IFP Response to My Vote Counts Campaign

IFP POSITION ON PARTY FUNDING
"ABSOLUTE TRANSPARENCY NEEDED"

Political party funding is good for all political parties because money is the milk of politics: without access to resources it would be difficult for a lot of political parties to operate. Democracy requires that there should be strong political parties, especially opposition parties. Opposition parties are watchdogs on behalf of the electorate, tasked with ensuring that government delivers services to the people and utilises taxpayers' money effectively. For opposition parties to be able to fulfill their role they need access to resources and in many instances those resources are very difficult to get.

In the midst of campaigns towards elections, much has been said about funding for new and smaller political parties. It is a matter of real concern that larger parties get the lion's share from the private sector and other donors, based on the proportion of votes attained in the last general election. Even the funding that comes from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is shared on proportional bases or based on the number of seats that a political party has in Parliament. This criterion is very biased: it makes the bigger party bigger and keeps the smaller parties even smaller. The bigger parties get a huge amount of party funding while smaller parties get a smaller share.

It would certainly serve multi-party democracy to allocate a set amount of funds to every party that registers to contest a national election. In the set allocation there should be a cap that will be divided equally to all politically parties represented in parliament then another allocation be distributed on proportional bases. In the absence of that, and considering the already huge war-chests of the larger parties, the IFP appeals to the corporate sector and industrialists to support smaller parties with donations and gifts in kind, to level the playing field and give multi-party democracy a fighting chance.

Some parties especially bigger political parties get a lot more funding from private sector companies which makes them have all the resources needed to campaign. This helps their campaign reach a larger majority of the electorate, which contributes to the number of votes they receive. Often smaller and new parties are at a disadvantage because they cannot fully push their campaign as much as they would like to, with the little funding they get from the Independent Electoral Commission.

As the IFP we believe that there should be absolute transparency on party funding.

Companies often fund bigger parties such as the ANC because they expect to get something in return. Transparency would be good, because it allows everyone to know which company is funding which political party and on what bases. Most often these companies support certain parties in order to incur future favour – this can easily be translated to bribery. For instance, if a company is funding the ANC, they may expect the ruling party to support them with government tenders and other government business.

The lack of transparency in party funding gives an opportunity for donors to influence the priorities of political organisations. Donors give money to these parties only if they get something out of it; knowing who gives what amount to whom will help keep the whole process clean and hinder individuals or organisations that want to derail our democracy from doing so.

Transparency will help us keep an eye over those issues and allow us to question why certain companies are more favoured than others when it comes to getting tenders from government. It will help in our fight against corruption that has plagued our country.

Ends.