



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **ORG Calls for Renewed Focus on Trust, Participation, and Transparency Following 2026 General Election**

*NASSAU, BAHAMAS—May 14th, 2026 —*

The Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG) congratulates the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) on securing a second mandate from the Bahamian people. We remain committed to offering positive, nonpartisan, and constructive contributions to national development over the next five years.

We note one of the most important takeaways from this election may be those who chose not to participate. A potentially historically low voter turnout should concern all of us; especially when it represents a smaller number and percentage of voters than in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic and snap election. This suggests something deeper in how people are relating to the political process, and democratic participation itself.

High registration but low turnout may mean people care deeply, but do not feel adequately heard, represented, or convinced that participation will lead to meaningful change in their everyday lives. ORG believes several factors are contributing to this.

During our voter education work through “Pathway to the Polls,” many people, particularly young and first-time voters, expressed frustration and fatigue with campaigns that felt heavily centered around personalities, sensationalism, and political cycles. These shallow tactics fall short when Bahamians are struggling with very real issues like cost of living, economic opportunity, crime, energy costs, housing, and public trust.

We continue to hear growing concerns around transparency, accountability, procurement practices, campaign finance reform, access to information, and whether citizens feel genuinely included in decision-making between elections. These issues come up repeatedly as people increasingly understand how governance directly affects their daily lives, opportunities, and confidence in leadership.

Declining public trust has direct implications for participation itself. When citizens lose confidence that institutions are transparent, responsive, fair, or accountable, they are less likely to believe their voices matter or that participation will make a meaningful difference. The Bahamas is not isolated from wider regional and global trends, where declining public trust has increasingly contributed to lower civic engagement and political participation.

Other concerns raised included lack of preparedness and efficiency during the advanced polling process; lack of adherence to laws regarding political “gifting” throughout the campaign season; the seemingly late and only partial rollout of biometric voter cards; and widespread speculation



and misinformation on social media. All of these things contributed to confusion among voters, and no doubt ultimately undermined confidence in the electoral process.

These issues are particularly concerning because research shows that when people do not vote in one election, they are significantly less likely to vote in the next one, and in future election cycles after that. Declining democratic participation weakens civic culture, public trust, accountability, and ultimately the quality of national development itself. Which is why moving forward, these issues must be addressed clearly and proactively.

Meaningful civic participation happens when people have accessible and inclusive engagement opportunities, *and* when they genuinely believe their participation can make a difference. Rebuilding that belief will require deliberate effort from government, civil society, the private sector, the media, and citizens themselves.

Amidst these concerns, ORG also acknowledges encouraging developments during this election cycle. Most notably, this election showed that Bahamians - especially younger people - are indeed invested in governance and national issues when they are engaged in a meaningful way. Through “Pathway to the Polls,” we witnessed strong interest in deeper conversations about policy, accountability, and representation beyond party politics.

Citizens demonstrated a growing interest in resources like ORG’s Voter Insight Tool and Quality of Representation Checklist, which were designed as practical guides to encourage a healthier ongoing relationship between constituents and their representatives, even after the election is over. These resources prompt citizens and representatives alike to think about things such as:

- How Members of Parliament (MPs) will continue engaging with communities outside of election season
- What opportunities exist for citizens to give input before decisions are made
- How policies and decisions are explained in ways people can understand
- What visible follow-through exists on priorities and commitments
- How citizens themselves can remain informed and engaged beyond election day

Democracy cannot function as a once-every-five-years exercise. The current overwhelming parliamentary majority alongside historically low voter participation makes it crucial to build strong, honest, and transparent ongoing relationships between Members of Parliament and their constituencies. It also reinforces the need for long-discussed transparency and accountability mechanisms to be fully implemented and properly resourced - things like the Freedom of Information Act, the Ombudsman, the Public Procurement Act, the Independent Commission of Investigations, and Protected Disclosures legislation. These mechanisms help create balance, trust, fairness, and confidence between citizens and institutions.

This moment requires moving beyond purely partisan approaches to governance and national engagement. There is now a shared responsibility among elected officials, political parties, civil society, the private sector, the media, and citizens themselves to help foster a sustained culture of civic participation in The Bahamas. Cross-sector collaboration must be intentional to ensure



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low voter turnout does not become the standard for participation in Bahamian democracy; because citizen participation is essential to long-term national development, effective governance, and public trust.

This is an opportunity to nurture a healthier democratic culture in The Bahamas. One where citizens remain engaged between elections; where leaders communicate more openly and consistently; and where consultation, accountability, and participation become normalized parts of governance. Strong democracies are built on ongoing partnerships between informed citizens and accountable leadership. Trust grows when people feel heard, respected, informed, and able to participate meaningfully in the decisions that shape their lives.

ORG remains committed to helping create spaces where Bahamians can better understand governance, participate meaningfully, and contribute constructively to national development. We continue to encourage, “Get Informed. Get Involved.” The election may be over, but the deeper work of rebuilding trust, strengthening participation, improving representation, and advancing good governance endures.

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## **About the Organization for Responsible Governance**

The Organization for Responsible Governance (ORG) is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit dedicated to promoting good governance, transparency, and active citizenship in The Bahamas through research, civic education, and community engagement initiatives.