**BILL WATCH 56/2022**

**[23rd November 2022]**

**In Parliament This Week:**

**Tuesday – Last Sittings of the Fourth Session**

**Wednesday – President’s SONA and Opening of Fifth Session**

**Thursday – 2023 National Budget Presentation**

This bulletin starts with an announcement  of major Parliamentary events scheduled for today and tomorrow.  Then it covers  briefly what happened in both Houses yesterday – which saw the last sittings of the Fourth Session of the Ninth Parliament. As explained below the Fifth Session will start at noon today.

**Events Today and Tomorrow in New Parliament Building**

The new Parliament building at Mount Hampden will be the venue for the following major Parliamentary events tomorrow and on Thursday:

        **President’s State of the Nation Address [SONA] and Official Opening of the Fifth Session of the Ninth Parliament of Zimbabwe**

This event will take place today, Wednesday 23rd November.  The President will enter the new National Assembly chamber at 12 noon, after the traditional preliminary ceremonies outside the building..  His address will conclude with the Government’s Legislative Agenda for the Fifth Session of this Parliament which he will then declare open.

        **Presentation of the 2023 National Budget by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development**

This event will take place tomorrow, Thursday 24th November in the National Assembly chamber.  The sitting will begin at 2.15 pm.

Attendance at both events will be strictly by invitation only.

**Arrangements for members of the general public**

Members of the general public will, therefore, have to be content with following the proceedings broadcast live:

        on mainstream media

        on Parliament of Zimbabwe’s social media platforms

        on giant screens that will be mounted in Africa Unity Square in central Harare.

**Permanent move to new Parliament Building to follow later**

As the new Parliament Building has not yet been officially handed over to Zimbabwe, the use of it for the above two special events is by special arrangement with the contractors.  After the presentation of the Budget tomorrow Parliament will continue to use the present building at least until the end of the year.

**Yesterday  in the “Old” Parliament Building**

Both Houses met yesterday, Tuesday 22nd November, having adjourned to this afternoon at their previous sittings on Thursday 3rd November [National Assembly] and Wednesday 9th November [Senate].  Their sittings yesterday will, in effect, be their last sittings of the present Fourth Session.

**In the Senate**

**Swearing-in of new Senator**

Hon Senator Marylyn Nobuhle NDIWENI was sworn in as a Senator.  She was appointed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission following her nomination by the MDC-T headed by Hon Mwonzora to replace the late Hon Mildred Reason DUBE as a party-list [proportional representation] Senator for Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

**Other business**

There were no Bills at all on the Order Paper – the Senate having passed the Health Service Amendment Bill, as amended by the National Assembly, at its last sitting on  Wednesday 9th November entirely without debate and without further amendment.

As a result, there were only two items on the Order Paper for the afternoon, both take-note motions by  the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs regarding the reports for the year 2021 of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission [ZEC].

The Senate adjourned after seventeen minutes without debating either motion.

**In the National Assembly**

The House faced an Order Paper of twenty-nine items, including thirteen Bills, but instead – after MPs had raised several points  of national interest – devoted the rest of the sitting to debating or adopting two portfolio committee reports:

Report of the Portfolio Committee on Primary and Secondary Education on rural schools, including supply of sanitary wear to girl pupils   The continuing debate on this report occupied the major part of two hours.  All contributors agreed that the Ministry had not handled the distribution of sanitary wear to rural schools satisfactorily – at least one MP even suggested that sanitary pads that should have gone to pupils had instead ended up for sale in shops – and that while some areas in the country had received ample supplies, others – particularly in Matabeleland – had received either none at all or very few.  The report was adopted.

Report of the Portfolio Committee on Local Government, Public Works, National Housing and Social Amenities on five petitions relating to service delivery by local authorities and implementation of devolution   Hon Chikukwa, chairperson of the portfolio committee, acknowledged MPs’ contributions to the debate on this report in brief winding-up remarks, during which she urged the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works “*to urgently bring the Devolution Bill to Parliament because it is causing a lot of problems in the communities and in all local authorities*”.  The report was then adopted and the House adjourned for the last time in the Fourth Session.

**Bills due to lapse at the end of the Fourth Session**

Thirteen uncompleted Bills are doomed to lapse at the end of the Fourth Session in terms of Standing Orders.  They will not appear on the Order Paper for the first day of the Fifth Session.

**Can lapsed Bills be Considered Again during Fifth Session?**

Yes.  The Standing Orders of both Houses – Standing Order 171 is the relevant one for the National Assembly – allow a Bill that lapses at the end of a session to be restored to the Order Paper in the next session at the stage previously reached; all that is needed is a resolution of the House concerned to that effect.

Standing Order 171(4), however, prohibits the restoration of a Bill that has lapsed at the end of two sessions in succession.  A current example is the Police Amendment Bill, which lapsed at the end of the Third Session, was restored to the Order Paper in November 2021 and will lapse at the imminent end of the Fourth Session.   The effect is that a new Bill will have to be introduced to replace it.

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