

to support their campaigns. According to the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE), an advocacy group, those accused of misapplication of resources include LPRC managing director Edwin Snow,* three deputy managing directors, and the chairman of LPRC's board of directors. LPRC executives are reported to be carrying out some of the biggest and most costly campaign activities in the country. LPRC has rejected accusations against it in full-page newspaper ads.

Campaign finance regulations adopted by the National Elections Commission (NEC) include restrictions on the source of campaign funds, prohibitions against bribing voters, and disclosure requirements that provide for all campaign finance information to be made public. However, many Liberians express concerns that the NEC lacks the resources to conduct discretionary audits of reports submitted by candidates, as provided for in the regulations.

The practice of donating money, rice, and other gifts to potential voters during campaigns has highlighted the need for further clarification of the definition of "bribery," which is proscribed in the Electoral Reform Law of 2004 (retaining the language from the 1986 New Elections Law). According to news reports, several candidates continue to donate money or other items of value to potential voters, and most candidates and parties prepare food for attendees at political rallies. While Liberians will vote by secret ballot, concerns remain that recipients of campaign gifts may feel obliged to vote for the candidates and parties supplying the gifts.

*According to CEDE, Snow's assets were frozen by United Nations sanctions, and he has been accused of siphoning public funds to former President Charles Taylor in the past.

Senatorial Votes

The Supreme Court of Liberia heard a suit concerning the electoral process for Senate candidates this week, which was brought by the Coalition for the Transformation of Liberia (COTOL) against the NEC. While Liberia's Constitution provides for the election of two Senators from each county, the Electoral Reform Law passed by the NEC in December 2004 stipulates that "Each voter shall have one vote." COTOL argued that the law should be interpreted under a "one man [sic], one vote, for one office" principle and that the NEC has failed to show that it adequately considered this approach. The Monrovia Magisterial Court ruled earlier that each registered voter should be allowed to vote for two senatorial candidates, and the NEC appealed that decision to the Supreme Court.

A decision in the case is expected next week. A ruling in COTOL's favor would require that Senate ballots be altered—and voter education be adapted accordingly—to instruct voters to make marks for two senatorial candidates.

Printing of Ballots

brt (W)5(h)1eoviadonr

printing in court, arguing that it is unconstitutional for the NEC to reveal the location of the ballot production. The NEC has encouraged political parties to travel to Ghana to inspect the ballot printing process in order to ensure transparency, and some representatives of parties are doing so.

Replacement Voter Registration Cards

The NEC has organized a two-week voter card replacement session for people who have lost their cards. From September 17 to 30, registration cards will be issued only to individuals whose names already appear on voter registration lists. The replacement cards, which will be a different color than the original registration cards, will contain the label “replacement.” In order to safeguard against illegal voting, NEC officials will provide a list of all individuals who have received replacement cards to each polling place. Once a replacement card is issued, a citizen cannot use his or her original voter card to vote; all citizens issued a replacement card will be required to present their replacement card in order to vote.

National Democratic Institute/Carter Center Statement on the Pre-election Period

NDI and The Carter Center jointly sponsored a pre-election delegation to Liberia from September 1-9, 2005. The delegates’ statement can be found at: www.ndi.org and www.cartercenter.org