

Press Statement

13 February 2026

Ramaphosa officially backs Public Service Amendment Bill in SONA

The New South Institute (NSI) welcomes President Cyril Ramaphosa's clear acknowledgement of the Public Service Amendment Bill during Thursday evening's State of the Nation Address (SONA).

In his address, President Ramaphosa stated:

"To build a stronger South Africa, we need an ethical, capable, and developmental state.

A capable state needs committed and honest public servants with the right skills and a deep culture of service.

Over the past year, we have passed significant new legislation to professionalise the public service.

The Public Service Amendment Bill will protect key appointments from political interference and ensure that capable and qualified people are appointed to senior positions on the basis of their suitability for the job."

This explicit recognition of the Public Service Amendment Bill at SONA, mentioned in exactly the terms the New South Institute (NSI) has been discussing it, marks an important milestone in the national effort to professionalise South Africa's public service.

For several years, the NSI has advocated for reforms that protect senior public service appointments from political interference and entrench merit, suitability, and competence as the foundation of state leadership. The President's remarks reinforce the principle that public institutions must be led by capable and qualified professionals committed to service - not political patronage.

"A capable and ethical state depends on the quality of the people who lead it," said Ivor Chipkin, Co-Founder of the NSI. "It is heartening that the President has made mention of something that can alter the course of history for South Africa. Protecting key appointments from political interference is not a technical reform - it is a structural intervention that can fundamentally change how the state works."

By safeguarding senior appointments and strengthening professional standards in the public service, the Public Service Amendment Bill represents a critical step toward rebuilding institutional integrity, restoring public trust, and improving service delivery.

The President's public endorsement strengthens the case for the full and decisive implementation of these reforms. Building the ethical, capable, and developmental state he has called for requires sustained commitment and collective support.

The New South Institute calls on stakeholders across government, civil society, and the private sector - and on all South Africans - to support this vital reform.

Having recognised its importance, all that remains is for the President to sign the Bill on his desk and make this reform a reality.

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