



# VOTE 2: FREE STATE LEGISLATURE **BUDGET SPEECH** 2025/2026



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**FREE STATE**

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**SPEECH OF THE SPEAKER OF THE FREE STATE LEGISLATURE, HONOURABLE MXOLISI ABRAHAM DUKWANA ON THE TABLING OF THE BUDGET VOTE 2 OF THE FREE STATE LEGISLATURE, 07 AUGUST 2025, BLOEMFONTEIN.**

Honourable **Deputy Speaker**

Honourable **Premier**

Members of the **Executive Council**

Honourable **Chair of Chairs**

Honourable **Chief Whip**

Honourable **Deputy Chief Whip**

**Leaders of Political Parties** represented in the Legislature

Honourable **Members of the Legislature**

**Executive Mayors, Mayors** and **Councilors** present

Representatives of the **House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders**

**Management** and **Officials** of the Free State Legislature

**Baahi ba Freistata**

**Bomme le Bontate**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker**, it is with profound honour and gratitude to have this privilege of standing before you today in this august House to present the Free State Provincial Legislature Budget Vote for the 2025/26 financial year. As we present this Budget vote, we must reflect soberly on the persistent and multifaceted challenges that continue confronting the Free State Province, evidenced by communities that still battle access to basic services, high levels of youth unemployment that threaten the social fabric of our society, and the triple burden of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment that remains deeply entrenched. Honourable Deputy Speaker, our Province still battles inadequate infrastructure, collapsing local municipalities, slow economic growth and systemic weaknesses in governance and service delivery mechanisms, all of which not only demands from us as a Legislature fiscal prudence but bold and transformative leadership that is rooted in the constitutional mandate of this Legislature to provide robust oversight, make progressive laws and ensure meaningful public participation in the path towards a more just, inclusive and developmental state

In responding to these challenges, we are inspired by the resilient and unwavering spirit of the youth of 1976 who uncompromisingly stood their ground against tyranny and oppression.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker,** I rise today, in tabling this Budget Vote, to honour the spirit and achievements of the 2025 Youth Parliament held under the theme “Charting the Future: A Legislature Responsive to the Voices of Youth.” The Youth Parliament, was convened in the Provincial Legislature 4<sup>th</sup> Raadsaal Chamber and marked by spirited debate, innovation, and leadership, stands as a testament to our ongoing commitment to inclusivity, youth empowerment, and democratic renewal. Over three days of 25 – 27 June 2025, Young Leaders engaged robustly with Government Officials, Private Sector Partners, and Civil Society, exploring platforms for economic empowerment, social development, gender-based violence interventions, and participatory governance.

As custodians of this Legislature, we affirm that the actions and resolutions articulated by the Youth Parliament will not remain symbolic. Instead, they are blueprints that will inform how resources are allocated to enhance meaningful youth participation in legislative processes, strengthen legislative literacy, promote entrepreneurial and innovative initiatives, and ensure robust oversight. In investing in youth-focused programmes and partnerships outlined in this budget, we advance a Legislature where the voices of young people are not only heard but acted upon making the Free State Legislature a true beacon of democracy, accountability, and hope for the future.

As we come together on this August month a month dedicated as **Women’s Month** to celebrate and remember the remarkable strength, resilience, and determination of Women in changing the *status quo* many years ago, this year, under the powerful theme “**Skills for the Changing World: Empowering Women for Meaningful Economic Participation,**” we recognize the vital role women played and continue to play as catalysts for social and economic transformation within our communities. This month is not only a time to honor the achievements and contributions of women across all sectors of society, but also an opportunity to reflect deeply on the challenges that still hinder equal participation and opportunity for women. As an institution rooted in the Free State, we wholeheartedly commit ourselves to nurturing and cultivating a spirit of selflessness, collaboration, and empowerment. We aim to create inclusive platforms where women can acquire relevant skills, gain access to education and training, and unlock economic opportunities that enable them to thrive and lead with confidence. By prioritizing the development of women’s capacities, we believe we can foster sustainable growth and build resilient communities that uplift not just women but society as a whole. Our dedication extends beyond mere recognition; it is a call to action to dismantle barriers, challenge stereotypes, and ensure that every woman, regardless of her background, has the chance to contribute meaningfully to the economic fabric of our country in particular our Province, the Free State. In doing so, we reaffirm our firm belief that empowering

women is fundamental to achieving broader social justice, equity, and prosperity for all. We re-affirm our resolve and commitment to stand against Gender Based Violence and Femicide.

In responding to the challenges of our times, we are further inspired by one of the pivotal injunctions of the Freedom Charter, a charter whose seventieth anniversary we are celebrating this year, which declared first and foremost that “**the people shall govern**”. As this institution, it is our cardinal mandate to ensure that the people do indeed govern. In the formulation of laws, and exercising oversight on the execution of these laws, it is our primary responsibility to ensure that the people are at the center. We, therefore, commit ourselves to ensuring that this clarion call of the Freedom Charter find resonance in our operation as the Legislature.

This budget that we are tabling today, informed by the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, reflects our unwavering commitment to strengthening the democratic processes and enhancing Public Participation, ensuring that the voices of the people of the Free State are heard loud and clear. With this allocation we must prioritize transparency, accountability, and the effective oversight of government actions and promises, which are fundamental pillars for a responsive and people-centered Legislature. Through this budget, we reaffirm our dedication to empowering our Portfolio Committees to execute their mandate with strategic focus and to deepen the engagement between the Legislature and the communities we serve.

#### **Overview of the 2025-2026 Budget Allocation:**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker:** reflective of the tight fiscal environment that we referred to earlier, the budget of the Free State Legislature for this Financial Year reflects a decrease from previous year’s allocations. For the 2025/2026 Financial Year, the Free State Legislature receives a total allocation of **R317.306 million**, with an additional statutory direct charge of **R30.429 million** against the Provincial Revenue Fund. This represents a decrease of **11,4%** from the previous allocation of **R347.7 million**. The budget is divided across three key programmes: **Administration, Facilities and Benefits to Members and Political Parties, and Parliamentary Services**.

The **Administration Programme**, which receives the largest share of the budget at **R199.068 million**, supports Vital Offices including the Speaker, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Chief Financial Officer, covering functions from Legal Services, Strategy and Risk Management, Internal Audit, Human Capital, Financial Management, Information Communication and Technology and Household Services. The **Facilities and Benefits Programme** receive an allocation of **R66.490 million** to provide Financial and Administrative Assistance to Political Parties in proportion to their representation, as mandated by Section 116(2) of our Constitution. Parliamentary Services, with an allocation of **R51.748 million**, supports Legislation and Oversight, Public Participation



Education Communication and Marketing and Hansard functions. The Direct Charge of **R30.429 million** covers the remuneration of members.

In terms of economic classification, compensation of employees constitutes 56.69% of the budget, reflecting the 158 staff members currently employed, with a concerning vacancy rate of **21%**. Goods and Services account for **22.31%**, covering essential operational costs such as hosting sittings, committee meetings, public hearings, communications, audits, and IT support. Transfers to political parties represent **20.43%**, while capital expenditure remains below 1%. The staff structure review planned for the year ahead is expected to alleviate capacity constraints and enhance the Legislature's ability to fulfill its constitutional mandates effectively.

It is important to note that there is no increase in the overall allocation compared to the previous financial year, which places the Legislature in a challenging position as we face budgetary shortfalls in critical areas such as Organisational Structure Review, Establishment of Monitoring and Evaluation Structure Directorate, to ensure improved monitoring of the work of the executive, establishment of an Internal Control Unit as well as a Labour Relations Unit to improve the labour peace as espoused in terms of the Labour Relations Act of 1995, Operational Expenses for Public Participation, as well as Replacement of Capital items.

#### **Honourable Members,**

It is necessary to candidly acknowledge the serious challenges confronting the Free State Legislature as a result of this fiscal environment and the reduction in our budget allocation. Despite the tight financial constraints reflected in the **11.4%** decrease to **R317.306 million** for the **2025/2026** financial year, concerted and determined efforts have been made at the highest levels to mitigate the potential negative impact on our core constitutional functions.

Through robust engagements and extensive deliberations with the Member of the Executive Council for Treasury, we have taken a concrete and principled stance, a posture aimed at turning the corner by securing the essential resources required for the Legislature to fully and effectively achieve its mandate as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This is not a mere request but a constitutional imperative. The current allocation stands in stark contrast to the growing demands of oversight and governance placed upon us. We cannot allow limited resources to erode the quality and effectiveness of our oversight functions and public participation, which underpin our democracy.

Moreover, let it be clearly understood that failure to allocate the necessary budget for the Legislature will have serious consequences. In particular, **Rule 187(2) of our Standing Rules and Orders** which provides that:

***"A money Bill shall not be introduced in the Legislature unless consensus has been reached between the Speaker and the Member of the Executive Council in charge of the Bill regarding the Legislature's allocation in the Appropriation Bill and the Adjustment Appropriation Bill."***

This provision underscores the critical balance and mutual accountability required for sound financial governance. It places a solemn responsibility on the Executive to engage constructively and to prioritize the Legislature's fiscal needs. Should this responsibility be neglected, it will fundamentally compromise the ability of the Free State Legislature to perform its constitutional oversight, legislative, and public participation functions.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker**, the challenges ahead are substantial, but our resolve must be unwavering. We must continue to advocate vigorously for a budget that reflects the true cost of democracy in the Free State and empowers this institution to serve the people effectively and with integrity. We owe no less to the citizens we represent.

### **Audit Outcomes 2024/25 Financial Year**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker,**

It is with great pride that we announce that the Free State Legislature has once again achieved a **Clean Audit Outcome for the 2024/25 Financial Year**, as confirmed by the Auditor-General of South Africa. This accomplishment demonstrates our unwavering commitment to transparency, sound governance and financial management, and positions the Legislature among only a handful of Provincial Entities that consistently meet the highest standards of public accountability. Notably, within the broader Free State Provincial Government, the **only two** Departments besides the Legislature to attain a Clean Audit for the **2024/25** year were the Department of Treasury and the Department of Economic, Small business development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTE). This contrast underscores both the work that lies ahead in strengthening Oversight and Accountability across Government, and the Leadership Role that the Legislature must play in turning this picture around. The excellence shown by these institutions sets a precedence and offers a blueprint for other Departments to emulate, ensuring public resources are managed efficiently and the public's trust is upheld.

### **The Joint Oversight on Municipalities by the National Parliament and Provincial Legislature Portfolio Committees (CoGTA and Finance Committees)**

**Honourable Deputy Speaker, distinguished colleagues, and esteemed guests**, it is my honour to address this august house following the successful Joint Oversight by the National Parliament and Provincial Legislature Portfolio Committees on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) and Finance, conducted as a pilot project in the Free State Province at the Windmill Casino on 24 and 25 July 2025. This initiative marks a pivotal intervention to address the persistent governance and financial

mismanagement challenges facing our Municipalities, as highlighted by recent audit outcomes and ongoing service delivery concerns. The extensive engagements with **Twenty Three Municipalities** provided a platform for accountability, solution-seeking, and the reaffirmation of our collective responsibility to ensure that Local Government delivers effectively for the people of the Free State.

The implications of this joint oversight extended directly to the Free State Provincial Department of CoGTA, whose constitutional mandate is now further sharpened to support, monitor, and enforce improved standards in municipal management and oversight. As the Speaker, I wish to remind this House that oversight does not rest with committees alone. Our Premier, as Head of the Executive, and the entire Executive Council remain ultimately accountable to this Legislature for the performance and integrity of all our municipalities. The Premier's leadership is integral in coordinating responses, driving consequence management, and ensuring that recovery plans are implemented robustly. Let us recommit ourselves to upholding our oversight mandate, strengthening cooperation across all spheres of government, and building a responsive government that honours public trust and accelerates service delivery for every resident of the Free State.

**Hon Deputy Speaker**, the role of the Free State Legislature, rooted in the Constitution, encompasses Law Making, Oversight over the Provincial Executive, and facilitating Public Participation to ensure democratic accountability and responsive governance. Recent lessons learned from the Joint Oversight visit underscore the need to move beyond "business as usual" by adopting a more coordinated, transparent, and accountable approach to governance. This involves not only rigorous monitoring and evaluation of municipalities' implementation of audit recommendations but also enforcing **Consequence Management** where irregularities are identified. The Legislature will institutionalize regular Quarterly Reporting and collaboration across Government Spheres to ensure ethical leadership, effective service delivery, and elimination of maladministration and corruption. This transformed oversight approach stresses collective government responsibility and public accountability, setting a new standard for continuous improvement and rebuilding of municipal systems, reflecting a decisive break from previous fragmented and ineffective oversight practices. As the Speaker I am committed to leveraging these lessons to strengthen Legislative interventions, ensuring the Free State Legislature remains a dynamic institution capable of driving meaningful change responsive to the needs of its people.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker**, it is with great commitment to strengthening our democratic oversight that I stand before you today to discuss a pivotal development in our Legislature's capacity to serve the people of the Free State. As part of our continuous drive for enhanced accountability and improved governance, I announce the establishment of a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate within the Free State Legislature Organisational Structure which will mark a significant transition from the norm.



This new Directorate will be a critical step in bolstering and strengthening the oversight capabilities of the Free State Legislature. Starting in the 2025/26 financial year, and progressing through to 2026/27, we will gradually phase in the work of this directorate and also ensure that it aligns closely with the work and oversight responsibilities of our Portfolio Committees.

This reconfiguration is informed by the deliberations of the Joint Portfolio Committees on Municipalities, whose insights have underlined the critical need for legislative structures to independently monitor and evaluate government programmes, especially at municipal level, to uphold service delivery standards and fiscal discipline. The Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate will be equipped with the requisite resources, expertise, and strategic mandate to rigorously assess Departmental Performance, Track Progress against agreed deliverables, and provide timely feedback to both the Legislature and the Public. This function is vital to strengthening the checks and balances that our constitutional democracy demands, promoting transparency, and enhancing the impact of our oversight work in governing the Free State.

As we proceed with the budget reassignment that supports this transition, we reaffirm our commitment to a renewed partnership between the Legislature and the Executive, one grounded in mutual respect and constitutional clarity. I urge all Honourable Members to support this initiative as it unfolds in phases over the next two financial years, ensuring that we build a robust, independent Monitoring and Evaluation capacity within the Legislature. This will not only deepen our oversight but also empower our Portfolio Committees to fulfill their mandates more effectively, ultimately improving the quality of governance for all our citizens. Together, we move forward to strengthen our democratic institutions for the betterment of the Free State's future.

## LEGISLATURE PROGRAMME 1 & 4:

### ADMINISTRATION and INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND SERVICES

**Honorable Deputy Speaker:** The administration function of the Free State Legislature plays a pivotal role in ensuring the institution operates efficiently and effectively in fulfilling its legislative mandate. The Acting Secretary to the Legislature oversees the overall coordination and management of the Legislature's activities, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and compliance with governance standards. Supporting this role, the Acting Deputy Secretary assists in managing day-to-day operations and facilitates communication across Directorates to maintain seamless workflow. Together, they ensure that the Legislature's Organizational Structure is responsive to emerging needs, including the introduction of specialized roles in Information and Communication Technology and

Human Capital Management, which are critical for enhancing operational capacity and strategic effectiveness.

Human Capital Management (HCM) is central to the Legislature's administration by fostering a productive and engaged workforce. With 195 positions in the organizational structure - 158 of which are currently filled, the HCM focuses on recruitment, training, performance management, and employee relations to support the institutional goals.

The Legislature actively collaborates with academic institutions such as the Universities of Witwatersrand and Johannesburg to provide capacity-building programs for members and staff, promoting innovative thinking and professional development. Currently, 35 employees benefit from study aid programs, and many have earned qualifications in key fields like Supply Chain Management and Labour Relations amongst others. This commitment to human capital development ensures the Legislature is well-equipped to meet its strategic objectives and adapt to evolving governance demands.

Financial stewardship is another critical component of the Legislature's administration, led by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) who manages budget planning, financial oversight, and supply chain management. The CFO ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and transparently, supporting the Legislature's operational needs while maintaining fiscal discipline. The supply chain function complements this by managing procurement processes to guarantee value for money and compliance with regulatory frameworks.

These financial and supply chain management efforts are integral to sustaining the Legislature's institutional capability, enabling it to deliver on its mandate with accountability and strategic foresight. Together, these administrative functions form the backbone of the Free State Legislature's capacity to serve its constituents effectively.

As we look towards the future, three key and strategic tasks that the institution has been seized with and which we will continue to deal with administratively include the following: Improvement of labour relations; ensuring availability of sufficient office space towards an effective working environment; and modernizing the Legislature.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker**, with respect to **improving relations between management and organized labour**, as Speaker of the Free State Legislature, I wish to report on the proactive journey undertaken by the Presiding Officers to address critical matters affecting our institution. Recognizing the number of challenges presented to us from pending disputes and temporary positions to the urgent need for policy reviews, we have engaged management with a firm commitment to fostering a **culture of care**. This approach has been instrumental in tackling challenges such as a toxic work environment, low staff morale, and mental health concerns, all of which require sensitive and sustained

attention. I am pleased to affirm that while some issues are still work in progress, others have been partially resolved, reflecting our dedication to meaningful and lasting solutions.

**Honourable Members and esteemed guests**, it is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I acknowledge a significant milestone during this budgetary period the establishment of a dedicated Computer Laboratory for our colleagues who conduct general cleaning services and serve as security officials. These hardworking employees, who do not have conventional office spaces, previously faced challenges accessing essential digital services such as emails, work studies, and other electronic resources that are readily available to office-based staff. Recognising this digital divide, management, after carefully considering the organised labour's heartfelt request presented to the Presiding Officers amid numerous union demands, set aside resources to bridge this gap. This thoughtful gesture ensures that these valued employees are no longer digitally excluded and can engage fully with the modern tools necessary for their work.

The desktop computers allocated to this initiative are not new but preserved assets whose useful lifespan remains intact, demonstrating a sustainable and thoughtful approach to resource management. On **30 July 2025**, a memorable handover ceremony marked the official launch of the Computer Laboratory, where employees expressed their happiness and gratitude for this long-awaited facility. This momentous achievement stands as a testimony to our collective commitment to inclusivity, empowerment, and respect for all staff members, regardless of their role or workspace. Going forward, it is our sincere hope that this facility will be well maintained, secured, and protected, ensuring that it continues to serve as a vital resource for those who, until now, had limited access to the digital world. Through collaboration and shared purpose, we are forging a more equitable and connected future for every member of the Free State Legislature family.

Our vision for the Leadership and Management is clear: **to drive a process grounded in respect, transparency, and collaboration between Management and organised labour**. We have utilized the **Culture of Care Barometer** as a guiding framework to ensure that all engagements are conducted with empathy and strategic insight, thereby improving relations and building trust. This journey is not merely about addressing immediate concerns but about laying a foundation for a healthier, productive workplace where every voice is heard and valued. The progress made thus far is a testament to the collective will and determination of all parties involved.

Looking ahead, I confirm that the Free State Legislature Collective Bargaining Forum will operate in strict accordance with all applicable standards, ensuring fairness and accountability in every negotiation and decision. This commitment underscores our resolve to institutionalize best practices and uphold the dignity of every employee. Together, we are forging a path towards a more harmonious and effective Legislature,

one that exemplifies the highest ideals of public service and governance. Let us continue this vital work with renewed energy and unwavering dedication.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker:** with regard to the provision of sufficient **office space** with a view to creating a conducive working environment, as we table Budget Vote 2 for the Free State Legislature, I wish to address the current status and future plans regarding the office space for the Administration Wing.

Presently, the Administration Wing is housed at the Southern Life Plaza building under a month-to-month lease arrangement. While this arrangement has served us temporarily, it is neither sustainable nor conducive to the efficient functioning of the Office of the Speaker, the Administration, and the Political Parties represented in this Legislature. It is therefore imperative that we secure suitable office space with a concluded lease agreement that will provide stability and allow for proper management within the framework of the law.

This process is underway, and we are committed to ensuring that the lease agreement for the premises will be finalized in compliance with all legal and procedural requirements, thereby safeguarding the interests of the Legislature and its stakeholders.

This strategic move aligns with our broader mandate to provide the necessary and required facilities to support the constitutional functions of the Legislature, including legislative oversight, accountability, and public participation. The office space will not only accommodate the administrative needs but also foster a conducive environment for the work of political parties and the Office of the Speaker.

We recognize the critical importance of proper office infrastructure in enabling the Legislature to perform its duties effectively and efficiently. As such, the lease agreement will be managed with utmost diligence and transparency, ensuring value for public resources and compliance with procurement regulations. I urge all Members to support this initiative as we continue to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Free State Legislature for the benefit of our province and its people

**Honourable Deputy Speaker:** on the third task confronting us, the **modernization of the Legislature**, the Free State Legislature has demonstrated a strong commitment to the modernization of the Fourth Raadsaal and the administration wing, regardless of whether operations are conducted within or outside the Free State Province.

In the **2024/2025 Budget Votes Speech**, an emphasis was made on the importance of refurbishing and modernizing the Fourth Raadsaal, a historic and symbolic seat of the Legislature. Efforts include the installation of an electronic sound system and ongoing refurbishment of furniture to restore the chamber as a prestigious plenary facility and heritage site. This modernization initiative is aimed at enhancing the working environment for Members of the Legislature and ensuring that the building remains a functional and

dignified space for legislative activities and public engagement. To that effect there will be no physical sittings of the House for the duration of the month of October as the Department of Public Works will be embarking on the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of renovation to the Ceiling of Raadsaal.

In terms of administrative support, it must be underscored that the essential roles played by various Offices and Directorates such as Institutional Support Services, the Office of the Speaker, the Offices of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, Financial Management, Legal Services, Strategy and Risk Management, Internal Audit and Core Business are critical to the work performed by Members. These structures provide comprehensive support to Members through well-organized working stations and efficient administrative services. The Legislature is committed to ensuring that these support services are well-resourced and equipped to facilitate the effective functioning of the Legislature, including oversight, public participation, and legislative processes. The integration of these support functions also aligns with the broader goal of improving operational efficiency and ensuring accountability and compliance within the institution.

The modernization of the Free State Legislature's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is a critical component of this commitment. Free State advocates for aligning the Legislature's ICT systems with national initiatives to enhance connectivity and digital communication across government institutions. This includes upgrading existing ICT infrastructure with advanced technologies such as cloud computing and enhanced cybersecurity measures to safeguard sensitive legislative data. Furthermore, the implementation of robust ICT governance frameworks, regular audits, and continuous training programs are prioritized to mitigate risks related to data breaches and system failures. These efforts will not only improve Legislature's operational efficiency but also foster greater public engagement through digital platforms, thereby ensuring a secure, reliable, and modern legislative environment.

**Hon Deputy Speaker**, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Free State Legislature is in a process to ensure the **procurement of Wi-Fi** for the Raadsaal and each floor in the Southern Life Building.

## **PROGRAMME 2: (CORE BUSINESS) LAW-MAKING, OVERSIGHT, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ PARTICIPATION**

**Hon Deputy Speaker:** The Free State Legislature remains steadfast in fulfilling its constitutional mandate of **Law-Making** with renewed commitment in the 2025/26 financial year. We have received part of the Provincial Budget, which, although insufficient to fully meet our obligations for 2025/26, demonstrates the provincial government's commitment to supporting the Legislature in developing responsive and inclusive legislation. Our focus will be on thoroughly considering, passing, amending, or rejecting bills, including initiating legislation beyond money bills. This process will be underpinned by extensive public



consultations and hearings to ensure that the laws we enact foster an enabling environment for socio-economic development that directly benefit the people of the Free State.

**Oversight** continues to be a cornerstone of our work, with Portfolio Committees employing advanced methodologies such as the Sector Oversight Model, Programme Evaluation and Budget Analysis. These tools enable us to rigorously monitor and hold the Executive accountable for the delivery of services. Through these mechanisms, we ensure that government programs are implemented effectively and efficiently, thereby safeguarding the interests of our communities. Our strategic planning workshops for members and coordinated budget management further enhances our capacity to execute this oversight mandate with precision and impact.

**Honourable Members**, our constitutional mandate is clear: we are entrusted with holding the provincial executive accountable and ensuring robust oversight over the exercise of provincial authority. This duty extends not only to Provincial Organs of State but also to our Municipalities and Public Entities, as enshrined in **Section 142(2) of the Constitution**. To strengthen this mandate, the Legislature will review and amend its Standing Rules and Orders, ensuring our internal procedures and mechanisms are fit for purpose. We are intensifying our oversight tools ranging from written and oral questions, departmental budget votes, and Members' statements, to the effective use of motions and constituency work. The institution will convene sessions with key executive leaders to address non-compliance, enforce strict measures, and implement consequence management where necessary. Our Portfolio Committees, following a strategic planning session, are now equipped with structured accountability strategies and will be empowered with dedicated operational budgets, ensuring their autonomy and effectiveness in oversight. We are also committed to forging stronger partnerships with **Chapter 9 and 10 institutions, civil society**, and other stakeholders to ensure our oversight is research-based and action-oriented.

Furthermore, we recognize the need to enhance our research capacity, gradually transitioning these functions from the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit to a dedicated research section. This will ensure our oversight is independent, impartial, and evidence based. We will implement intensified tracking mechanisms for House and Portfolio Committee resolutions, publishing all oversight reports for public access and introducing consequence management for non-compliance. Our commitment extends to monitoring the implementation of the District Development Model and fostering coordination with the NCOP, National Parliament, and other Provincial Legislatures. Through active participation in NCOP processes and collaboration on cross-cutting issues like water security and youth unemployment, we reaffirm our dedication to advancing the socio-economic aspirations of the people of Free State. This is not just a constitutional

obligation, but a solemn commitment to the principles of democratic governance and the people we serve.

We congratulate the recently appointed **Manager: Committees**, Mr. Chabana Chabana who hit the ground running during the Joint Oversight of the Parliament and Provincial Portfolio Committees together with team. We are also thrilled to announce that we will be advertising the position of the **Manager: Research** and other positions which we anticipate to be filled by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2025 in order to capacitate the work of the Portfolio Committees

**Accountability and participatory** democracy remain central to our approach. We are committed to actively managing public participation processes, ensuring that the voices of our electorate are meaningfully integrated into legislative mandates and outcomes. This fosters transparency, inclusivity, and trust between the Legislature and the people we serve. Our legislative agenda aligns with broader provincial goals, balancing economic growth initiatives with the delivery of essential frontline services to achieve a prosperous Free State. Supported by ongoing strategic planning and public involvement efforts, the Free State Legislature is well-positioned to advance law-making and oversight that are responsive, inclusive, and geared towards sustainable development in the year ahead.

**Honourable Deputy Speaker:** Despite the challenges we face as the sector, of Constitutional Court litigation against some of critical Bills passed by the NCOP through the 8 Provincial Legislatures intended to improve the lives of our people and service delivery, **Public Participation and Involvement** remains a cornerstone of our democracy, deeply embedded in our constitutional framework and central to our mandate of ensuring active citizen involvement in decisions that impact their lives.

We are committed to responding effectively to the challenges and complaints raised by the public, ensuring that state organs address service delivery issues and uphold good governance. Inspired by the words of our first **President Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela**, who emphasized that the legislature is the vanguard of change and the platform for societal influence on policy and oversight, the Free State Legislature (FSL) has developed mechanisms to engage the public meaningfully. While progress has been made, the **7th Administration** must intensify efforts to enhance public involvement, focusing on transforming Sectoral Parliaments into sustainable, ongoing processes that translate community challenges into actionable recommendations for government intervention, with special attention to youth, women, and disability sectors this is one of the main resolutions of our recently held strategic planning session for portfolio committees.

Furthermore, **Public Education and Voter Engagement** are critical as we approach the **2026 Local Government Elections**, especially in light of declining voter registration and apathy among young people. We plan to partner with the IEC and other stakeholders to expand voter education and raise awareness of the Legislature's role through programs

like "**Taking Legislature/Committees to the People.**" The right to lodge a petition which is a constitutionally guaranteed right to our people, remains vital for holding the executive accountable, and we aim to improve systems, capacity, and legislative tools to ensure timely and effective responses to public grievances.

By the end of this financial year, we aim to introduce an **online petition process** in order to significantly enhance the efficiency of the Legislature's petitioning system. Currently, petitions must be submitted via email or hand-delivery, which limits accessibility and slows down processing. With the rise of social media and widespread internet use changing how people engage politically, implementing citizen-driven e-petitions is our priority. Online petitioning will reduce costs related to participation, dissemination, and organization, and it will facilitate major petition drives that build broad coalitions across municipal and provincial boundaries, thereby increasing public involvement in policymaking.

**Hon Deputy Speaker, constituency engagement** remains a vital channel through which community concerns reach the Legislature. Direct communication between elected Public Representatives and citizens is essential for effective representation and timely response to local needs. Through regular outreach, representatives gain valuable insights into the challenges faced by their communities, enabling them to craft more responsive and inclusive policies. This ongoing engagement helps ensure that elected officials remain visible, accountable, and trusted by their constituents even outside of election periods, strengthening the bond between the public and the Legislature.

**Hon Deputy Speaker,** Constituency work involves elected representatives advocating on behalf of their constituents and making their voices heard in public policymaking. This role is fundamental to representative democracy, which upholds the right of citizens to participate in decisions affecting them. MPLs (Members of the Provincial Legislature) must engage meaningfully with their constituents to fulfill their representative, legislative, and oversight duties effectively. Given time and resource constraints, building strong relationships with community leaders is crucial for maintaining productive and efficient dialogue. To support this, the current term aims to launch a Constituency Outreach Programme under the "**Know Your Public Representative**" campaign, developed in collaboration with the Directorate of Public Participation, Education, Communications, and Marketing, to strengthen the Legislature's impact and enhance members' roles in addressing community challenges.

Additionally, the Communication and Marketing Unit is enhancing our institutional presence through a Corporate Identity Manual and an upgraded website, ensuring consistent branding and accessible information. These initiatives collectively strengthen our commitment to a responsive, transparent, and participatory democracy.

### PROGRAMME 3: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**Honorable Deputy Speaker**, the goal is to ensure that as the Free State Legislature, we maintain and strengthen relations with most bicameral and unicameral Parliaments and administrations around the globe and within the continent. We derive this mandate from the preamble to our Constitution which provides “*Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations*”. The role played by the Free State Legislature in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as well as the administration through the Society of Secretaries and the African Colloquium of Legal Counsel to Parliament must never be taken for granted as these associations contribute immensely to improving the services rendered by the Legislature to the people of Free State.

### CONCLUSION

**Honourable Deputy Speaker**, as we conclude, we would like to point out that this budget is designed to support the implementation of our Strategic Plan for the 7<sup>th</sup> term, aligning resources to key priorities that will drive Legislative excellence and Service Delivery. We will continue to invest in Capacity Building, Audit Oversight, and Communication Infrastructure to ensure that our work is not only efficient but also accessible and transparent to all Free Staters. By doing so, we uphold the principles of Good Governance and contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of our Province.

Despite the financial constraints, the Legislature remains committed to aligning its budget with key outcomes: enhancing oversight and accountability of the Executive, proactive and responsive law-making, meaningful public participation, improved collaboration with other state organs, and adherence to good governance principles. We have also implemented cost containment measures to ensure value for money in all expenditures and operational efficiencies, particularly in supply chain management. Treasury has assured us that a review of the baseline budget will be considered through the Adjustment Appropriation process, providing some hope for addressing current shortfalls. Furthermore, funding to political parties is fully budgeted, ensuring their continued effective participation in the legislative process.

**Hon Deputy Speaker**, the Joint Oversight of the Parliament and the Provincial Portfolio Committees showed that an increase in the allocation of budget to the Free State Legislature is a necessity and not a luxury to ensure that effective oversight through site visits is undertaken by the Legislature through its engine in the form of committees.

Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude as the **Presiding Officers**, to all the professionals in this institution who enable us as Members to do our work efficiently and effectively: our dedicated Legislature Staff, and Management. We thank the members of

this house for being combat ready to serve in the various responsibilities that are expected of them in line with the mandate of this house.

Our **greatest gratitude** goes to the Members of the Executive Council for always availing themselves for various portfolio committees whenever they are called upon to come and account for their respective portfolios.

A **big thank** you to the people of the Free State for their relentless responses to our public participation calls we make whenever we have to review or make laws.

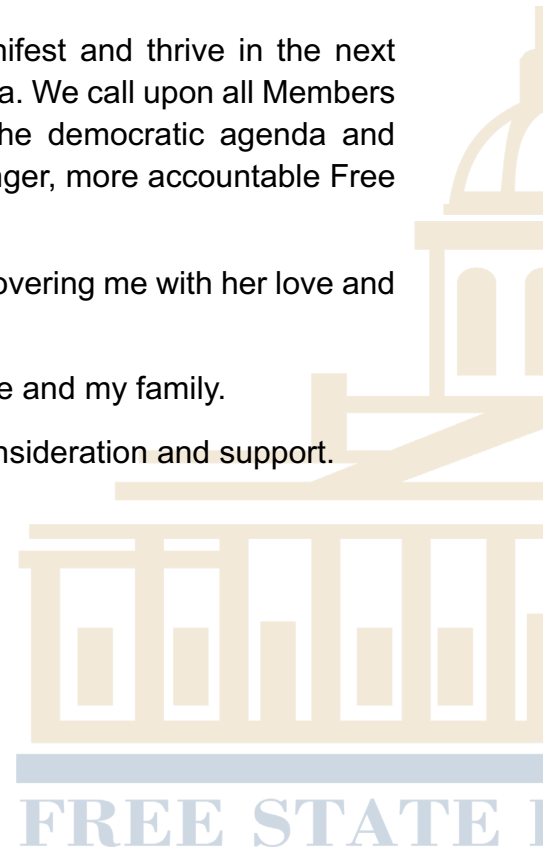
It is our hope and trust that this spirit will continue to manifest and thrive in the next Financial Year and way into the future for a better South Africa. We call upon all Members to support this budget as a vital instrument to advance the democratic agenda and improve the lives of our people. Together, let us build a stronger, more accountable Free State Legislature for the future.

Last but not least let me thank my beautiful wife for forever covering me with her love and prayers.

Most of all let me thank God who is forever watching over me and my family.

**Honourable members**, I present Budget **Vote 2** for your consideration and support.

**I THANK YOU**





## Annexure A - Programmes

Allocation of budget to execute Constitutional Mandates vested in the Free State Legislature:

1	<b>Administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides for (1) Office of the Speaker (including Portfolio &amp; Household Committees), (2) Office of the Secretary (Strategic &amp; Risk, Internal Audit, Marketing &amp; Communication, Public Participation, Security, Legislative Sector Support Programme), (3) Office of the Deputy Secretary (Human Resources, Institutional Support) and (4) Office of the Chief Financial Officer (Finance, Supply Chain Management).</li> <li>International Relations</li> </ul>
	<b>Direct Charge to Provincial Revenue Fund</b>	<b>Remuneration of Members</b>
2	<b>Facilities and Benefits to Members and Political Parties</b>	In terms of Section 116 (2) of the Constitution of our country, financial and administrative assistance to each party represented in the legislature, in proportion to its representation, to enable the party and its leader to perform their functions in the legislature effectively must be provided.
3	<b>Parliamentary Services</b>	Provides for Hansard, Legal Services, Legislation & Oversight

<i>Budget allocation per programme</i>	2025-26 R'000
Administration	R199 068
Facilities & Benefits to Members and Political Parties	R66 490
Parliamentary Services	R51 748
<i>Total to be appropriated</i>	R317 306
Direct Charge to Provincial Revenue Fund	R30 429
<i>Total Payments</i>	R347 735

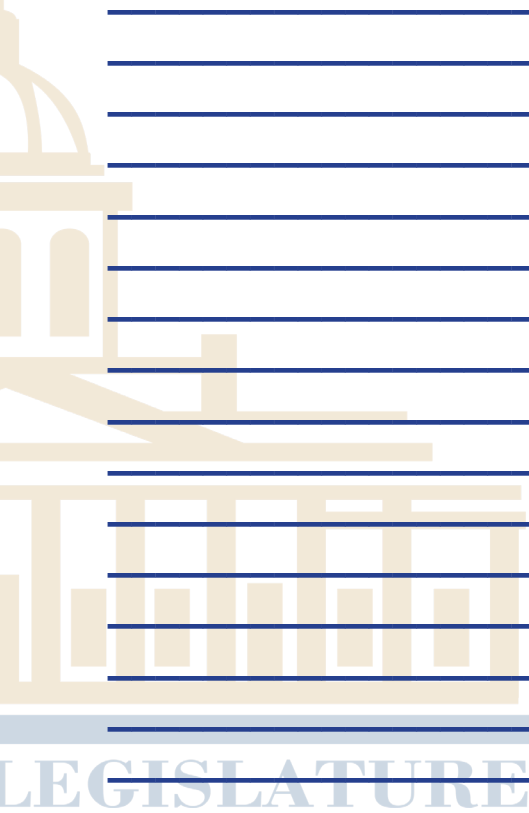
<i>Budget allocation per economic classification</i>	2025-26 R'000
Compensation of Employees	R 210 330
Goods & Services	R70 816
Transfers	R64 834
Payments for Capital Assets	R1 755
Total	R347 735



## NOTES



## NOTES





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