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S.I. No. Short Title Page

HB 22 An Act to make Public Records and information more freely available, Provide for Public Access to Public Records and Information, Protect Public Records and Information to the Extent consistent with the Public Interest and the Protection of Personal Privacy, and Related Purposes hereof C277-C29

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C277

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION BILL, 1999

ARRANGEMENT OF CLAUSES

CLAUSES:

1. Short Title
2. Interpretation
3. Right of access to records
4. Information about government institution
5. Request for access to records
6. Notice where access to records are requested
7. Transfer of request
8. Extension of time limit
9. Where access is refused
10. Fees etc, and action for waiver
11. Destruction or falsification of records
12. Access to records
13. Where information is not available in discrete form
14. Internal affairs and defence
15. Law enforcement and investigations
16. Economic interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
17. Personal information
18. Third party information
19. Advice

- 20. Legal practitioner/client privilege
- 21. Course or Research materials
- 22. Severability
- 23. Judicial review
 - 1. Refusal by head of government and or public institution to disclose records
- 24. Hearing in a summary way
- 25. Access to records by court
- 26. Court to take precautions against disclosing records
- 27. Burden of proof
- 28. Order to disclose records
- 29. Exempted material
- 30. Protection of public officers, Cap. 77 LFN 1990; Cap. 245 LFN 1990

And Cap. 335 LFN 1990

- 31. Document under security classification Cap. 335 LFN, 1990.
- 32. Submission of records
- 33. Complementary procedures.

C279

H.B.22

A BILL

FOR AN ACT TO MAKE PUBLIC RECORDS AND INFORMATION MORE FREELY AVAILABLE, PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS AND INFORMATION, PROTECT PUBLIC RECORDS AND INFORMATION TO THE EXTENT CONSISTENT WITH THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY, AND RELATED PURPOSES HEREOF

Sponsored by: DR. JERRY SONNY UGOKWE – Representing Idemili North/

South Federal Constituency of Anambra State

HON. TONY ANYAWU,

HON. NDUKA IRABOAR

Commencement.

- 1. This Act may be cited as the Freedom of information Act, 1999. Short Title.
- 2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires –
- 3. "Court" means a Court where the official information in
- 4. question is kept by a local or State government institution, and
- 5. "Foreign State" means any State other than the Federal Republic of
- 6. Nigeria;
- 7. "Public/Government Institution" means any legislative, executive,
- 8. judicial, administrative or advisory body of the Federal, State and Local
- 9. Governments, boards, bureaux, committees or commissions of the State,

10. and any subsidiary body of those public bodies including but not limited
11. to committees and sub-committees which are supported in whole or in
12. Part by tax revenue or which expends tax revenue and private bodies
13. Carrying out public functions.
14. "Public record or document" means a record in any form
15. under the

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **C280 1999 No.**

- 1 control of any public or private body relating to matters of public
- 2 interest and includes-
- 3 (a) any writing on any material;
- 4 (b) any information recorded on stored or other devices; and any material
 - 5 subsequently derived from information so recorded or stored;
- 6 (c) any label, marking, or other writing that identifies or describes
 - 7 anything of which it forms part, or to which it is attached by any means;
- 8 (d) any book, card, form, map, plan, graph, or drawing;
7. 9 (e) any photograph, film, negative, microfilm, tape, or other device in
 1. which one or more visual images are embodied so as to be capable (with or
 2. without the aid of some other equipment) of being reproduced;
 3. "Minister" means the Minister charged with responsibility for
 4. information.
 5. "Person" means a corporate body or proprietorship or a body of persons.
 6. "Personal information" means any official information held about all
 7. person; which include information that bears on the
 8. public duties of public employees and officials; and
 9. "Public Officer" means a person who exercises, for
 10. the purpose of the government, the functions of any office or employment
 11. under the State.

Right of access to records.

- 22 3.-(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act but notwithstanding anything
- 23 contained in any other Act, Edict, Law, or Regulation, any person whether or
 1. not that person is a citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has a legally

25 enforceable right to, and shall, on request, be given access to any record under
26 the control of a government or public institution.

1. (2) An applicant need not give any reason or justification for his interest in the
 1. information being requested for.
 2. (3) For the purpose of this Act, any record requested under the Act that is not
 3. readily available but can, subject to such limitations as may be prescribed by

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C281**

- 1 regulation, be produced from any device deemed to be under the control of
2. the government and/or public institution
3. **4.**-(1) The head of every government and or public institution to which Information about government Institution.
4. this Act applies shall cause to be published in the Federal *Gazette* at least once
5. every year-
6. (a) a description of the organisation and responsibilities of the
 7. institution including details of programmes and functions of each division,
 8. branch and department of the institution;
 9. (b) a description of all classes of records under the control of the
 10. institution in sufficient detail to facilitate the exercise of the right to access
 11. under this Act;
 12. (c) a description of all manuals used by employees of the institution in
 13. administering or carrying out any of the programmes or activities of the
 14. institutions;
 15. (d) a description of documents containing final opinions including
 16. concurring and dissenting opinions as well as orders made in the
 17. adjudication of cases;
 18. (e) a description of documents containing substantive rules of the
 19. institution;
 20. (f) a description of documents containing statements and interpretations
 21. of policy which have been adopted by the institution;
 22. (g) a description of documents containing final planning policies,
 23. recommendations, and decisions;
 24. (h) a description of documents containing factual reports, inspection
 25. reports, and studies whether prepared by or for the institution;
 26. (i) a description of documents containing information relating to the
 27. receipt or expenditure of public or other funds of the institution;
 28. (j) a description of documents containing the names, salaries, titles, and

C282 1999 No. *Freedom of Information Bill, 1999*

1. dates of employment of all employees and officers of the institution;
2. (k) a description of documents containing opinions concerning the rights
3. of the State, the public, a sub-division of the State or a local government of
4. any private person;
5. (l) a description of documents containing the name of every official and
6. the final records of voting in all proceedings of the institution;
7. (m) a description of files containing applications for any contract, permit,
8. grants, or agreement.
9. (n) a list of reports, documents, studies, or publications prepared by
10. independent consultants or other independent contractors for the
11. institution;
12. (o) a description of materials containing information relating to any grant
13. or contract made by or between the institution and another government and/
14. or public institution or private organization; and
15. (p) the title and address of the appropriate officers or employees of the
16. institution to whom requests for access to records under this Act should be
17. sent, provided and that the failure of any government and/or public institution to
18. publish any information required to be published under this sub-section
19. shall not prejudicially affect the right of access to public records and
20. information in the custody of such government and/or public institution as
21. provided for under this Act.
22. (2) Any person entitled to the right of access conferred by this Act shall have
23. the right to institute proceedings in a Court to compel the head of any government
24. institution and/or public body to comply with the provisions of this section;
25. (3) The government and or public institutions to which this Act applies are all
26. authorities whether executive, legislative or judicial agencies, ministries, and extra-
27. ministerial departments of the Federal Government and of all State and local
28. governments, together with all corporations established by law and all companies
29. in which a Federal, State or Local Government authority has a controlling interest
30. and also private companies performing public functions.

1 **5.** A request for access to a record under this Act shall be made in writing Request for access to records.

2. to the government and or public institution that has control of the record and

3. shall provide sufficient detail to enable an experienced employee of the institution
4. with a reasonable effort to identify the record.
5. **6.** Where access to a record is requested under this Act, the head of the Notice where Access to records are requested.
6. government and/or public institution to which the request is made shall, subject
7. to Sections 7, 8, and 10, within 14 working days after the request is received.
8. (a) give written notice to the person who made the request as to whether
9. or not access to the record or a part thereof will be given; and
10. (b) if access is to be given, give the person who made the request
11. access to the record or part thereof.
12. **7.-(1)** Where a government and or public institution receives a request Transfer of request.
13. for access to a record under this Act, and the head of the institution considers
14. that another government and/or public institution has a greater interest in the
15. record, the head of the institution to which the request is made may, subject to
16. such conditions as may be prescribed by regulation, within three days after the
17. request is received, transfer the request, and if necessary, the record to the other government and/or public institution, in which case the head of the
18. institution transferring the request shall give written notice of the transfer to
19. the persons who made the request, which notice shall contain a statement
20. informing the person who made the request that such decision to transfer the
21. request can be reviewed by a Court.
22. (2) For the purpose of Section 6, where a request is transferred under sub-
23. section (1) of this section, the request shall be deemed to have been made to the
24. government and or public institution to which it was transferred on the day the
25. government and/or public institution received it.
26. (3) For the purpose of sub-section (1), a government and/or public
27. institution has a greater interest in a record if-
28. (a) the record was originally produced in or for the institution; or
29. (b) in the case of record not originally produced in or for a government
30. and or public institution, the institution was the first government and/or

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C284**

1 public institution to receive the record or a copy thereof.

Extension of Time limits. **2 8.-(1)** The head of a government and or public institution may extend the

1. time limit set out in Section 7 or sub-section 7 (1) in respect of a request under this

2. Act for a reasonable period of time, and in any event not exceeding seven working days,
3. if-
4. (a) the request is for a larger number of records or necessitates a research
5. through a large number of records and meeting the original time limit would
6. unreasonably interfere with the operations of the government and/or public
7. institutions; or
8. (b) consultations are necessary to comply with the request that cannot
9. reasonably be completed within the original time limit,
10. by giving notice of the extension stating whether the extension falls under
11. the circumstances set out in paragraph (a) or (b), which notice shall contain
12. a statement that the person has a right to have the decision to extend the
13. time limit reviewed by a Court.

Where access is refused. 16 **9.-**(1) Where the head of a government and or public institution refuses to

17 give access to a record requested under this Act, or a part thereof, the head of the

1. institution shall state in the notice given under section 6 (a) the specific provision
2. of this Act on which the refusal was based and shall state in the notice that the
3. person who made the request has a right to have the decision refusing access
4. reviewed by a Court.
5. (2) Any notification of denial of any request for records shall set forth the
6. names of each person responsible for the denial of such request.
7. (3) The head of a government and or public institution shall be required to
8. indicate under sub-section (1) whether a record exists.
9. (4) Where the head of a government and or public institution fails to give
10. access to record requested under this Act or part thereof within the time limits
11. set out in this Act, the head of the institution shall, for the purposes of this Act,
12. be deemed to have refused to give access.

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C285**

1 **10.-**(1) A government or public regulations shall provide that- Fees etc, and Action for waivers.

2 (a) fees shall be limited to reasonable standard charges for document

3. search, duplication, review and transcription where necessary, when
4. records are requested for commercial use;
5. (b) fees shall be limited to reasonable standard charges for document
6. search, duplication, review and transcription where necessary, when
7. records are not sought for commercial use and the request is made by an
8. educational or noncommercial, scientific research, or a representative of
9. the news media; and
10. (c) for any request not described in (a) or (b) fees shall be limited to
11. reasonable standard charges for document search, duplication, review
12. and transcription where necessary.
13. (2) Document shall be furnished at a charge or at a charge reduced
14. below the fees established under Section 10 (1) (b) if disclosure of the
15. information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly
16. to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and
17. is not operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the
18. commercial interest of the requester.
19. (3) Fees schedules shall provide for the recovery of only the direct costs
20. of search, duplication, reproduction, review or transcription where the record
21. being requested under this Act is produced as a result of the request from a
22. machine readable record under the control of a government and/or public
23. institution.
24. (4) Review costs shall include only direct costs incurred during the
25. initial examination of a document for the purposes of determining whether the
26. documents must be disclosed under this section and for the purpose of
27. withholding any portions exempt from disclosure under this Act.
28. (5) Review costs may not include any costs incurred in resolving issues
29. of law or policy that may be raised in the course of processing a request
30. under this section.

C286 1999 No. Freedom of Information Bill, 1999

1. (6) Nothing in this Act shall supercede fees chargeable under a statute
2. specifically providing for setting the level of fees for particular types of records.
1. (7) In any action by a requester regarding the waiver of fees under this
2. section, the court shall determine the matter de novo, provided that court's Fees
3. review of the matter shall be limited to the record before the Government of Public
4. Institution.

Destruction or falsification

7. **11.** It shall be a criminal offence punishable on conviction to a minimum of 3 years

8. imprisonment or an option of N500,000 fine any officer or the head of any government of record.

9. and or public institution to which this Act applies who tries to either willfully destroy

10. any records kept in his/her custody or attempts to doctor or otherwise alter same

7. 11. before they are released to any person, entity or community requesting for it.

Access records 12 **12.**-(1) Access to a record shall be given to the person requesting such

13. access in one or more of the following forms:

8. 14. (a) a reasonable opportunity to inspect or copy the record;

9. 15. (b) in the case of a record that is an article or thing from which sounds or
10. 16. visual images are capable of being reproduced, the making of
arrangements

11. 17. for the person to hear or view these sounds or visual images;

12. 18. (c) in the case of a document by which words are recorded in a manner in
13. 19. which they are capable of being reproduced in the form of sound or which

14. 20. words are contained in the form of shorthand writing or in codified form,
15. 21. provision by the government and/or public institution of a written
transcript

16. 22. of the words recorded or contained in the document.

17. 23. (2) Subject to sub-section (3) of this section, where the person
requesting

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C287**

1. access has requested such access in a particular form, access shall be given
in

2. that form.

3. (3) If the giving of access in the form requested by the person-

4. (a) would interfere unreasonably with the operations of the government
5. and or public institution, or the performance by any officer or employee
6. thereof of his functions,

7. (b) would be detrimental to the preservation of the record or, having
8. regard to the physical nature of the record, would not be appropriate; or

9. (c) would, but for the provisions of this Act, involve an infringement of
10. copyright (other than copyright owned by the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
11. a state, or a local government, or a government and or public institution
12. thereof) subsisting in matter contained in the record being matter that
13. does not relate to the affairs of a government and/or public institution,
14. access in that form may be refused and access shall be given in another
15. form.

16. (4) Subject to sub-section 12 (1), where a person requests access to a
17. record in a particular form and, for a reason specified in sub-section (3)
hereof,

18. access in that form is refused but access is given in another form, the person
 19. requesting access shall pay a charge in respect of the provision of access to
 20. the record in the form obtained.
 21. **13.** Where a request is made from a government and or public institution and- Where information is not available in discrete form.
 22. (a) it appears from the request that the desire of the person requesting
 23. access is for information that is not available in separate and distinct
 24. form in documents of the government and/or public institution, and
 25. (b) the government and or public institution could produce a written
 26. document containing the information in separate and distinct form by-
 27. (i) the use of a computer or of other equipment that is ordinarily
 28. available to the government and/or public institution for retrieving or
3. collating stored information, or

C288 1999 No. Freedom of Information Bill, 1999

1 (ii) the making of a transcript from a sound recording held in the

2 government and or public institution,

3 the government and/or public institution shall deal with the request as if it

1. were a request for access to a written document so produced and containing
2. that information, and, for that purpose, this Act applies as if the government
3. and or public institution had such a document in its possession.

International affairs and defence.

7 **14.**-(1) The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to

8 disclose any record requested under this Act that contains information the

1. disclosure of which may be injurious to the conduct of international affairs and the
2. defence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
3. (2) However, such right to refuse the disclosure of any record requested by
4. an applicant ceases to exist where the interest of the public in having the said
5. record being made available to them outweighs whatever injury disclosing such
6. records would have to the aforementioned interests.

Law enforcement and investigations.

15 **15.**-(1) The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to
16 disclose any record requested under this Act that contains;
17 (a) records compiled by any government and/or public
institution for
18 administrative enforcement proceedings and any law enforcement or
19 correctional agency for law enforcement purposes or for internal matters of a
20 government and/or public institution, but only to the extent that disclosure
21 would:
22 (i) interfere with pending or actual and reasonably contemplated law
23 enforcement proceedings conducted by any law enforcement or correctional
24 agency;
25 (ii) interfere with pending administrative enforcement proceedings
26 conducted by any government and/or public institution;
27 (iii) deprive a person of a fair trial or an impartial hearing;
28 (iv) unavoidably disclose the identity of a confidential source
29 (v) constitute an invasion of a personal privacy under section 19 of this
30 Act, however, where the interest of the public would be better served by

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C289**

1. having such record being made available, this exemption to disclosure
2. shall not apply.
3. (vii) obstruct an ongoing criminal investigation.
4. (b) information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to
5. be injurious to the security of penal institutions.
6. (2) The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to
7. disclose any record requested under this Act that contains information that
8. could reasonable be expected to facilitate the commission of an offence.
9. (3) For the purposes of paragraph (1) (a), "Investigation" means an
10. investigation that-
11. (a) pertains to the administration or enforcement of any enactment.
12. (b) is authorized by or pursuant to any enactment.
13. **16.** The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to
- Economic interest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
14. disclose any record requested under this Act that contains;

15. (a) trade secret or financial, commercial, or technical information
16. that belongs to the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria or any
17. State or Local Government thereof, and has substantial economic value or
18. is likely to have substantial value;
19. (b) information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected
20. to prejudice the competitive position of a government and/or public
21. institution;
22. (c) scientific or technical information obtained through research by an
23. officer or employee of a government and/or public institution, the disclosure
24. of which could reasonably be expected to deprive the officer or employee
25. of priority of publication; or
26. (d) information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to
27. be materially injurious to the financial interest of the Federal Republic of
28. Nigeria, or any State or Local Government thereof, or the ability of the
29. Federal Government thereof, or the ability of the Federal Government, a
30. State or Local Government to manage its economy, or could reasonably be

C290 1999 No. *Freedom of Information Bill, 1999*

1. expected to result in an undue benefit to any person including but not limited
2. to the following information-
3. (I) the currency, coinage or legal tender of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
4. (ii) a contemplated change in the rate of banks interest or in government
5. borrowing;
6. (iii) a contemplated change in tariff rates, taxes, duties or any other
7. revenue sources,
8. (iv) a contemplated change in the conditions of operation of financial
9. institutions; and
10. (v) a contemplated sale or purchase of securities or of foreign or Nigerian
11. currency.

Personal Information. 12 **17.**-(1) Subject to subsection (2), the head of a government and or public

13 institution shall refuse to disclose any record requested under this Act that contains

14 personal information. Information exempted under this subsection shall include:

15 (I) files and personal information maintained with respect to clients,

16 patients, residents, students, or other individuals receiving social, medical,

17 educational, vocational, financial, supervisory or custodial care or services

1. directly or indirectly from federal agencies or government and or public
2. institutions:
3. (ii) personnel files and personal information maintained with respect to
4. employees, appointees or elected officials of any government and/or public
5. institution or applicants for such positions;
6. (iii) files and personal information maintained with respect to any
7. applicant, registrant or licensee by any government and/or public institution
8. cooperating with or engaged in professional or occupational registration,
9. licensure or discipline;
10. (iv) information required of any tax payer in connection with the
11. assessment or collection of any tax unless disclosure is otherwise requested
12. by state statute; and
13. (v) information revealing the identity of persons who file complaints

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C291**

1. with or provide information to administrative, investigative, law
2. enforcement or penal agencies.
3. (2) The head of a government and or public institution may disclose any
4. record requested under this Act that contains personal information if-
5. (a) the individual to whom it relates consents to the disclosure;
6. (b) the information is publicly available.
7. (3) Where disclosure of any information referred to in this section would
8. be in the public interest, and if the public interest in the disclosure of such
9. information clearly outweighs the protection of the privacy of the individual to
10. who such information relates, the head of the government and/or public
11. institution to whom a request for disclosure is made shall disclose such
12. information.
13. **18.**-(1) Subject to this section, the head of a government and/or public Third
14. party information.
15. institution shall refuse to disclose any record requested under this Act that
16. contains.
17. (a) Trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from
18. a person or business where such trade secrets or information are proprietary,
19. privileged or confidential, or where disclosure of such trade secrets or
20. information may cause competitive harm. Nothing constrained in this
21. subsection shall be construed to prevent a person or business from
22. consenting to disclosure.
23. (b) information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to
24. interfere with the contractual or other negotiations of a third party.
25. (c) proposal and bids for any contract, grants, or agreement, including
26. information which if it were disclosed would frustrate procurement or give
27. an advantage to any person.
28. (2) The head of a government and or public institution shall not, pursuant

28. to subsection (1), refuse to disclose a part of a record if that part contains the
29. result or product of environmental testing carried out by or on behalf of a
30. government and/or public institution.

C292 1999 No. Freedom of Information Bill, 1999

1 (3) Where the head of a government and or public institution discloses a

1. record requested under this Act, or a part thereof, that contains the results of a product or environmental testing, the head of a government and or public institution

4 shall simultaneously as the record or part thereof is disclosed, provide a person who

5 requested the record with a written explanation of the methods used in conducting the test

6 (4) The head of a government and public institutions shall disclose any record

7 requested under this Act, or any part thereof, that contains information described

8 in paragraph (1) (a) and (b) if that disclosure would be in the public interest as it

9 relates to public health, public safety or protection of the environment and, if the

10 public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs in importance any financial loss or

11 gain to, or prejudice to the competitive position of, or interference with contractual

12 or other negotiation of a third party.

Advice, etc. 13 **19.**-(1) The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to

14 disclose any record requested under this Act, that contains preliminary drafts,

15 notes, recommendations, memoranda and other records in which opinions are

16 expressed, or policies or actions are formulated, except that a specific record or

17 relevant portion thereof shall not be exempted when the record is publicly cited

18 and identified by the head of the government and/or public institution. the

19 exemption provided in this subsection extends to all those records of officers and

20 agencies of National or State Houses of Assembly which pertain to the preparation

21 of legislative documents.

22 (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in respect of a record that contains-

23 (a) an account of, or a statement of reasons for a decision that is made in

24 the exercise of a discretionary power or an adjudicative function and which

25 affect the rights of a person; or

26 (b) a report prepared by consultant or an adviser who was not, at the time

27 the report was prepared, an officer or employee of a government and/or

28 public institution or personal staff of appointed public officers.

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C293**

1 **20.** The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to Legal Practitioner/Client

2 disclose any record requested under this Act that contains information that is

3 subject to Legal Practitioner-Client privilege.

4 **21.** The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to Course or Research Materials.

5 disclose any record requested under this Act which contains course

6 or research materials in process or prepared by faculty members.

7 **22.** Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, where a request is Severability

8 made to a government and or public institution for access to a record that the

9 head of the institution is authorized to refuse to disclose under this Act by

10 reason of information or other material contained in the record, the head of the

11 institution shall disclose any part of the record that does not contain, and can

12 be severed from any part that contains any such information or material.

13 **23.** Any person who has been refused access to a record requested under Judicial review.

14 this Act, or a part thereof may apply to the Court for a review of the matter

15 within thirty days after the head of the government and/or public institution
16 refuses or is deemed to have refused the request, or within such further time as
17 the Court may either before or after the expiration of those thirty days fix or
18 allow.

19 **24.** The head of a government and or public institution may refuse to Refusal by
head of government and or public institution to disclose

20 disclose any record requested under this Act that contains information
21 pertaining to:

22 (a) test questions, scoring keys and other examination data used to records.
23 administer an academic examination or determine the qualifications of an
24 application for a license or employment.

25 (b) architects' and engineers' plans for buildings not constructed in
26 whole or in part with public funds and for buildings constructed with
27 public funds, to the extent that disclosure would compromise security,
28 and

29 (c) library circulation and other records identifying library users with
30 specific materials.

C294 1999 No. Freedom of Information Bill, 1999

Hearing in a summary way.

1 **25.** An application made under section 23 shall be heard and determined

1. summarily.

Access to Record by Court.

3 **26.** Notwithstanding anything contained in any other Decree, Act or

4 enactment or any privilege under the law of evidence, the Court may, in the course

5 of any proceedings before the Court arising from an application
under section 23

6 of this Act, examine any record to which this Act applies that is under the control

7 of government and/or public institution, and no such record may be withheld

8 from the court on any ground.

Court to take precautions against disclosing information.

9 **27.** In any proceedings before the Court arising from an application under

10 section 23, the Court shall take precaution, when receiving

11 representations *ex-parte* and conducting hearings in *camera* to avoid the

12 disclosure by the Court or any person of any information of other material on a

13 basis of which the head of a government and/or public institution will be authorized

14 to disclose a part of a record requested under this Act.

Burden of Proof. 15 **28.** In any proceedings before the Court arising from an application under

16 section 23, the burden of establishing that the head of a government and or public

17 institution is authorized to refuse to disclose a record under this Act or a part

18 thereof shall be on the government and/or public institution concerned.

Order to disclose Records. 19 **29.** – (1) Where the head of a government and of public institution refuses

20 to disclose a record requested under this Act, or a part thereof on the basis of a

21 provisions of this Act, the Court shall order the head of the institution to disclose

22 the record or part thereof to the person who requested for access to the record-

23 (I) if the Court determines that the head of the institution is not authorized

24 to refuse to disclose the record or part thereof; or

25 (ii) where the head of the institution is so authorised, but the Court

26 nevertheless determines that the head of the institution did not
have

27 reasonable grounds on which to refuse to disclose the record or
part

28 thereof;

29 (iii) where the court makes a finding that the interest of the public
in

30 having the record being made available is greater and more vital
than the

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C295**

1. interest being served if the application is refused, in whatever
2. circumstance.

3 (2) Any order the Court makes in pursuance of this section may be made

4 subject to such conditions as the Court deems appropriate.

5 **30.** This Act does not apply to- Exempted material.

6 (a) published material or material available for purchase by the public;

7 (b) library or museum material made or acquired and preserved solely for

8 public reference or exhibition purposes; or

9 (c) material placed in the National Library, the National Museum or the

10 non-public section of the National Archives of the Federal Republic of

11 Nigeria on behalf of any person or organization other than a government

12 and/or public institutions.

13 **31.**-(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Criminal code, penal Protection
of public officers

14 Code, the Official Secrets Act, or any other enactment, no civil or criminal

15 proceedings shall lie against any government and or public institution, or against
LFN, 1990

Cap. 245

16 any person acting on behalf of the government and or public institution, and no
LFN, 1990

Cap. 335

17 proceedings shall lie against the Federal Government, State or Local Government
LFN,1990

18 any institution thereof, for the disclosure in good faith of any record or any part
19 of a record pursuant to this Act, for any consequences that flow from that
20 disclosure, or for the failure to give any notice required under this Act, if care is
21 taken to give the required notice.

22 (2) Nothing contained in the Criminal Code or the Official Secrets Act shall
23 prejudicially affect any public officer who, without authorization discloses to
24 any person any public record and/or information which he reasonably believes
25 to show.

26 (a) a violations of any law, rule or regulation,

27 (b) mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, fraud, and abuse of

28 authority; or

29 (c) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety

30 notwithstanding that such information was not disclosed pursuant to the

31 provision of this Act.

C296 1999 No. Freedom of Information Bill, 1999

1 (3) No civil or criminal proceedings shall lie against any person receiving the

2 information or further disclosing it.

Document Under securityClassification

3 **32.**-(1) the fact that any record in the custody of government and/or public

4 institution is kept by that institution under security classification or is classified

Cap. 335,

LFN. 1990.

5 document within the meaning of the Official Secrets Act does not preclude it from
6 being disclosed pursuant to a request for disclosure thereof under the provisions
7 of this Act, but in every case the head of the government and/or public institution
8 to which a request for such record is made shall decide whether such record is of
9 a type referred to in sections 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 or 21 of this Act.

10 (2) if the head of the government and or public institution to which the
11 request for a record mentioned in sub-section (1) is made, decides that such
record

12 is not a type mentioned in the sections referred to in sub-section (1) hereof,
access

13 to such record shall be given to the person requesting for such access.

14 (3) If the head of the government and or public institution to which the

15 request for a record mentioned in sub-section (1) is made decides that such
record

16 is of a type mentioned in the sections referred to in sub-section (1) hereof, he
shall

17 give notice to the person requesting for the record.

Submission of reports.

18 **33.**-(1) On or before February 1 of each year, each government and/or public
19 institution shall submit to the Attorney General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
20 a report which shall cover the preceding fiscal year and which shall include-

21 (a) the number of determinations made by the Government and/or Public
Institution

22 not to comply with requests for records made to such Government and/or Public
23 Institution under this Act and the reasons for each such determinations;

24 (b) the number of appeals made by persons under this Act, and the reason for
25 the action upon each appeal that results in a denial of information;
26 (c) a description of whether a court has upheld the decision of the Government
27 and/or Public Institution to withhold information under such circumstances and a
28 concise description of the scope of any information withheld;
29 (d) the number of requests for records pending before the Government and/or
30 Public Institution as of October 31 of the preceding year and the median number

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C297**

1 of days that such request had been pending before the Government and/or
2 Public Institution as of that date;
3 (e) the number of requests for records received by the Government and/or
4 Public Institution and the number of requests which the Government and/or
5 Public Institution processes;
6 (f) the median number of days taken by the Government and/or Public Institution
7 to process different types of requests;
8 (g) the total amount of fees collected by the Government and/or Public
9 Institution to process such request; and
10 (h) the number of full-time staff of the Government and/or Public Institution
11 devoted to processing requests for records, and or the total amount expended
12 by the Government and/or Public Institution for processing such requests.
13 (2) Each government and/or public institution shall make such report available
14 to the public including by computer telecommunications, or if computer
15 telecommunications means have not been established by the Government or
16 Public Institution, by other electronic means.

17 (3) The Attorney-General shall make each report, which has been submitted
18 to him, available at a single electronic access point.

19 (4) He shall notify the Chairman and ranking minority member of the
20 Committee on Government Reform Oversight of the House of Representatives
21 and the Chairman and ranking minority member of the Committees on
22 Government Affairs and the Judiciary of the Senate, not later than April of the
23 year in which each such report is issued, that such reports are available by
24 electronic means.

25 (5) The Attorney-General shall develop reporting and performance
26 guidelines in connection with reports required by this section and may establish
27 additional requirements for such reports as the Attorney-General determines
28 may be useful.

29 (6) The Attorney-General shall submit to the National Assembly an annual
30 report on or before April 1 of each calendar year which shall include for the prior
31 calendar year a listing of the number of cases arising under this Act, the
exemption

Freedom of Information Bill, 1999 **1999 No. C298**

1 involved in each case, the disposition of such case, and the cost, fees, and
penalties assessed.

2 (7) Such report shall also include a description of the efforts made by the
3 Ministry of Justice to encourage all government or public institutions to comply
4 with this Act.

Complementary Procedures.

5 **34.** Where the question whether any public record and or information is to be
6 made available, where that question arises under this Act, the question shall be

7 determined in accordance with the provisions stated herein, unless otherwise

8 exempted by this Act.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

This Act seeks to provide a right of access to public information or records kept by government, public institution and/or private bodies carrying out public Functions for citizens and non-citizens of the country.

2. This Act will increase the availability of public records and information to citizens of the country in order to participate more effectively in the making and administration of laws and policies and to promote accountability of public officers.

3. The Act also seeks to provide the disclosure of public records or information by public officers without authorisation thereof provided it is for public interest and such officers are protected from adverse consequences flowing from such disclosure.

4. This Act is intended to complement and not replace existing procedures for access to public records and information and is not intended to limit in any way access to those types of official information that have, hitherto, been normally available to the general public.