

TITLE:

**PASSAGE OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
BILL IN NIGERIA: THE UNENDING JOURNEY.**

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ABSTRACT

Information has become the essential tool in the development process, in enhancing good governance and empowering people around the world. Unfortunately, virtually all government information in Nigeria is classified as top secret. This veil of secrecy makes it difficult to get information from any state agency. A plethora of laws prevent civil servants and other government officials from divulging official facts and figures. These laws include the Official Secrets Act, Criminal Code, Penal Code, Evidence Act, Public Complaint Commission Act, Statistics Act, Civil Service Rules etc. These officials including journalists are required upon appointment to swear an oath of secrecy not to disclose any information that comes their way unless specifically authorized to do so. The idea behind these laws is to protect vital government information but the level of secrecy is so ridiculous that some classified government files contain ordinary information like newspaper cuttings which are already in the public domain. Freedom of Information Bill is a bill which if passed into law will give every Nigerian a legal right of access to information, records, and documents held by the government or its agency. In Nigeria this bill was first submitted to the National Assembly in 1999. The continued delay in the passage of this bill by the National Assembly has continued to attract mixed reactions from stakeholders. This paper hopes to trace its legislative history, examine the impediments, provisions, adequacy, weaknesses, public outcry and input of different interest groups. Recommendation will be made based on lapses so discovered.