



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE, HOUSING AND CHIEFS AFFAIRS

ON THE

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, N.A.B NO 76 OF 2026

FOR THE

FIFTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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FOREWORD

Honourable Madam Speaker, the Committee on Local Governance, Housing and Chiefs Affairs has the honour to present its Report on the Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, N.A.B No. 76 of 2026, for the Fifth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly. The Committee is mandated to consider Bills referred to it by the House pursuant to Standing Orders 112(3) and 207(j) of the National Assembly Standing Orders, 2024.

The Committee held three (3) meetings to consider submissions from stakeholders. To acquaint itself with the Bill's ramifications, the Committee sought written and oral submissions from various stakeholders. The list of stakeholders is at Appendix II of the Report.

The Report is organised in three parts. Part I provides the background and a summary of the Bill's provisions. Part II presents the summary of submissions from stakeholders, while Part III highlights the Committee's observations and recommendations.

The Committee wishes to pay tribute to all stakeholders who appeared before it and tendered both oral and written submissions. It further wishes to thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing it to study and consider the Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, N.A.B. No. 76 of 2026. The Committee also appreciates the services rendered by the Office of the Clerk during its deliberations.



PP Mr Twaambo Mutinta, MP
CHAIRPERSON

May, 2026
LUSAKA

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1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consists of MrTwaamboMutinta. MP (Chairperson); MrGeorge KKandafula, MP (Vice Chairperson); Mr Christopher Kang'ombe, MP; Mr Henry Sikazwe, MP; Mr Anthony Kasandwe, MP; Mr Paul Chala, MP; MsEmeldahMunashabantu, MP; MrKabasoKampampi, MP; MrKenny Siachisumo, MP; and MrNewton Samakayi, MP.

PART I

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Public Holidays Act was enacted shortly before Zambia's independence to establish a legal framework for the observance of national public holidays. It came into effect on 26 March, 1964 as Act No. 14 of 1964 and is now codified as Chapter 272 of the Laws of Zambia.

Prior to independence, Northern Rhodesia largely observed holidays based on the British colonial calendar. As Zambia prepared for self-governance, there arose a need to create holidays that reflected the country's national identity, liberation struggle, unity, and social values. The Act, therefore, provided for the official recognition and regulation of public holidays across the country.

The legislation sought to declare official public holidays, ensure nationwide observance, provide substitute holidays where a holiday falls on a Sunday, and empower the responsible Minister to declare additional holidays where necessary. Over time, the Act has been amended to accommodate Zambia's evolving political and social landscape, resulting in the introduction of holidays such as Kenneth Kaunda Day, National Day of Prayer, Youth Day, and Heroes Day. The Act also permits the declaration of special public holidays through statutory instruments for occasions such as elections, presidential inaugurations, national mourning, and major national events.

Zambia currently observes sixteen public holidays annually, prompting the proposed Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, N.A.B. No. 76 of 2026.

3.0 OBJECT OF THE BILL

The object of this Bill is to amend the Public Holidays Act, Chapter 272 of the Laws of Zambia, so as to remove the observance of a Monday as a public holiday on the day following a public holiday falling on a Sunday.

4.0 PROVISIONS OF THE BILL

Clause 1 – Short title

The clause provides for the citation of the Bill as the Public Holidays (Amendment) Act, 2026, and stipulates that it shall be read together with the principal Act.

Clause 2 – Amendment of section 2 of the principal Act

The clause seeks to amend section 2 of the principal Act by deleting subsection (2), which currently provides for the observance of a Monday as a public holiday where a public holiday falls on a Sunday. The clause further makes a consequential amendment to subsection (1) by deleting the figure “(1)”.

PART II

5.0 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders who appeared before the Committee generally supported the Bill on the basis that it would enhance economic efficiency, productivity, operational planning and administrative certainty. However, they also expressed concerns relating to labour rights, worker welfare, economic implications and the broader social and administrative ramifications of the proposed amendment. The summary of their submissions are set out below:

Clause 2 – Removal of the observance of a Monday as a public holiday following a holiday falling on a Sunday

5.1 Policy rationale and productivity concerns

Stakeholders submitted that the Bill sought to remove the observance of a substitute Monday holiday where a public holiday fell on a Sunday, with the intention of reducing non-working days and improving productivity within the country. It was submitted that the current framework disrupts planning for public and private enterprises because additional Monday holidays reduce working days and affect productivity. Therefore, they explained that the amendment would create a more predictable legal framework for observance of public holidays and improve planning for both the public and private sectors.

Further, other stakeholders questioned whether the limited number of holidays falling on Sundays each year could materially affect productivity. They submitted that the overall number of public holidays remained constant regardless of the day on which they occurred and argued that productivity losses also arose from holidays occurring on weekdays such as Fridays, Wednesdays or Tuesdays.

5.2 Planning and administrative efficiency

Stakeholders submitted that removing substitute Monday holidays would improve operational planning by reducing uncertainty caused by additional non-working days. They explained that where public holidays fell on Sundays, the resulting substitute Mondays disrupted staffing, operations, and business continuity in both Government and private sector institutions.

However, other stakeholders argued that public holidays were predetermined through annual calendars and could therefore be adequately planned for in advance. They submitted that the occasional occurrence of substitute Monday holidays did not justify removing a long-standing public holiday provision in the principal Act.

Scope and application of the Sunday rule under the principal act

Stakeholders submitted that the principal Act provides for scheduled public holidays under section 2, including the “Sunday rule” under subsection (2), which permits observance of a Monday where a public holiday falls on a Sunday. They noted that the Schedule lists eleven

(11) categories of public holidays, although Heroes Day, Farmers Day and Unity Day are unaffected by the Sunday rule due to their fixed weekday arrangements. In this regard, the “Sunday rule” practically applies to eight (8) holidays.

Stakeholders further submitted that, under section 3 of the principal Act, the Minister retains powers to declare additional public holidays by statutory notice. These include International Women’s Day, Kenneth Kaunda Day, Easter Monday and the National Day of Prayer, Fasting, Repentance and Reconciliation. However, stakeholders observed that the Bill only seeks to amend section 2 and does not clarify whether holidays declared under section 3 of the principal Act should be subjected to the Sunday rule. Stakeholders submitted that the absence of such clarification creates legal ambiguity regarding the treatment of additional public holidays declared by statutory notice.

5.3 Public holidays and productivity misconceptions

Stakeholders further submitted that several sectors of the economy continued operating irrespective of whether a day was designated as a public holiday. They noted that sections 74 and 75 of the Employment Code Act, Cap 268, already recognised this reality by permitting normal work schedules to include public holidays and by providing for double pay only where the public holiday fell outside an employee’s normal working week.

Stakeholders explained that an employee whose ordinary schedule already included the day on which a public holiday occurred was not automatically entitled to additional remuneration. In this regard, they submitted that where an employee ordinarily worked from Monday to Friday, the mere occurrence of a public holiday on a Monday did not alter the employee’s entitlement unless otherwise provided in the conditions of service. Stakeholders further observed that many employers and employees incorrectly interpreted public holidays to mean mandatory non-working days or automatic entitlement to extra pay, contrary to the provisions of the Employment Code Act.

Therefore, stakeholders argued that productivity challenges in Zambia were more closely linked to workplace culture, limited understanding of labour laws and resistance to flexible work arrangements than to the existence of substitute Monday holidays.

5.4 Workers’ rights and rest periods

Stakeholders opposed to the Bill submitted that the “right to rest” is a fundamental principle recognised under International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, which support genuine statutory holiday entitlements that should not be lost due to calendar placement. They explained that the Sunday Rule gives practical effect to this principle by preserving substitute holidays where public holidays fall on Sundays.

Stakeholders further submitted that removing substitute Monday holidays would erode workers’ rights and welfare by reducing guaranteed rest periods, considering that Sundays already function as ordinary rest days for many workers. They argued that public holidays form part of broader labour protection mechanisms intended to safeguard rest, recovery and wellbeing. Stakeholders warned that fewer rest periods could negatively affect morale, increase fatigue and reduce long-term productivity.

However, other stakeholders submitted that concerns relating to rest and worker welfare could be addressed through compensatory leave arrangements instead of automatic

substitute Monday holidays. They argued that compensatory leave would preserve employees' entitlement to rest while reducing disruptions caused by additional nationwide non-working days. Stakeholders further submitted that employers should make administrative arrangements to safeguard lower-income and formal sector employees through equivalent leave mechanisms provided under conditions of service or labour regulations.

5.5 Economic activity and local revenue in retail and hospitality industries

Stakeholders submitted that the current framework stimulated domestic trade, tourism, transport activity and local economic circulation through the creation of long weekends. It was argued that local authorities and businesses benefited from increased market activity, recreational spending and travel during extended holiday periods. In this regard, stakeholders cautioned that removal of substitute holidays could negatively affect local revenue generation and economic activity associated with long weekends.

However, other stakeholders submitted that economic activity should not depend solely on substitute holidays, as many public holidays already fall within weekdays and continue to support commerce and tourism. They argued that removing substitute Monday holidays would improve operational certainty and productivity. Stakeholders further noted that employees would still access rest and recreation through annual leave and other leave entitlements provided under conditions of service.

5.6 Comparative and regional approaches to public holiday scheduling and the Sunday rule

Stakeholders submitted that many countries structure public holidays around periods of observance rather than fixed calendar dates in order to minimise disruption to productivity while preserving meaningful rest periods. They cited the United States, where holidays such as Thanksgiving are deliberately aligned with weekends to create predictable long weekends without interrupting the working week.

Stakeholders further submitted that majority of the Southern African Development Community member states, including South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana, retain substitute Monday holiday provisions where public holidays fall on Sundays. In this regard, stakeholders argued that the removal of the Sunday Rule would neither align Zambia with regional practice nor international trends. Instead, they submitted that Zambia would become an outlier within the region, as neighbouring countries continued to preserve substitute holiday arrangements aimed at balancing productivity, worker welfare and social participation.

PART III

6.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After carefully considering submissions from all stakeholders, the Committee makes the following observations and recommendations.

- 6.1** The Committee observes that the proposed amendment addresses only the Sunday rule without comprehensively reviewing the broader public holiday framework and its economic, social and labour-related implications. The Committee further notes the absence of sufficient empirical evidence demonstrating the projected productivity gains and economic benefits anticipated from the proposed amendment. In this regard, the Committee recommends the following:
- i. that Government undertake a comprehensive review of the public holiday regime and related labour laws with a view to consolidating related commemorative holidays and ensuring greater policy coherence; and
 - ii. that such a review be supported by broad stakeholder consultations and a detailed economic and social impact assessment prior to the implementation of any further reforms;
 - iii. the introduction of appropriate compensatory mechanisms, including substitute leave arrangements, in order to safeguard workers' rights, welfare and productivity.
 - iv. Further, the Committee is of the view that substitute arrangements should be retained for nationally significant holidays such as Labour Day, Independence Day and Christmas Day, in recognition of their historical, social and national significance.
- 6.2** The Committee observes that aligning public holidays to fixed weekdays may reduce economic disruptions while preserving adequate rest periods, family time and social participation. In this regard, the Committee recommends transitioning from a fixed-calendar-date approach to a weekday-based public holiday framework.
- 6.3** The Committee notes that the current framework may benefit from reforms aimed at improving administrative efficiency and productivity without undermining the social purpose of public holidays. The Committee further recommends the rationalisation of the public holiday calendar through the revocation, consolidation or harmonisation of duplicate and overlapping holidays in order to promote productivity, policy coherence and administrative efficiency.
- 6.4** The Committee notes the lack of clarity regarding the application of the Sunday rule to public holidays declared under section 3 of the principal Act. The Committee is concerned that this omission may create legal ambiguity and inconsistent interpretation in the application of the law. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Bill expressly clarify whether the Sunday rule applies to public holidays declared by the Minister in order to ensure legal certainty, consistency and uniform application of the law.
- 6.5** The Committee observes that misconceptions regarding public holidays, employee compensation and work scheduling arrangements have contributed to disputes and misunderstandings between employers and employees. The Committee is of the view that limited public awareness of labour law provisions continues to undermine compliance and harmonious labour relations. In this regard, the Committee recommends the implementation of nationwide sensitisation and labour law awareness programmes to enhance public understanding of the proposed amendment and existing legal provisions relating to public holidays, compensation, substitute leave arrangements and flexible work schedules.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Committee notes that the Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, N.A.B. No. 76 of 2026 aims to enhance productivity, operational planning, and administrative efficiency by managing public holiday disruptions arising from the Sunday rule. Additionally, the Committee also notes concerns raised by stakeholders relating to labour rights, employee welfare, social participation, and the potential administrative and contractual adjustments required for implementation. Notwithstanding this, the Committee is of the view that the proposed reforms are necessary and progressive in promoting economic efficiency and certainty in institutional planning. In this regard, the Committee supports the Bill, subject to the incorporation of the recommendations contained in this Report.



PP Mr Twaambo Mutinta
CHAIRPERSON

May, 2026

LUSAKA

APPENDIX I

LIST OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS

Mr. Charles Haambote, Director, (Social Committees)
Mrs. Chitalu K Mumba, Deputy Director (Social Committees)
Mr. Darius Kunda, Senior Committee Clerk
Mr. Kelezo Lushako, Committee Clerk
Mr FebianLitia, Committee Clerk
Ms Anita Mulale, Administrative Assistant II
Mr Daniel Lupiya, Senior Committee Assistant
Mr MuyembiKantumoya, Committee Assistant
Ms TaonaChabinga, Committee Assistant

APPENDIX II

LIST OF WITNESSES

Cabinet Office

Chapter One Foundation

Hon MisheckNyambose

Local Governance Association of Zambia

Lusaka City Council

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

Zambia Federation of Employers