LEAD DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2026

A Bill for an Act to Amend the National Youth Service Corps Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, and for Related Matters.

Sponsor: Hon. Nnamdi Ezechi

Mr Speaker, Honourable Colleagues,

I rise today to lead the debate on the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the National Youth Service Corps Act, Cap. N84, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, and for related matters.

Mr Speaker, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme was established with the noble objectives of promoting national unity, integration, understanding and the spirit of common citizenship among Nigerian youths. For decades, the scheme has provided an avenue for young graduates from different parts of our country to interact, serve, learn and contribute to national development.

These objectives remain as relevant today as they were at the inception of the scheme. However, as our country continues to evolve, it is important that we periodically review aspects of our laws and policies to ensure that they remain responsive to the realities, needs and aspirations of our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Colleagues, the Bill before this House seeks to introduce a practical and flexible approach to the posting of prospective corps members by ensuring that persons qualified to participate in the NYSC scheme are posted to states within their respective geopolitical zones, while preserving their right to voluntarily opt to serve in any other state of their choice.

The Bill proposes to amend Section 2 of the principal Act by inserting two new subsections, namely subsections (5) and (6).

The proposed subsection (5) provides as follows:

"The National Youth Service Corps shall ensure that any person qualified to serve in the Service Corps under this Act is posted to any state in his geopolitical zone."

The proposed subsection (6) further provides:

"Notwithstanding the provision of subsection (5) of Section 2 of this Act, a person who desires to serve in any other state shall apply to the National Youth Service Corps for posting to the state of his choice."

Mr Speaker, these provisions seek to establish a clear and fair framework that balances the objectives of national integration with the practical considerations that influence the lives of young Nigerians.

First, the amendment will promote the welfare and well-being of corps members. Many graduates face financial constraints, family responsibilities and other personal circumstances when they are mobilised for national service. Posting corps members within their geopolitical zones can help reduce the financial burden associated with travelling long distances, securing accommodation and settling in unfamiliar environments. This will enable more young Nigerians to commence and complete their service year with greater stability.

Second, the Bill will provide a measure of flexibility without undermining national unity. The proposed subsection (6) expressly recognises that some prospective corps members may wish to serve outside their geopolitical zones. Such individuals will retain the opportunity to apply to the NYSC for posting to a state of their choice. The amendment, therefore, does not impose an absolute restriction on interstate service; rather, it provides a general framework while allowing voluntary choices.

Third, the amendment will promote fairness and individual choice. It establishes a clear statutory basis for zone-based postings while providing an avenue for corps members who have legitimate reasons or personal preferences to seek deployment elsewhere. This will help create a more predictable posting process and reduce the uncertainty that some prospective corps members experience.

Fourth, the proposal will enable corps members to contribute meaningfully to development within their geopolitical zones. Nigeria's six geopolitical zones contain diverse communities, institutions and development needs. Deploying corps members within their zones can help strengthen local institutions, improve access to graduate manpower and encourage young professionals to contribute to the development of their wider regions. At the same time, those who wish to explore other parts of the country will remain free to apply for such opportunities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Colleagues, I wish to emphasise that this Bill is not intended to diminish the importance of national integration, which remains a foundational objective of the NYSC scheme. Rather, it seeks to achieve a more balanced approach by accommodating the welfare and circumstances of corps members while preserving the opportunity for those who voluntarily wish to serve outside their geopolitical zones.

The ability to serve in another part of Nigeria should remain an opportunity for national learning, cultural exchange and mutual understanding. However, such an opportunity should not necessarily come at the expense of the personal circumstances or financial capacity of every prospective corps member.

Mr Speaker, the proposed amendment also provides the NYSC with a statutory framework for administering these postings. In implementing the provisions, the Service will need to maintain an orderly application process for those seeking deployment outside their geopolitical zones and ensure that such requests are considered in accordance with its operational requirements and applicable guidelines.

Honourable Colleagues, the passage of this Bill will represent a meaningful step towards a more flexible, responsive and welfare-conscious national service scheme. It will recognise that while our young people have a responsibility to contribute to nation-building, the system must equally take reasonable account of their circumstances and choices.

I therefore urge this Honourable House to support the principles and objectives of this Bill by allowing it to pass second reading and proceed to the relevant Committee for further legislative scrutiny.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Colleagues, I so move.