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POLICY AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CENTRE

QUICK FACTS ON THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE MODEL FOR WOMEN'S SPECIAL SEATS



Bill Title

A Bill for an Act to Alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to Provide for Additional Special Seats for Women in the Senate, House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly; to Provide for the Filling of those Seats through an Electoral College as a Temporary Special Measure to Increase the Political Representation of Women; and for Related Matters.



Objective of the Bill

The Bill seeks to alter the 1999 Constitution to create additional special seats for women in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. It proposes an Electoral College Model for filling these seats as a temporary special measure to improve women's political representation in Nigeria's elected legislative institutions.

What the Electoral College Model Means

Under the proposed model, women will not be elected into the additional special seats through the general ballot.

Instead, political parties will nominate women candidates, and the seats will be filled through indirect elections conducted by INEC, with members of defined Electoral Colleges voting to elect the successful candidates.

Establishment of Electoral Colleges

Each State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory shall have a State Electoral College for the purpose of electing women into the additional special seats.

The Electoral Colleges will be used to elect women into the proposed additional seats in the:

- Senate
- House of Representatives
- State Houses of Assembly

Composition of the State Electoral College

The Electoral College shall comprise:

1

All elected Chairpersons of Local Government Councils in the State

2

All elected Vice-Chairpersons of Local Government Councils in the State

3

All elected Councillors of Local Government Councils in the State

4

All members representing constituencies in the State House of Assembly

5

All members of the House of Representatives elected from the State

6

All Senators representing the State, and in the case of the FCT, the Senator representing the FCT

Note: Every member of an Electoral College shall be entitled to one vote.

Additional Seats in the Senate

+12 New Senate Seat for Women

The Bill Proposes:

- ✓ 2 women Senators from each of the 6 geopolitical zones
- ✓ A total of 12 additional Senate seats for women

Because the proposed Senate special seats are allocated on a geopolitical zone basis, the FCT is not assigned an additional Senate special seat under this model.

Note: Elections into the additional Senate seats will be conducted on a rotational basis among States within each geopolitical zone. The details of the rotation are to be determined by an Act of the National Assembly.

Additional Seats in the House of Representatives

+37 New House of Representatives Seats for Women

The Bill Proposes:

- ✓ Additional woman representative from each State of the Federation
- ✓ Additional woman representative from the FCT
- ✓ A total of 37 additional House of Representatives seats for women

Existing Seats Remain Open to Women

The additional special seats are not intended to stop women from contesting for existing legislative seats. Women will remain eligible to contest for all existing seats in the Senate, House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly, including:

- ▶ **109** existing Senate seats
- ▶ **360** existing House of Representatives seats
- ▶ **990** existing State Houses of Assembly seats

The special seats are therefore an additional pathway, not a replacement for women's participation in regular elections.

Recall, Vacancy and Accountability

Women elected into the additional special seats will be subject to recall and vacancy provisions, in line with the Constitution and any enabling legislation.

Under the proposed recall process:

- ▶ Recall must be initiated by a petition signed by not less than one-half of the members of the Electoral College that elected her.
 - ▶ The petition must be presented to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).
 - ▶ INEC must verify the signatures within the period to be prescribed by law.
- Where the signatures are verified, the recall must be approved by not less than two-thirds of the members of the Electoral College voting by secret ballot in a referendum conducted by INEC.

Total Number of Additional Seats Proposed

The Bill proposes a total of 157 additional legislative seats for women:

- **Senate: 12** additional seats
- **House of Representatives: 37** additional seats
- **State Houses of Assembly: 108** additional seats

TOTAL: 157 ADDITIONAL SEATS

How Women Will Be Elected

Women will be elected into the additional special seats through indirect elections conducted and supervised by INEC. The process will broadly involve the following:

- ▶ Political parties nominate women candidates.
- ▶ Electoral Colleges are constituted in line with the Constitution and enabling legislation.
- ▶ Members of the Electoral College vote.
- ▶ INEC conducts and supervises the process.
- ▶ Successful candidates are declared elected into the additional special seats.

Temporary Special Measure

The special seats are proposed as a temporary special measure to address the severe underrepresentation of women in Nigeria's legislative institutions.

- ✓ The House of Representatives and State House of Assembly special seats will be reviewed after 16 years or 4 election cycles.
- ✓ The Senate special seats will be reviewed after the completion of the prescribed rotation cycle among States within each geopolitical zone.

Matters to Be Fleshed Out by Law

The National Assembly is expected to provide further details by law on the implementation of the Electoral College Model, including:

- ✓ The rotation arrangement for Senate special seats
- ✓ The procedure for conducting Special Seats elections
- ✓ Nomination processes by political parties
- ✓ Administrative and operational guidelines for INEC
- ✓ Safeguards for transparency, fairness and accountability

Pros and Cons of the Electoral College Model

Potential Advantages	Key Concerns
May provide a more politically acceptable pathway for passing the Special Seats Bill.	Reduces direct voter participation in the election of representatives to the special seats.
Could lower the cost and logistical burden of conducting separate direct elections for the additional seats, as well as the cost of campaigning across States/Zones.	May raise questions around democratic legitimacy and public ownership of the process.
Retains the central objective of increasing women's representation in legislative institutions.	Electoral College members may be vulnerable to party control, elite bargaining or political pressure.
Creates a structured process that can be regulated by law and supervised by INEC.	The credibility of the process will depend heavily on transparent rules and safeguards.
May help secure support for the reform ahead of the 2027 elections.	Women aspirants may still face barriers in party nomination processes.
Provides a temporary special measure to address severe underrepresentation.	Recall and accountability will be exercised through the Electoral College, not directly by the broader electorate.



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About PLAC

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) is a non-governmental organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. PLAC works to enhance citizens' engagement with state institutions, and to promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making process.

The main focus of PLAC's intervention in the democratic governance process is on building the capacity of the legislature and reforming the electoral process. Since its establishment, PLAC has grown into a leading institution with capacity to deliver cutting-edge research, policy analysis and advocacy. PLAC receives funding support from donors and other philanthropic sources.

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