

# Sovereignty bill: real threat is absence of laws limiting campaign spending



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**L**ooking at the Protection of Sovereignty bill, it seems that we are attempting to catch “big and small flies” in a legislative net. The bill is so wide and it threatens to strangle our economy, scare away vital investment, and punish the average Ugandan for the “sin” of earning a living. I have come to realize the problem emanated from the dust of the recent elections, although it has settled, the legislative aftershocks are just beginning. Currently, questions about the validity of this bill are spreading across the country like rain in a tropical forest.

Last year, before the first ballot was even cast, I penned an article in the very pages of *The Observer* newspaper dated August 20, 2025 calling for urgent reforms to regulate campaign spending. My argument then, as it is now, is simple: if we truly wish to level the playing field for our democracy, we must follow the money.

After my careful study of the Attorney General’s article in the *New Vision* titled “*Regulating foreign influence without stifling growth*” and dated Tuesday, April 21, 2026, he clearly brought up my earlier mind that the common tools across this law include funding bans: Prohibiting foreign donations to political candidates and parties, as Singapore and the US do.

He mentioned the different countries that have legislated this law and to my research most of these countries were

targeting elections interference by foreign countries! That said, do we still need the protection of sovereignty bill or a law limiting campaign funding?

When a foreign NGO or investor fears that a vaguely worded law might criminalize their presence, they pull out. The result? Ugandans lose jobs, and our poverty levels spike. You cannot protect the sovereignty of a hungry population. If we are to raise our GDP as we claim in 2040; this bill may sabotage our goal.

The spirit behind this legislative push emanates from the allegations that several candidates received substantial foreign aid to bankroll their campaigns. This is the real “mischief.” We saw convoys that stretched for kilometers and media blitzes that cost billions of Shillings—expenses that far exceed the legitimate earnings of a standard Ugandan politician.

The threat to our “political soul” isn’t a foreign grant for a borehole in Gulu or a human rights workshop in Mbarara; it is the unlimited, untraceable campaign spending that allows external interests to “buy” a seat at our table of power. This is the valid reason for sovereignty.

Instead of a verbose sovereignty bill that contradicts existing financial laws, we need a Campaign Funds Regulation Act. Here is why this is the real solution:

a) Transparency over Paranoia: Rather than monitoring every citizen’s bank account, we should require candidates to declare the source of every Shilling above a certain threshold.

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b) Levelling the Playing Field: In the recent elections, we saw “deep-pocketed” candidates drown out the voices of brilliant, grassroots leaders simply because the latter couldn’t afford the “facilitation” culture. Sovereignty belongs to the people, not the highest bidder.

c) Protecting Investment: A specific law on election funding allows legitimate foreign direct investment (FDI) to flourish. We can welcome a factory in Namanve while strictly forbidding that factory’s owner from donating to a presidential candidate.

## **WAY FORWARD**

We must approach legislation with a cool head, not a clenched fist. The unlimited flow of money into our elections is the true Trojan Horse. If we don’t cap spending and regulate contributions, our sovereignty will be sold off piece by piece during every five-year cycle.

Let us abandon the “catch-all” net that threatens our economy. Let us instead draft a law that targets the heart of the problem: campaign finance. Only then can we ensure that a leader’s mandate comes from the Ugandan voter, not a foreign wire transfer.

Our democracy is not for sale; let our laws finally reflect that.

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