

November 15 2014

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Dear Sir

**1999 CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT: APPEAL ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AUTONOMY AND OTHER MATTERS**

Citizens Wealth Platform is a network of civil society organisations, community and faith based organisations, professional groups, private sector organisations and other citizens groups working to ensure that public resources are made to work and be of benefit to all. We are writing to appeal to your good conscience, sense of nobility and patriotism in the exercise of your powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of your State.

Specifically, in the bill for the amendment of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, it is our plea that you consider and approve the following key proposals. The first is the provision for autonomy to Local Government Councils (LGCs). It provides for four year tenure for LGCs, establishment of LGCs as a tier of government, direct funding of LGCs from the Federation Account, INEC to organize LGC election, withdrawal of recognition to unelected LGCs, etc. We seek your approval of LGC autonomy for a number of reasons. Autonomous LGCs will deepen democracy, increase transparency and accountability in the management of LGC resources; improve access to basic needs of the people such as primary health care services, basic education, portable water, rural electricity, feeder roads, etc. As such, it will reduce poverty in your State. Since 1999, each of the 774 LGCs has “received” not less than N30billion from the Federation Account; considering the poverty and underdevelopment of our people, it is clear that the current LGC system is not working and is in dire need of reforms.

The second is the provision for the financial autonomy to State Houses of Assembly. An independent and vibrant legislature is essential for the sustenance and deepening of democracy. As representatives of the people, financial autonomy is a pre-condition for the effective exercise of your powers of law making, oversight and representation. A legislature that goes cap in hand to the executive cannot effectively discharge its constitutional obligations. Allied to this is the provision for the financial autonomy of the office of the Auditor-General and the office of the Attorney-General of the State.

The third is the inclusion of the rights to free basic education, free primary and maternal health care services as fundamental rights in Chapter Four of the Constitution. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal and child mortality and morbidity in the world. We also contribute over one-fifth of out of school children in the world. The approval and implementation of these provisions will remove this shame from Nigeria.

In the light of the foregoing, we appeal that you consider and approve the foregoing amendments to the 1999 Constitution and set our country on the path of development, economic growth and social justice. May God continue to bless Nigeria and bless you specifically as you discharge your duties and as you vote and identify with the Nigerian people.

Sincerely,

Eze Onyekpere

Lead Director

George-Hill Anthony

South-South Coordinator