"The election process is tiresome and very expensive. Unfortunately, before the elected leaders settle down to do their work, campaigns start and party primaries are on.

A serious government cannot operate like this," he said.

However, Opposition MPs argued that members had a contract of five years with their electorates and extending it means violation of the terms of the contract.

They proposed that rather than starting with them, the extension should have started with the next Parliament.

Jackson Mbaju (Busongora South) said: "I do not support the seven years because we already have an agreement with our people. One person cannot decide to extend it without consulting the other party.

Winfred Kiiza, the Leader of Opposition in Parliament, said they are opposed to the Bill and have agreed to go to court to challenge the entire process, from where it started on September 27 to Wednesday.

"We are going to the people now to tell us what they want us to do next. This law is selfish and for an individual, but the mantle is now back to the people. That is why we are now calling our campaign *Kogikutteko* (now that you have touched it).

Lyandro Komakech (Gulu Municipality) said the extension of term of office betrays the people of Uganda.

However, Rukutana said Parliament has the mandate to make laws for the good of the country and "that is exactly what we have done".

It is not first time that Parliament has extended its term. In 1967, the House extended its term for five more years after promulgating a new Constitution that declared the country a republic.

Meanwhile, MP Hamson Denis Obua yesterday clarified that he attended and voted in favour of the Constitution Amendment Bill. He was responding to reports he was absent during voting for the Bill to be read a second time.