



Press Release

RE: Withdrawal of the Compulsory Voting Bill (HB1930) – A Welcome Commitment to Democratic Freedom

We acknowledge the decision by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, Ph.D., GCON, to withdraw the Compulsory Voting Bill (HB1930) following widespread public concern and stakeholder engagement.

HB1930, which sought to amend the Electoral Act 2022 to make voting mandatory for all eligible Nigerians, proposed punitive measures for non-participation in elections, including fines of up to ₦100,000 or imprisonment for six months. While the Bill was introduced with the stated aim of boosting civic participation, we note that democracy thrives not through compulsion, but through trust, transparency, and empowerment.

The withdrawal of the bill signals responsiveness to the voices of citizens, civil society, legal experts, and electoral reform advocates who have consistently emphasized that participatory democracy must be voluntary, inclusive, and anchored in the protection of fundamental rights.

We reiterate that low voter turnout in Nigeria is a symptom of deeper systemic issues—such as distrust in the electoral process, insecurity, logistical failures, and lack of confidence in political actors, not a lack of civic responsibility. Rather than criminalize disengagement, efforts must focus on:

- Electoral reforms that ensure credibility and transparency;
- Civic education that fosters genuine political awareness;
- Institutional reforms that guarantee safety and accessibility during elections.

We commend the Speaker's openness to "exploring positive incentives and innovative approaches" to strengthen voter engagement. We urge the National Assembly to channel legislative energy into empowering the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), enhancing voter access, and addressing the root causes of apathy.

This is an opportunity to recommit to a democracy that respects choice, upholds rights, and encourages participation through trust—not fear.

Signed:
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