

Private funding of South African political parties

Whilst the recent political maneuvers within our country has once again taken center stage of our media, notably as we head for the voting polls in 2009, much more attention will be given to the manner in which corporate funding of political parties will still take place.

A number of scandals regarding private funding of political parties have arisen, some cases being that of Brett Kebble, Willie Madisha, Shabir Shaik and the 'Oilgate' sagas. Not only does secretive funding of political parties cause major suspicion of 'buying' political favour, it also epitomizes poor corporate governance practices within a country as well as marginalizing the voice of ordinary voters. These factors amongst other, damages every aspect of our moral and social values and undermines the democratic ethos and principals of our Constitutional rights.

The call therefore, to build trust between citizens and the state, is to see a system of private political funding which is transparent and one that enshrines the principals of accountability and equity. Andre Fourie, the CEO of The National Business Initiative (NBI) argues that, "a functional multi-party democracy is important for sustainable development and economic growth. In other words, democracy is good for business. It is therefore in the interest of companies to support the democratic process".

Whilst in South Africa there is no regulation pertaining to the manner in which companies or individuals (sponsors) privately fund political parties, there is increasingly a demand for greater transparency. Private sponsors, who are in many cases the life line of some political parties, are therefore urged to create their own frameworks that support good governance practices when funding political parties.

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