

Legislation needed to stabilise coalitions in SA

By Siviwe Gwarube, Chief Whip of the Official Opposition

Chair,

As the South African democracy matures, voters are increasingly realizing the power of their vote. For the past five years, this has signaled the end of the ANC majority in many parts of the country. This has meant that the ANC has lost grip on the major economic hubs in most provinces.

This party that used to be a political giant is only a shadow of its former self. The residents of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Bay, Tshwane, Johannesburg and most recently – again – Ekurhuleni have rejected this governing party.

They have done so because the ANC has long forgotten what service means. It is riddled with its own internal politics, a bun fight for positions and perks. More importantly, the party has broken towns and cities in every corner of South Africa. The state of local governments – through years of neglect and rampant corruption – has led us to this point.

The fate of the ANC is nothing to gloat about. Because its failures in government have come at a tremendous cost to the people of South Africa.

- Lives and livelihoods have been lost;
- The dream of a better life has long been forgotten;
- The hope of a capable state that places people at the center of its business has long been destroyed.

This is a lesson to us all who have been trusted to govern in coalition governments by millions of South Africans.

- Coalition governments should be bound together by a common set of values and goals;
- These governments should be stable;
- They should be intolerant of corruption that robs people of critical services.

This is why the DA has reached out to all political parties represented in this House with our proposed legislation that would go a long way to stabilize coalition governments.

This is because we recognize that the real victims of unstable coalitions that eventually end up in the hands of the corrupt ANC, are the citizens. Legislating for coalition governments will ensure that we insulate people from the whims of greedy politicians.

Stability is critical.

The DA's legislation would:

- Ensure that coalition agreements are codified and are binding to parties; preventing politicians from swinging support for positions at the detriment of residents;
- It will introduce an independent arbiter that will manage and implement the coalition agreement, separate from the politics like Kenya has done.
- It would introduce electoral thresholds; while still ensuring maximum representation as envisioned by the Constitution;
- It would seek to amend existing legislation to regulate the frequency of motions of no confidence and instill stability in our councils, legislatures and this very Parliament.

Passing this legislation is beyond our individual interests as various parties.

It is about investing in the future of a hard-won constitutional democracy.

There are organizations across the country who are prepared to roll up their sleeves and jump in to save South Africa from utter ruin.

It is imperative that this institution provides the legislative framework that will allow for this.

Even in the hurly burly of politics, some moments do call for us to reach across party lines to make sure that Parliament fulfills its constitutional mandate; and responds to issues facing the people that we serve.

Coalition governments are here to stay; whether the governing party is willing to accept this or not.

It is therefore our responsibility to create stable, clean and service led governments through the legislative powers that have been vested in us all.