



**Press Statement**  
**24 September 2022**

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**We need a heritage of accountability and ethical leadership**

Defend Our Democracy wishes all those living in South Africa a safe and happy Heritage Day. It is through our hard won democracy that we are able to celebrate our diverse cultures, beliefs and traditions, in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people.

And, even though we are able to celebrate Heritage Day, it is important that we equally embrace a heritage and culture of constitutionalism.

Defend Our Democracy believes that the only way we can do this is through a commitment of ethical leadership from our public representatives, who must embody principles of good governance, transparency and accountability, particularly as it pertains to political party fundraising and the need for prioritising the interest of the public over those of the party.

On this Heritage Day, Defend Our Democracy reiterates support of the Political Party Funding Act and the need for meaningful electoral reform.

We welcome the recent Constitutional Court judgement made, that upheld a Gauteng High Court judgement that the Executive Ethics Code, in its current state, is unconstitutional and invalid. The Executive Ethics Code did not require members of the executive to disclose donations made for their election campaign to be elected to positions within political parties.

Defend Our Democracy applauds AmaBhungane investigative journalists for spearheading this important work, and ensuring that political parties are transparent, accountable and open to the public on funding received for election campaigns. We as the public, must be able to vote consciously and this judgement goes a long way in ensuring that the electorate can do so.

The need to hold political parties and our public representatives more accountable and to be able to directly vote for our public representatives in the legislature must inform the kind of constitutional heritage we desire for our country.

In addition, we must continuously push for the implementation of the recommendations of the State Capture Report, and continuously guard against the unholy alliance of big business corruption and the state, for the sake of our democracy.

As we celebrate Heritage Day, we must relook at our constitutional values, efforts for reconciliation, non-racialism and national unity.

We must put these values at the forefront of a collective national heritage that is resilient to overcome the forces behind destabilisation.

We need to guard against those who exploit social tensions; those who wish to silence whistleblowers, members of the media and activists; and mafia operators - such as those in the construction industry who demand cuts from infrastructure development.

We must also guard against those who would go to any length - even if it negatively affects the country - to avoid accountability, or for some personal political gain.

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