

YOU CAN NEVER EAT YOUR CAKE AND HAVE IT

The adage "You can never eat your cake and have it" implies that one cannot simultaneously enjoy the benefits of two mutually exclusive choices. This principle is evident in the facets of life, particularly in governance, where decision-making often comes with trade-offs.

A contemporary example is the nomination and confirmation process of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) in Ghana, a situation that reflects the above proverb vividly.

Recently, His Excellency, John Dramani Mahama, the President of the Republic of Ghana, through the Minister of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs, Ahmed Ibrahim (MP), nominated individuals for MMDCE positions per Article 243(1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. These nominees must be confirmed by assembly members, who have a critical role in ensuring that the most competent and ethical leaders assume these positions. However, the process is often marred by allegations of bribery and financial inducement, where some Assembly Members allegedly demand payments from nominees before confirming their appointments.

This practice exemplifies the idea that one cannot eat his or her cake and have it.

Assembly Members, by allegedly demanding financial, as rewards in exchange for confirmations, compromise their moral authority and weaken their ability to hold the appointed officials accountable. When financial transactions dictate the confirmation process, governance is reduced to a mere transaction rather than a responsibility aimed at community development.

In many instances, after confirming nominees through unethical means, some Assembly Members later express dissatisfaction with the performance and lament about the attitudes of these officials; forgetting that they relinquished their leverage when they prioritized personal gains over the collective good. One cannot trade integrity for financial benefit and still expect to wield genuine influence over the confirmed officials.

It must be stated that many of these nominees come from humble backgrounds and may struggle to afford the financial demands placed upon them.

Consequently, they may resort to unethical means to recoup their expenses, including misappropriation of public funds, favouritism, and acts of corruption, which ultimately hinder local development. This vicious cycle perpetuates inefficiency and undermines democratic governance.

To break this cycle, Assembly Members must prioritize the interests of their communities.

Before making confirmation decisions, they should hold discussions within their electoral areas to gather relevant information about nominees, as outlined in Section 16(1)(d) of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936). Such an approach will ensure that choices are made based on merit and the principles of good governance rather than self-interest.

Additionally, the ongoing constitutional review process should consider implementing an electoral system for MMDCEs to minimize undue influence in the confirmation process.

Electing these officials directly could enhance transparency, accountability, and public confidence in local governance.

Assembly Members must therefore recognize that sacrificing integrity for financial gains is detrimental to both their authority and the development of their districts. They cannot simultaneously engage in corrupt practices and expect good governance. It is imperative that they act with a clean conscience and uphold democratic principles to foster sustainable growth in their communities.

May the confirmation process be conducted peacefully, with the sole aim of advancing Ghana's local governance agenda.

May God bless our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong!

Eric Adu (Esq)

(Ahafo Regional Director of the NCCE)