

Integrity of SA elections likely to be compromised if lack of funds persists

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Madame Speaker, Fellow South Africans

How sacred is your right to vote?

On 27 April 1994 millions of South Africans who had never had the opportunity, voted for the very first time. We dreamed of a South Africa we could be proud of, One South Africa for All.

Chapter 9 institutions were established to strengthen our Constitutional Democracy. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to ensure the free and fair opportunity to exercise that hard won right to vote.

In the recent elections the integrity of the electoral process was called in to question like never before. Loopholes were discovered which allowed voters to cast multiple ballots at different voting stations. Without a fully addressed voters roll and the forms required to register addresses ran out at several voting stations.

The 2019 Election was a watershed moment where it became clear that reform is needed.

The IEC set about putting in place measures to safeguard the vote. These measures include the replacement of outdated zip-zip machines with a new online voter registration technology and deployment of technology to facilitate real time live voters roll.

If someone had come to you on that day in 1994 and said this electoral process is not important, not a priority, it would have been a slap in the face.

Yet we are now told there is not enough money available due to austerity measures. The IEC is thus left with a R300M funding shortfall and is unable to implement the measures necessary to curb multiple voting.

We are told there is no money when, according to a recent study, the government spends well over R300M on luxury German vehicles for high-ranking officials.

A DA government would redirect money allocated for luxury vehicles to address this shortfall as a matter of urgency.

Free and Fair elections are not a luxury, Madame Speaker.

In terms of section 190(b) of the Constitution the Electoral Commission MUST ensure that those elections are free and fair.

Our Chapter 9 institutions face a crisis of credibility. This funding is not an option. We are faced with Local Government Elections in just two years' time and for a change we need decisive action.

We need urgent interventions that will address this as a matter of urgency to protect the sanctity of our vote and to protect our Chapter 9 institutions. We therefore call on National Treasury to give this funding the top priority it deserves.

One Vote for All, One South Africa for All.