

# LEGISLATIVE ALERT

A Weekly Parliamentary Report of  
Parliamentary Network Africa



Promoting Open Parliaments Across Africa

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# INTRODUCTION

• Edition: SL005

May 8, 2024 •



*Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas*  
*New Speaker of Parliament*



*Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh*  
*New Deputy Speaker of Parliament*

In this edition of our weekly alert, we focus on the election of a new Speaker of Parliament following the resignation of Hon. Dr. Abass Bundu weeks ago. The extensive debates and comments made by MPs, on the Constitutional Instruments that were laid on the Floor of the House on April 18, 2024 and "The Industrial Relations and Union Act, 2023" which seeks to repeal the Regulations of Wages and the Industrial Relations Act, 1971 (Act No.18 of 1971) and the Trade Union Act (Cap221). Also is the Toll gate tariff increase and what decision was taken on it. As well as the Acting Speakers' summons and the statement made by the Parliamentary Committee on Basic and Senior Secondary Education to heads of Secondary School and other administrative work done in Parliament.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Elections

During the election of a new Speaker of Parliament following the resignation of Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu as Speaker of Parliament effective April 30, pursuant to Section 79 subsection (2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone (Act No. 6 of 1991) as amended in 2013.

The House agreed that a two-third threshold should be 98 MPs based on the current composition of 147 excluding 2 deceased Paramount Chief Member of Parliament (PCMPs) after series of debates. However the inability of the House to have attained the threshold called for a fourth round which dictates for a **simple majority**.

The All People's Congress (APC) Speaker candidate attempted to withdraw his candidacy but was opposed by Hon. M. Nyuma who insisted that due process be followed to enhance full legitimacy to the elections as enshrined in the Constitution of Sierra Leone and Standing Orders. this was adhered to accordingly.

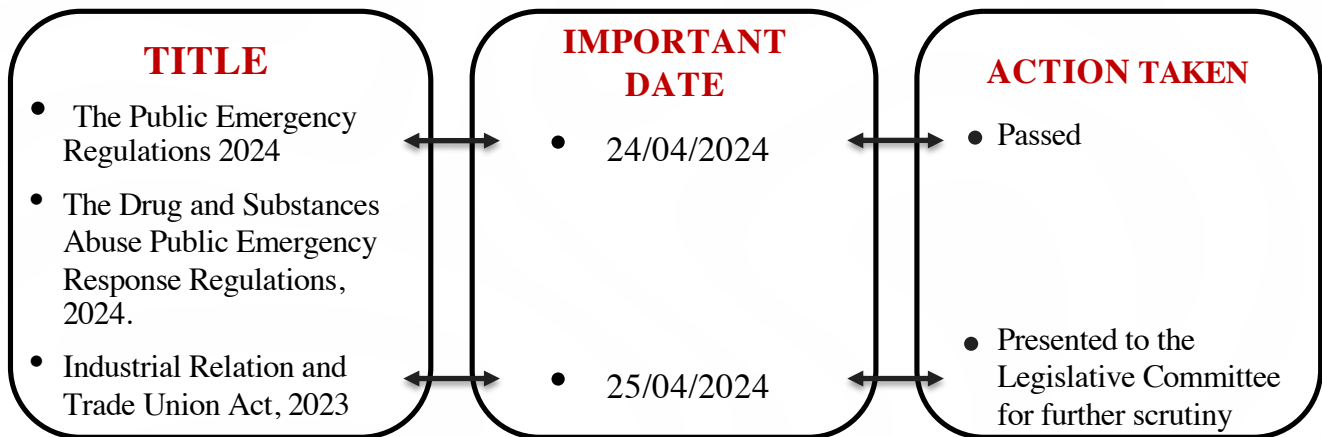
Below is the result of the elections stating how the candidates fared

Election of Speaker (vote by secret ballot)						
Ballot Round	Total MPs voted		MPs Abstained	Void	Voice Votes	Total
	Ayes	Nays				
First	93	52	0	0	0	96
Second	96	49	0	0	0	96
Third	95	50	0	0	0	96
Fourth	128	10	6	1	0	145
Election of Deputy Speaker						
First	94	47	4	0		145

Source: Parliament of Sierra Leone

**Bills**

These two Bills were debated and the following decisions were made by the House:



**Papers**

The report on the much talked about Tollgate tariff was laid before the House and argued upon by the MPs.

- Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Works and Public Assets on an inquiry into the proposed adjustment of the Wellington-Masiaka Tollgate Tariff.

**MPs statements**

The following procedures ensued before and after the election of the Speaker:

- The Leader of Government Business Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma nominated Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas (Deputy Speaker - Acting Speaker of parliament) as candidate to contest for the position of the Speaker and described him as a political heavyweight, legal luminary, highly religious and a philanthropist.
- Seconding the nomination was the former Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Hon. Mohamed Sidie Tunis.

- On the Opposition side, the Leader of Opposition, Hon. Abdul Kargbo nominated Hon. Daniel Koroma as candidate for the position of Speaker and referred to him as someone with a satisfactory mind and one that knows what the MPs want and ready to give what they want. "He is God fearing, corrupt free and one with good desire" he said.
- Seconding the nomination of the Opposition candidate, was Hon. Catherine Zainab Tarawally
- The nomination to the Deputy Speaker position which was then the position of the newly elected Speaker of Parliament was done by the Deputy Leader 2 of Government Business, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina who nominated Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh as candidate for the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). This was as a result of his effectiveness and performance as a seasoned Member of Parliament.
- His nomination was seconded and endorsed by the Majority Whip, Hon. Dickson Rogers, in which he described him as a humble and respectful personality.
- On the part of the Opposition, the Opposition Whip, Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara. nominated Hon. Haja Miatta Amara on gender grounds. He informed the house that the candidate is a woman of humility, soft spoken with other positive character.
- Seconding the motion on the nomination of the Opposition candidate, Hon. Dr. Umpha G. Koroma described Hon. Miatta Amara as a unique character for the position of Deputy Speaker.

**The following were some comments made during the presentation of the Proclamation to the House for debate:**

- Majority Leader and Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma vehemently assured the House of curtailing the impact of the harmful drug. "We should go after the drug lords," he said,
- underscoring the Government's efforts to establish treatment and rehabilitation centres for the victims. While applauding the support of the opposition in the fight, the Leader called on all and sundry to galvanise efforts to eradicate the spread of the menace. He emphatically alluded to the application of drug enforcement laws and added that the regulations on the health of emergency are vital for the implementation of the proclamation by the President. he reassured that, "No one is above the law, we should go after the manufacturers to eliminate the supply chain of the Kush drug". He urged stakeholders to come on board to help the government to eradicate the Kush in the country.
- The statement by the Leader was seconded by Hon. Dr. Unpha Sorie Koroma and fellow MPs from both sides of the House who appreciated the Leadership of Parliament and the President for declaring a health emergency on Kush. On the regulation of the health emergency, he said Parliament should treat it as their baby and welcomed the guides on the Health emergency. They maintained that the Kush menace has threatened the lives of the people of Sierra Leone and underscored the importance of the proclamation by the President. In light of urging the authorities to provide the necessary financial support, the erudite MP expressed the need for inclusivity of the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency and the Opposition for their strategic roles. He went on to emphasize that the war on Kush should have a national lens and not otherwise. "The fighting against kush should not only stop at fighting it but also fighting other harmful related drugs in the country", Hon. Dr. Unpha Sorie Koroma.
- In concluding the debate, Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma again underscored the collaborative effort in the fight against Kush drug and expressed hope for eradication of the menace. He explained the chemistry that



produces the drug and went to educate the House on the same. He extensively explained some definitions of the Proclamation. "Kush is a public health emergency under the Proclamation," and went on to say the drug is synthetic.

- The Leader clarified certain regulations and Constitutional Instruments. "There are no perfect regulations...but the spirit of unity by the opposition is necessary", and went on to assure the opposition of the positive implementation of the regulations during the three-month period. He clarified concerns raised around Section 29 (10) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. He thanked the opposition for drawing the attention of the State to the menace and their support. The Leader comprehensively explained the meanings, and definitions and clarified the appointment of the National Taskforce Coordinator in the fight.
- He also used the opportunity to reassure the Opposition that the law would not be violated and added that President Bio is the Father of democracy and would never use the law to intimidate the opposition. He emphasised that they would not intimidate the victims of Kush and advised colleague MPs to continue to protect them. "These people are our voters", he said "let us change the minds of the addicts". He encouraged colleague MPs to give solace to the addicts and urged them to educate the people on the law. He appealed to the opposition to manage the three months and assured them positively.
- In his statement, the Acting Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas said Parliament is being misconstrued and categorically stated that they are united in the fight against Kush drug, "As I sit here I would never allow this matter to be politicised" he maintained. The Acting Speaker reassured the House that the implementation of the proclamation would not be politicized or used against anybody.

***The following were comments made by MPs during the debate of the "The Industrial Relations and Union Act, 2023" on 25/04/2024:***

- The Deputy Parliamentary Chairperson of the Labour Committee, Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi from Kailahun District provided a historical background of the labour laws in Sierra Leone and went on to appreciate the work of the Labour Ministry. "Let's make these laws, they are beautiful for the people of Sierra Leone ", she said and went on to advise the Minister to implement the Bill to the fullest. The Deputy Chairperson assured colleague MPs that the Bill is not controversial and called on them to enact it into law.
- In concluding the debate, the Acting Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie thanked the President for the appointment of the Labour Minister and also acknowledged the powers of the law before the House. He acknowledged the work of the Minister and referred to him as a visionary Minister. The MP used the opportunity to advise all and sundry to be proactive in their work. These offices are transitional offices", he noted. The Leader explained the relevance of the composition of the board and the commissioners.
- The Leader also went on to explain the roles and responsibilities of the secretary to the board and also the appointment of the commissioners. "When we make laws we should not consider ourselves but we should consider institutions and the interest of the nation", he concluded.

***Committee Sitings***

***The parliamentary Committees had the following engagements on various policies and laws in the House:***

**May 03**

The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Water Resources made a working visit to various Guma Valley project sites in the

Western Area of Freetown, in order to ascertain water catchment areas and projects implementation by contractors.

- The Parliamentary Oversight Committee on National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) engaged National Investment Board and its sub-agencies, in order to brief Parliament on their operational activities

#### April 24

- The Committee on **Communications, Technology and Innovation** held an Oversight Meeting with the Mobile Companies, Africell and Orange at the Conference Hall of the Administrative Building of Parliament. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss on their operations, tariff structures, compliance regulations, expansion plans and the measures put in place to combat frauds especially with SIM card registration and how to protect customers from fraudster.
- Following a complaint by a host Member of Parliament, Hon. Cecilia Mabinty Bangura of Karene District on illegal mining and land dispute, a cross-section of the **Committee on Mines and Mineral Resources** led by Acting Chairman, Hon. Musa Fofana recently paid on the spot visit to the mining site at Sariah Village around Kamalo in the Sanda Loko Chiefdom Karene District. The Committee has summoned all parties to come to Parliament for further deliberations in order to amicably resolve the matter.

#### Other Activities

*The Parliamentary Service held activities on some key priority areas of the administration. The following include some of the activities:*

#### May 02

- Just after the election of the Speaker, two letters of resignation as Member of Parliament and Deputy Speaker were tendered in by the former Deputy Speaker and read by the Director General of

Parliament, Mrs. Finda Findosia Fraser who declared vacancies for the position of Deputy Speaker and a Member of Parliament for Bonthe District to replace Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas respectively, given the fact that when a sitting Member of Parliament is elected Speaker, he automatically loses his seat in Parliament following provisions of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

- The Parliament of Sierra Leone unanimously adopted the pronouncement made by the Leader of Government Business Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma on members of Parliament representing Sierra Leone on both the ECOWAS Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament .

#### May 03

- The Iceland Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Her Excellency Asdis Bjarnadottir and team comprising visiting Members of Parliament led by Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Icelandic Parliament, Ms Elin Rosa Sigurdardottir (Director General of the International Development Cooperation Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Iceland and Head of the delegation), paid a courtesy visit to the newly elected Speaker of Parliament, Hon Segepoh Solomon Thomas. The Icelandic Members of Parliament were in Sierra Leone on a study visit. They were also there to deepen bilateral ties with Sierra Leone and expressed interest in development programmes in the areas of fishing, promotion of renewable energy, and support the implementation of the country's medium term national development plan and gender empowerment efforts, As well as promote tourism.

#### April 25

- The Parliament of Sierra Leone concluded a three-day engagement on its Annual Review process for 2024, with the theme "Enhancing Strategic Planning Through Co-creation". The aim of the review is to track the progress on performance and discuss and

agree on key priorities for the Parliamentary Service and its corresponding departments for 2024. The Annual Review process attracted the Leadership of Parliament, the Director General of Parliament, the Director and Deputy Directors of the Department, Principals and Senior Officers of Parliament.

### April 23

- The Deputy Speaker of Parliament Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas summoned heads of Secondary Schools through the Ministry of Basic Education to answer questions relating to challenges of the WASSCE Examination for 2024, In attendance were the officials and Minister of Basic Education, Deputy Commissioner ACC and others.
- There was a statement from the Parliamentary Committee urging all members of the public to patiently wait for the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to complete and conclude the process, and come up with the true numbers of genuine and legitimate schools and candidates . Adding that, severe penalties await all defaulting school heads, as well as all officials of the MBSSE and WAEC that allegedly connived to deprive legitimate school candidates and caused unwarranted stress to them and their parents and guardians, and, in the process, to also tarnish the image and undermine the achievements of the government, and the Free Quality Education Programme.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

### In the week under review, we observed that:

There was no swearing in of the new leaders because they had been sworn in when he first entered Parliament (2012) he was not sworn in again.

Hon. Thomas was grateful to President Maada Bio and all who supported his ascent to the Speaker's position, paying tributes to the excellence of the outgoing Speaker, Hon. Dr. Bundu. He encouraged everyone to engage with him for him to be able to steer better parliamentary service. He called on people not to judge him in haste.

The Industrial Relations Act, of 1971 (Act No.18 of 1971), and the Trade Union Act (Cap221) which were presented to Parliament seek to repeal the regulations of wages. Before the debate, the Minister of Labour and Industrial Relations, Mr. Mohamed Rahman Swarray informed Members of Parliament (MPs) that the document was one of those old laws that deserved to be reviewed and when enacted into law would enhance development in the labour sector. In terms of penalties and fines, it had also been adjusted to meet labour standards. He also said it is timely for the Bill to be reviewed to meet international Standards.

The Acting Speaker of Parliament Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas on Thursday 25/04/2024 in the Chamber of Parliament announced that the proposed increment licence tariff by Sierra Leone Road Safety Authority (SLRSA) be put on hold immediately after MPs raised the issue before the House.

After an intensive debate on the report, from the Leadership and Members of Parliament it was recommended that the various adjustments be made to the proposed new tollgate charges to be reduced, in order to meet the affordability of the citizens.



# CONCLUSION

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**T**he election of a new Speaker of Parliament barely a year into the 6th parliament of the Second Republic will have significant implications for Sierra Leone's political landscape, coupled with expectations of great and positive change in the administration of parliamentary service. The extensive debates have demonstrated the MPs' feelings towards the issues happening in the country and the hope that the State of Emergency would be implemented in good faith.

PNAfrica will bring you updates on happenings in and around parliament in subsequent reports.



*This Legislative Alert is published by Parliamentary Network Africa to promote parliamentary openness in Sierra Leone. For further information, send email to [sierraleone@parliamentafrica.com](mailto:sierraleone@parliamentafrica.com) or call +233 (0) 30 244 6631/50 5571336. [www.parliamentafrica.com](http://www.parliamentafrica.com)*