

LEAD DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORP ACT
CAP N84 LFN 2004 (AMENDMENT) BLL 2017.

Sponsored by **Senator Emmanuel Bwacha**

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on the general principles of the National Youth Service Corp Act (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

Objectives of the Bill

This Bill is intended to amend sections 13 and 16 of the Principal Act to achieve the following objectives –

- (1) increase the penalty for the offences contained in the Act to make such fines reflect the present value of the naira; and
- (2) ensure that regulations made by the NYSC Directorate prescribing uniforms and exercise regimen do not violate the religious practices/beliefs of corps members.

Brief Background to the Bill

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the NYSC is a laudable scheme established in 1973 by the then military Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon as part of the effort by the federal government to rebuild , reconstruct and reconcile Nigerians following the unfortunate incidents of the civil war which ended in 1970.

It is important to point out that while the scheme has lived up to expectation as a reliable platform for nurturing young patriotic Nigerians, fostering unity and promoting a better understanding of our religious and cultural differences, it has however become necessary to amend the Principal Act to address observed lapses and shortcomings. One of such lapses is that the penalty for offences contained in the Act is now outdated and in need of urgent review. Secondly, while section 16 of the Principal Act mandates the NYSC Directorate to make regulations or bye-laws relating to discipline, exercise regimen, uniforms, welfare of corps etc, uniforms and drills adopted by the Directorate has become a basis for tension and controversy between the Directorate and corps members and other members of the public. The major bone of contention is that some of the uniforms and drills contravene religious beliefs and practices of corps members and invariably their right to freedom of religion, thought and conscience under the Nigerian Constitution. This bill essentially addresses the above mentioned lapses in the Principal Act.

Mr President, Distinguished Colleagues, from the foregoing therefore, the proposed amendment reinforces the right to freedom of religion under section 38 of the 1999 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

as, amended, and Article 8 of the African Charter on Human and People's Right (Ratification and Enforcement) Act by making it mandatory for the NYSC Directorate to adopt alternative uniforms and exercise regimen or drills that are tolerable to the religious conscience of corps members . This in essence will put to rest the current agitations and tension from corps members or other members of the public on these sensitive issues.

Distinguished Colleagues, the intendment of the Bill is quite simple and I will therefore appeal that you give your overwhelming support for the Second reading of this Bill.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, this Bill has no financial implication and no compendium is attached as required by **Order 77(3) of the Senate Standing Orders, 2015**, as amended.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

**A BILL
FOR**

AN ACT TO AMEND THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORP ACT, CAP.N84,
LAWS OF THE FEDERATION OF NIGERIA, 2004

*Sponsored by Senator **Emmanuel Bwacha**
(Taraba South)*

BE IT ENACTED by the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria As
Follows -

AMENDMENT OF CAP.84 LFN, 2004

The National Youth Service Corp Act, Cap.N84, Laws of the Federation of
Nigeria, 2004 (hereinafter referred to as "the Principal Act") is amended as set
out in this Bill -

AMENDMENT OF SECTION 13

Section 13 of the Principal Act is amended by:

(a) substituting for the sum " N2,000" in subsection (1), paragraph (b), line 3,
the sum " N100,000"

(b) substituting for the sum " N4,000" in subsection (2), paragraph (b), line 5,
the sum " N200,000"

AMENDMENT OF SECTION 16

Section 16 of the Principal Act is amended by inserting the following new
subsection" (3) " after the existing subsection " (2)", that is:

"(3) In exercising its powers under subsection (2)(a) and(b) of this section, the
Directorate shall take into consideration the need to prescribe or adopt uniforms
and exercise regimen or drills that does not violate the religious practices relating
to modest dressing, and accordingly specify alternative uniforms and exercise
regimen that conforms to the religious dictates and conscience of corps
members as recognized by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of
Nigeria, as amended"

CITATION

This Bill may be cited as the National Youth Service Corp Act (Amendment) Bill,
2017

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

This Bill seeks to increase the penalty for the offences contained in the Act to
make such fines reflect the present value of the naira; and to ensure that in
adopting regulations prescribing uniforms and exercise regimen, the Directorate
take into consideration the religious practices/beliefs of corps members.