
Liberia Elections Observation Network

Electoral Cycle Observation Report for the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections in Liberia

October 2024



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ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
ALP	All Liberian Party
BVR	Biometric Voter Registration
CDC	Coalition for Democratic Change
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC	Constitution Review Committee
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CVE	Civic and Voter Education
DI	Democracy International
EC	European Commission
ECC	Elections Coordinating Committee
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
EOM	Election Observation Mission
EU	European Union
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
FRR	Final Registration Roll
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IPCC	Inter-Party Consultative Committee
JPC	Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
LCP	Liberia Crusaders for Peace
LIS	Liberia Immigration Service
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LEON	Liberian Elections Observation Network
LP	Liberty Party
LTO	Long-term Observer
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NEC	National Elections Commission
NEL	National Elections Law

NMC	National Media Council
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NUOD	National Union of Organizations for the Disabled
STO	Short-term Observer
TBG	Tactile Ballot Guide
TCC-DP	The Carter Center–Democracy Program
TEE	Tamper-evident Envelope
TEW	Temporary Election Worker
TWG	True Whig Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UP	Unity Party
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VRC	Voter Registration Center

ABOUT LEON

The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) is a legally registered organization consisting of a network of four civil society organizations (CSOs): the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), Liberia Crusaders for Peace (LCP), Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), and National Union of Organizations for the Disabled (NUOD). Founded in May 2017, LEON became a legal entity under the laws of Liberia in November 2022.

LEON implements activities within the following programmatic areas: election and by-election observation, public perception surveys and research, policy-based advocacy, legislative monitoring and engagement, social media monitoring and reporting, civic and voter education, and other forms of strengthening democracy and governance in Liberia.

LEON is administered through a Secretariat, based in Monrovia, and has previously deployed 73 long-term observers (LTOs) in each electoral district until December 2023. This enabled LEON to establish stakeholder relationships over several years; collect local political and socio-economic data; and maintain its viability and visibility with local, national, and international actors. Periodically, LEON recruits enumerators to conduct public perception surveys on key national issues relating to governance, elections, and other social issues.

LEON issues periodic public reports, statements, and recommendations based on its governance and electoral observation, legislative monitoring, and social research findings and policy advocacy positions.

LEON has received technical assistance from The Carter Center–Democracy Program since 2017, and financial support from the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida), European Commission (EC), and Irish Aid since its founding.



LEON Steering Committee: Pilate Johnson (JPC), Ambassador Juli Endee (LCP), Banica S. Elliot (FLY), and Peter B. K. Flomo; Head of Secretariat, Augustine S. M. Tamba; and TCC-DP Project Lead and Technical Advisor Robert David Irish (Sep. 2024) (Image by LEON)

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The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) acknowledges the Embassy of Sweden through the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida) for its financial support provided on this project. Since 2017, Sida’s support to LEON has contributed to strengthening its organizational and programmatic capacity to be a positive voice for local civil society research and advocacy that has enabled LEON’s work to observe and promote credible democratic processes in Liberia.

LEON acknowledges The Carter Center–Democracy Program for its technical assistance and advisory services provided to LEON since 2017. LEON’s capacity to fulfill its vision, mission, and values has been strengthened by the work of The Carter Center in Liberia. To our other partners, the European Union (EU) and the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Monrovia, we thank you for your financial and material support during the 2023 general elections. LEON appreciates and remains grateful to all our donors and advisors as we continue to support the consolidation of Liberian democracy.

Sincere thanks to LEON’s Steering Committee and network member organizations for their guidance and leadership during implementation of program activities during the 2023 electoral cycle and their strong support and mentorship throughout the current three-year project period. LEON extends its heartfelt appreciation to its Secretariat staff and LTO/STOs for their dedication and genuine collaboration over the course of the 2023 general elections. Their commitment, hard work, expertise, and enthusiasm significantly enhanced the effectiveness of our joint efforts to observe and report on the presidential and legislative electoral cycle.

To all local and international observation partners, the ongoing commitment to excellence and our shared values have created a strong foundation for ongoing partnership. LEON recognizes and appreciates the collaborative efforts among the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), European Union-Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM), African Union-Election Observation Mission (AU-EOM), and Economic Community of West African States Election Observation Mission (ECOWAS-EOM). Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to Liberia.



*NEC-sponsored technical working group (Nov. 2023)
(Image by NEC)*

LEON values the national and international relationships we have built and looks forward to continuing this collaborative journey. Together, we have not only achieved remarkable milestones but have also forged a strong bond that goes beyond the realm of our projects.

Thank you for your invaluable support and dedication to improving Liberia to create a better and more sustainable democracy. LEON is profoundly grateful for the positive impact we have made together, and we are excited about the possibilities for greater progress that lie ahead!

CORRECTION TO LEON ELECTORAL CYCLE REPORT (2024)

In the report “Electoral Cycle Observation Report for the 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections in Liberia” (October 2024) by the Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON), the following statistical facts were corrected and inserted in the report:

- ◆ **Page 5, Introduction, third paragraph:** The number of political parties participating during the 2023 general elections was corrected from 33 to 31 parties.
- ◆ **Page 20, Section 6, third paragraph:** The percentage of women’s representation at the legislature in 2006 was corrected from 16% to 15% and in 2012 from 13% to 12%.
- ◆ **Page 20, Section 6, third paragraph:** The number of political parties nominating 30% or more women candidates in 2017 was corrected from two to one of 24 parties.
- ◆ **Page 21, Section 6, first paragraph:** The number of political parties nominating 30% or more women candidates in 2023 was inserted to two of 31 parties.
- ◆ **Page 21, Section 6, second paragraph:** The number of total accepted candidates in 2023 was corrected from 1,030 to 1,029, with the percentage of female candidates being adjusted from 15% to 15.5% and the number of male candidates being corrected from 871 to 870 and corresponding percentage from 85% to 84.5%.
- ◆ **Page 21, Section 6, second paragraph:** The number of independent candidates in 2023 was corrected from 199 to 197 and number of candidate who ran on political party tickers was corrected from 831 to 832.
- ◆ **Page 27, Section 8.2, second paragraph:** The number of women (1,237,257) and men (1,234,360) registered voters during the 2023 general elections was inserted with the total number of registered voters (2,471,617).
- ◆ **Page 56, Section 21, second paragraph:** The number of representative seats that were won by a challenging candidate during the 2023 legislative elections was corrected from 46 of 73 (63%) to 55 of 73 (75.3%).

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON) issues the following electoral cycle observation report on the 2023 presidential and legislative elections in Liberia. LEON’s assessments are based on observation by its core team of election analysts, 73 district-level long-term observers, and approximately 1,000 short-term observers assigned to polling precincts and places across all 15 counties during both rounds of elections. LEON issued pre-election survey findings on public perceptions around the elections and reported on the status of the first biometric voter registration in Liberia. During the elections, LEON released 12 pre-election, election day, and post-election statements, analyzing election day processes, results management activities, electoral dispute resolution, and by-elections. LEON conducted two rounds of sample-based election observation that enabled statistically relevant projections on the presidential results for the first time in Liberia. LEON’s projected result ranges were consistent with NEC’s official results, which contributed to the credibility of the electoral process. LEON monitored and reported on the presidential transition and inauguration, opening of the legislature, and legislative by-elections. LEON analyzed voter turnout and invalid voting rates and conducted a post-election public perception survey in December 2023 to assess views of the electorate. Finally, LEON commented on pending reform issues around the status of the current electoral law and pending analysis of the 2022 census population data to conduct constituency boundary delimitation and determine new electoral districts for seats in the House of Representatives.

LEON’s officers and observers signed a pledge of impartiality and neutrality to monitor and report findings from each electoral district and the capital city of Monrovia.

LEON’s report provides a comprehensive assessment of Liberia’s electoral cycle from 2022 to 2024, with the following 21 brief assessments summarizing the key events prior to, during, and following the 2023 general elections. Overall, LEON assessed the 2023 presidential and legislative elections as largely peaceful, well-coordinated, and implemented in a timely manner. NEC successfully delivered genuine and credible results in a professional and timely manner, despite financial and logistical challenges and with only minor incidents of electoral violence. The Government of Liberia and all citizens are commended for enabling orderly elections and conducting a successful transition of government with the formation of the 55th Legislature and inauguration of the 26th President of the Republic.

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LEON’s Assessment Summary

1. LEON assessed the electoral law reform process (2022–23) as incomplete due to the uncertainty of the status of the 1986 New Elections Law (NEL) (Amended 2014) following the president’s partial veto of certain provisions of the 2022 electoral reform bill submitted for his signature. The remaining NEL amendments were approved and returned to the legislature by the president as of March 9, 2023; however, the Amended law was not formally enacted prior to the 2023 general elections, creating uncertainty on its current status. LEON calls on the 55th Legislature to resolve the issue and determine whether the amended NEL should be in effect or if Article 35 of the Constitution can be invoked for the legislature to override the presidential veto with a two-thirds vote by both houses. Liberian citizens and institutions require an answer to the amendment question and confirmation of which NEL is the current law.

2. LEON assessed the political environment during the elections as highly engaging and devoid of systematic electoral violence. During the legislative elections and first round of the presidential election, some violent incidents took place among political party supporters, particularly in Montserrado, Lofa, and Nimba counties; however, LEON considers most of these as localized incidents and not part of any organized effort to create instability. The political parties contesting the presidential runoff election – Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) and Unity Party (UP) – competed for stakeholder endorsements and engaged in door-to-door canvassing among citizens in the 15 counties in a relatively peaceful manner.
3. LEON assessed the legal context as largely compliant with the electoral legal framework, including the NEL (Amended 2014), 1986 Constitution of Republic of Liberia (Amended 2011), and relevant regulations set by NEC prior to the elections.
4. LEON assessed the biometric voter registration (BVR) exercise (March–May 2023) as largely successful, especially the effective deduplication of double registrants and identification and removal of under-age individuals. LEON notes that the postponement of the beginning of the registration process was due to procurement challenges with the Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC). LEON observed that insufficient amounts of public information were available on the purpose and process of the BVR, and additional civic education is needed during the next registration.
5. LEON assessed the publication of election regulations (May 2023) by NEC as timely and transparent and provided an adequate basis for guiding electoral officials during the conduct of the 2023 general elections. LEON notes that the 2023 regulations should be reviewed for constitutional and electoral law compliance prior to the next elections.
6. LEON assessed the exhibition of the provisional registration roll (June 2023) as compliant with NEC regulations and procedures for the 2023 general elections. LEON notes that NEC’s process for replacing voter cards was procedurally cumbersome, requiring citizens to submit multiple documents at the magisterial level, and pay a \$5.00 USD fee, which LEON deems as a cost too high for the average citizen, and thus created a barrier to participation prior to the elections.
7. LEON assessed candidate nomination (June–July 2023) as not decentralized with only one nomination site operated by the NEC central office in Montserrado County. The location was accessible to observer groups; however, the details of the application process were under the purview of NEC officials and thus the content and eligibility of individual applications could not be independently assessed, making an accounting of the process difficult. LEON recognizes that some parts of the process are under the responsibility of NEC and confidential financial and other information may not be publicly observed, but suggests that additional transparency measures be considered by NEC during future nomination processes to enable greater accountability.
8. LEON assessed civic and voter education (CVE) (July–November 2023) as an area that needs further strengthening by NEC and other electoral stakeholders to enable relevant information on the electoral process to be shared across all urban and rural communities. Even though NEC established district-level CVE cells, consisting of community-based organizations, insufficient funding limited the reach and thus effectiveness of these cells. More diverse participation from other stakeholder groups –

civil society, political parties, media outlets, and international organizations – would increase accessibility to accurate information across the country.

9. LEON assessed the campaigning for the legislative elections, and both rounds of the presidential election (August–November 2023), as mostly peaceful but remains concerned by several electoral violence incidents. Observable incidents of vote buying, manipulation of information, and deaths and injuries attributable to electoral violence in some places, however, cast shade on what was essentially a calm and commendable campaign and rally environments.
10. LEON assessed NEC’s electoral preparedness during the legislative and both rounds of the presidential election (October–November 2023) as sufficient to deliver the general elections. NEC staff were centrally recruited and largely trained in a timely manner. LEON notes, however, that delays in government funding led to postponement of some activities, such as the BVR. In addition, logistical challenges, such as poor roads, access to trucks and boats, and inclement weather, delayed distribution or resulted in damage of materials in some remote locations.
11. LEON assessed election day opening of polls, voting, closing of polls, and counting during the legislative elections and first round of the presidential election (October 2023) as well administered, and properly coordinated. During the second round of the presidential election (November 2023), election day was also largely well administered, properly coordinated, and NEC improved its adherence to its procedures and timelines to deliver the final results.
12. LEON assessed NEC’s results management process during the legislative and first and second rounds of the presidential election (October–November 2023) as systematic and appropriate. Despite some NEC website access issues during the first round of the results announcement period, daily NEC press conferences and reading of the detailed results contributed to public confidence in the outcome. LEON notes that NEC remained legally compliant with the time allowed for final results announcement.
13. LEON assessed performance by security forces during the electoral cycle (2022–23) as generally professional and properly coordinated during the electoral events. LEON notes that the Joint Security Forces (JSF) operated with cohesion and both election days were peaceful. Regardless, LEON observed some instances when police responsiveness could have been more prompt during sporadic cases of incidents between political party supporters in Lofa, Nimba, and Montserrado counties. LEON calls on the police and judicial authorities to prosecute and hold accountable those responsible for incidents of electoral violence in line with the legal framework to deter future cases.
14. LEON assessed the electoral dispute resolution (EDR) process (October 2023–January 2024), following the presidential and legislative elections, as more effective compared to the 2017 general elections. The total number of complaints filed related to the legislative elections decreased from 89 in 2017¹ to 57² in 2023, with only one

¹ The Carter Center. “Election Report: national Elections in Liberia, Fall 2017, Final Report,” (2018): p. 76 <<https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/liberia-121018.html>>.

² Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), “Final Observation Report: General Elections 2023,” Liberia Independent Domestic Election Observation (LIDEO) Activity (May 2024): p. 14.

complaint, compared to two in 2017, related to the presidential election. All election disputes followed the established EDR process, starting from presiding officers to the hearing officers, county magistrates, Board of Commissioners, and finally, the Supreme Court, where final decisions were rendered. Unlike 2017, the 2023 EDR was implemented with no threat to legislative certification or presidential inauguration. LEON notes the legal timeline provided for EDR was exceeded in 2023 and has been historically inadequate and should be extended to enable consistent compliance.

15. LEON assessed the court-ordered rerun election, and three recounts conducted by NEC (January–February 2024) as largely adhering to its policies and procedures and were conducted in a secure and peaceful environment. The rerun representative election in Maryland county and recounts in Grand Bassa, Nimba, and Rivercess counties resulted in different numeric results but did overturn the results of the initial winners.
16. LEON notes with concern the percentage increase in invalid votes during the 2023 presidential and legislative elections, as compared to recent general elections. In 2023, NEC reported 5.9% of the presidential election ballots were invalid, an increase compared to 5.4% in 2017, but a decrease compared to 6.4% in 2011. LEON notes that causes for invalid votes have multiple sources, including inadequate voter education, illiteracy among some voters, protest votes, unfamiliarity with how to vote by first-time voters, and a complex ballot with multiple candidates to select from. This report provides a more in-depth analysis of invalid balloting below.
17. LEON identifies that social media monitoring trends were generally positive towards the electoral process among citizens, political actors, and media; however, LEON condemns the use of offensive speech and false accusations online by some citizens and political actors during the campaign period and elections, as inappropriate, disrespectful, and unsavory behavior to be avoided during future elections.
18. LEON calls on all stakeholders to not use information manipulation as a strategy to confuse the electoral process or provoke voters. Political party leaders, representatives, officials, agents, and supporters should avoid such misleading tactics, such as producing mis/dis-information, and not make unsubstantiated allegations against other political parties, citizen observation organizations, and international entities.
19. LEON commends the post-election transition of power from one government and administration to the next (November 2023–January 2024), as orderly and peacefully conducted and compliant with the constitutional framework, leading to the opening of the 55th Legislature and inauguration of the 26th President of the Republic of Liberia.
20. LEON assessed the legislative by-elections (April 2024) as professionally conducted with NEC largely complying with its policies and procedures to deliver genuine and credible results. LEON observed that all political parties and stakeholders were patient and respected the electoral process to maintain transparent, safe, and inclusive legislative by-elections.
21. LEON assessed the performance of domestic and international election observation missions throughout the 2023 electoral cycle as positive, helpful, and essential to increasing the awareness and accountability of the electoral process. Thousands of election observers contributed to a series of respective statements and reports with hundreds of recommendations issued to improve democratic practices in Liberia.

At the end of this report, LEON provides a comprehensive set of actionable recommendations to the citizens, government, and legislature of Liberia and to the electoral commission, security forces, political parties, civil society organizations, media and social media outlets, and the international community. LEON’s recommendations aim to improve and strengthen the practice and implementation of credible democracy and governance in Liberia.

II. INTRODUCTION

Liberia has a recent history of overcoming challenges related to civil war, social conflict, and poor governance, while continuing to strengthen its democratic institutions by regularly holding elections since 2005. The 2023 electoral cycle is a testament to the nation’s commitment to fostering transparent, genuine, and credible elections.

The 2023 general elections began with consultations among key stakeholders, including political parties, CSOs, and partners as a pivotal step in setting the 2023 electoral process in motion. This inclusive process marked a crucial moment in the nation’s democratic journey.



Electoral cycle approach to election observation

As a result of these consultations and in line with the legal framework, the National Election Commission (NEC) introduced the biometric voter registration (BVR) process for the first time in the country’s electoral history. The BVR process shaped the political landscape by increasing confidence and trust in the voter roll and made it easier for the deduplication of double registrants on the voter roll using the unique biometric features captured during the registration process. The successful introduction of BVR contributed to citizens exercising their democratic rights to elect leaders who will guide the country in the coming years.

The electoral process was characterized by the participation of diverse political parties, CSOs, development partners, and citizens. There are 46 registered political parties in Liberia with 31 participating during the 2023 general elections, either as stand-alone parties or as a coalition or alliance of parties organized under a common political agenda.

The electoral process was largely peaceful during a presidential election that was remarkably close between incumbent President George M. Weah and the winning opposition candidate Joseph N. Boakai. Article 83(b) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides that if no candidate obtains the required absolute majority of valid votes (50%+1) to be declared winner in the presidential election, then a second-round election must be held between the two top candidates. After none of the candidates achieved the absolute majority threshold during the October 10, 2023, presidential election, NEC scheduled a runoff between President Weah of

the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) and Mr. Boakai of the Unity Party (UP) for November 14, 2023. Ultimately, Mr. Boakai won the election and President Weah conceded.

Voter turnout was the highest since the 2005 general elections during both rounds of the presidential election. Voter turnout during the first-round was 78.9%, while turnout during the runoff was 66.1%. Liberians demonstrated a high degree of democratic maturity in the way election results were obtained, signaling the possibility for a reduced number of political parties in the country. The votes of Liberians were concentrated between two main parties despite the many other political parties that contested the elections. No other political party obtained more than 5% of valid votes than the two parties in the run-off election. LEON notes that this pattern could indicate a desire from the voters for a reduction in political party options in elections for a country with the population of Liberia (5.2m).

LEON observed that electoral processes were largely conducted in line with the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and 1986 New Elections Law (NEL) (Amended 2014), and NEC generally adhered to its regulations, procedures, and timelines to deliver well-administered electoral activities. NEC actively engaged with political parties and domestic and international observer groups to hold the process accountable to the electoral legal framework and monitor whether the process adhered to democratic principles, standards, and obligations.

LEON commends the Government of Liberia and NEC for their performance given that this was the first election where funding, security operations, and logistics for the election were largely the responsibility of the Government of Liberia and not the United Nations.

LEON assessed the 2023 general elections as credible, generally peaceful, highly coordinated, and well-administered to deliver genuine results to the Liberian people. Despite the notable achievements, future electoral cycles can be improved with more timely and adequate government funding, greater and more diverse civic and voter education, less instances of electoral violence, and a more efficient complaints adjudication process. Nevertheless, the 2023 electoral cycle serves as a significant chapter in the Liberia's democratic chronicle, embodying the collective aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework of Liberia's 2023 general elections is firmly rooted in the country's 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and 1986 NEL (Amended 2014). These foundational documents provide the legal structure for governing elections, while NEC regulations and procedures guide the electoral process to enable transparent, genuine, inclusive, and credible elections.

The constitution serves as the supreme law of the land and establishes the fundamental principles and structures of the government. The constitution prescribes the date of elections, eligibility for candidacy, and formation of political parties, and delineates the powers and responsibilities of key institutions, such as NEC, which plays the most vital role in overseeing and administering the electoral process.

NEC is an independent constitutionally mandated body responsible for organizing, conducting, and supervising all elections and referenda in Liberia. NEC's mandate includes voter registration, candidate nomination, voter education, and overall management of electoral infrastructure. The constitution outlines the NEC's composition, appointment procedures, and authorities to empower its impartiality and effectiveness in upholding democratic principles.

The NEL further defines the electoral legal framework, addressing procedural issues not detailed in the constitution. The NEL covers various aspects of the electoral process, such as campaign financing, voter registration, political parties, and dispute resolution mechanisms, among other provisions.

The legal framework includes provisions for ensuring inclusivity and representation (Constitution, Article 77a and NEL, Section 4.5). Legal provisions also promote measures for participation of marginalized groups, such as women and minority communities. The legal framework also incorporates international practices and standards in electoral administration and human rights to align Liberia’s electoral processes with global standards and obligations.

Furthermore, the legal framework outlines the rights and responsibilities of voters, candidates, and other stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of civic participation and adherence to ethical standards. Penalties for electoral offenses and mechanisms for addressing complaints and disputes are defined to deter malpractice and maintain electoral integrity; however, adequate enforcement of these laws by judicial and police authorities could be strengthened in practice during future elections.

IV. PRE-ELECTION OBSERVATION

1. LEON’s 2023 Pre-election Survey–Summary

Prior to the 2023 general elections, LEON conducted a baseline public perception survey on electoral issues (see baseline survey, Annex A).³ The pre-election survey contributed to previous LEON surveys to independently understand the knowledge levels, views, and understanding of voters nationwide. The two objectives of the pre-election survey were to first understand various influences and rationales and factors that impact voter decision-making and second to provide policymakers with information that could be used to improve the electoral process leading up to the 2023 general elections. LEON provided a set of 17 actionable recommendations to electoral stakeholders based on the survey findings in June 2023.

The survey employed a sample of 2,380 respondents (49% female, 51% male) who were drawn from NEC’s final voter registry (2020) using a confidence interval of 95% with a 2% margin of error to enhance reliability. LEON deployed 150 enumerators in all 73 electoral districts to collect a weighted demographic sample with diverse age groups based on each county’s registered voters. Each enumerator interviewed 17 respondents in their assigned enumeration area. Data was collected using a smartphone application that sent information for analysis by LEON’s survey team. The study used a quantitative method of randomized systematic sampling, with an interval of every 15 households. To protect the rights of respondents, interviewees signed a predefined survey consent form before participating in the study.

LEON summarizes the key survey findings as follows:

1. When asked if they had voted before, approximately 90% of respondents said “yes,” with approximately 10% indicating they were first-time voters.

³ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Elections 2023 Liberia: A Pre-election Baseline Survey,” (Jun. 2023).

2. When asked about the reasons why they vote, approximately 38% of respondents said, “it is my right to vote” and approximately 33% said, “I want change.”
3. When asked about their intent to follow electoral preparations, approximately 91% of respondents said “yes,” with approximately 98% intending to vote on election day.
4. Combined data showed that 78% of respondents said NEC is “very prepared” or “prepared” to conduct the 2023 general elections, and approximately 75% of respondents considered citizen observer groups as “very prepared” or “prepared” to monitor the elections.
5. When asked if they think vote buying occurs during elections, approximately 61% said “yes,” while approximately 80% said voters should not accept money or gifts in exchange for their vote. Approximately 37% said that “party candidates” engage in vote buying, with “independents” (approximately 28%) and “supporters” (approximately 25%) rated at second and third, respectively.
6. When asked why they would accept money in exchange for their vote, among the approximately 28% who said they would accept money, approximately 38% said “it is free money,” approximately 28% said “the money belongs to the country,” and approximately 18% said “I need the money.”
7. Survey data showed that approximately 75% of respondents do not trust the media reporting on elections, citing that media outlets are not balanced (approximately 45%), not credible (approximately 21%), are partisan (approximately 16%), or allege that media takes bribes (approximately 18%).
8. Data showed that approximately 78% of respondents said social media will have a great influence on the upcoming elections. Most respondents said media presents female politicians as “good” (approximately 55%) and “very good” (approximately 18%).
9. Combined data on secrecy of the vote showed that most respondents said that powerful people finding out who they voted for was “not very likely” (approximately 28%) or “not likely” (approximately 57%).
10. Combined data showed that many respondents rated the government’s performance as “very bad” or “bad” on the economy (approximately 45%), job creation (approximately 65%), and health (approximately 58%).
11. When asked which security agency they feel more secured with to provide electoral security, approximately 38% of respondents named the Liberian National Police (LNP), with the Liberian Armed Forces (LAF) (approximately 30%) and Liberian Immigration Services (LIS) (approximately 15%) receiving the second and third ratings.
12. When asked if they thought elections will be violent, approximately 48% of respondents said “no,” while approximately 34% of them said “I do not know,” and approximately 18% said “yes.”

LEON applied a post-election lens to its pre-election survey to recognize that voter perceptions largely played out during the 2023 general elections. Most significantly, nearly a third of likely voters indicated a desire for change that may have reflected voting for opposition candidates. Nearly three-quarters of respondents were accurate about electoral preparations, as NEC and citizen observer groups were duly and truly prepared to conduct the elections. More than three-

quarters of respondents were perceptive when indicating that social media would be influential during the elections. Finally, the respondents' trust in the security forces was well placed and the election remained largely peaceful, with only sporadic incidents of electoral violence. LEON's pre-election baseline survey set the stage for its electoral observations and was further supported with a post-election survey to enable LEON to assess the beginning and end of the 2023 electoral cycle. Post-election survey findings are at the end of this observation report.

2. Electoral Legal Framework Reform 2022–23

2.1 2022 Electoral Reform Bill Passage

The journey towards electoral reform in Liberia has been a continuous endeavor, with collaboration from both national and international stakeholders.⁴ Notably, on January 20, 2022, Honorable Richard N. Koon of District No. 11, Montserrado County, introduced an electoral reform bill (ERB) at the House of Representatives. The subsequent 2022 ERB proposed amendments to key provisions within the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014) that were crucial to the electoral process of the country.

The aim of the 2022 ERB was to align electoral laws with evolving democratic standards and address challenges arising from unclear sections in the NEL. The 54th Legislature engaged in thorough discussions and analysis of the 2022 ERB between January and September 2022, recognizing the need to provide more coherence within the existing electoral framework.

Based on LEON's legislative monitoring,⁵ the introduction, discussion, amendment, and eventual passage of the 2022 ERB by the 54th Legislature proceeded along the following timeline of key dates:

- ◆ January 20, 2022 – Introduced at the House of Representatives
- ◆ February 25, 2022 – Second Reading at the House of Representatives
- ◆ March 22, 2022 – Introduced at the Senate
- ◆ July 28, 2022 – Discussed at the Senate
- ◆ August 19, 2022 – Senate voted for amendments
- ◆ August 26, 2022 – Ad hoc committee established to harmonize issues from both houses
- ◆ September 13, 2022 – House of Representatives passed the Amended bill
- ◆ September 14, 2022 – House of Representatives sent bill to the Senate
- ◆ September 16, 2022 – Senate passed the Amended bill and forwarded it to the Office of the President

Passage of the amended 2022 ERB demonstrated the 54th Legislature's commitment to enhancing democratic governance. This decision underscored a collective determination to

⁴ Liberia Elections Observation Network, "Policy Brief No. 1: Strengthen Constitutional Reform, Clarify Electoral Legal Framework, Establish New Electoral Districts, Regulate Governmental Transition Process, and Enact Cybersecurity Measures," (Jun. 2024) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

⁵ LEON. "Legislative Monitoring Report – 54th Legislature (May–September 2022)" (Feb. 2023); and LEON. "Bi-annual Legislative Monitoring Report (October 2022–March 2023)," (Sep. 2023) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

uphold democratic principles and enhance electoral integrity in Liberia. Following approval by both legislative houses, the bill awaited the final stage of the law-making process – approval by the president and subsequent publication as a handbill for enactment and implementation.

The electoral reform process, however, faced a setback in early March 2023, when former President George M. Weah utilized his constitutional authority to veto certain provisions of the proposed 2022 ERB. This application of the line-item veto – per Chapter V, Article 35 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) – allowed the President to object to specific items within the bill. When the president sent the partially vetoed bill back to the Speaker of the House of Representatives on March 9, 2023, his objections posed a challenge to the electoral reform efforts, affecting certain sections of the legislation. The sections vetoed by the president are noted further below.

The president formally approved some amendments and vetoed others in his response to “An Act to Amend Certain Sections of the New Elections Law (1986) as Amended Through 2014.” Notably, the entire ERB was NOT vetoed. His stated objections to amendments in Sections 2.1, 5.12, and 5.13(1) and Chapter 6A focused primarily on “items in the bill that are already addressed by existing constitutional provisions; existing statute; or that are better addressed through the existing, independent recruitment process of the NEC.”⁶ The bill was only partially vetoed with the remaining amendments approved, with the expectation by the president that the bill would proceed along the constitutionally mandated law-making process.

At this important stage of a partial approval, the 54th Legislature could have either accepted the amended 2022 ERB, as returned by the president, and enacted it into law or the House of Representatives, from which the bill originated, could have challenged the partial presidential vetoes by seeking a two-thirds majority of the members in each house to override them. Article 35 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) reads as follows:

*Each bill or resolution which shall have passed both Houses of the Legislature shall, before it becomes law, be laid before the President for his approval. If he grants approval, it shall become law. **If the President does not approve such bill or resolution, he shall return it with his objections, to the House in which it originated.** In so doing, the President may disapprove of the entire bill or resolution or any item or items thereof. **This veto may be overridden by the re-passage of such bill, resolution or item thereof by a vote of two-thirds of the members in each House, in which case it shall become law. If the President does not return the bill or resolution within twenty days after the same shall have been laid before him it shall become law in like manner as if he had signed it, unless the Legislature by adjournment prevents its return (emphasis added).***

Since March 2023, neither enactment nor challenge of the partially vetoed 2022 ERB has taken place, and the status of the bill has been in a state of legal limbo ever since. As a result, the 2023 general elections were held under the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), preventing the electoral reform measures to be applied to the recent presidential and legislative elections.

⁶ Weah, Sr., George M., President of the Republic of Liberia, Letter to Hon. Bhofal Chambers, Speaker, Hon. House of Representatives, regarding response to “An Act to Amend Certain Sections of the New Elections Law (1986) as amended Through 2014,” (Letter: GMW/MOS/RL/197/2023, Mar. 9, 2023).

2.2 Elections Law Analysis

The 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and 1986 NEL (Amended 2014) contain provisions that could be modified or changed to amend the electoral system and operation of NEC, as proposed in the 2020 referendum and 2022 ERB. The provisions vetoed by former President Weah affected the amendments pursued in the 2022 ERB prior to the 2023 general elections.

Some of the key amendments passed by the 54th Legislature include but are not limited to the following points:

- ◆ Introduced a process for out-of-country voting for Liberians in the diaspora;
- ◆ Introduced a compulsory gender quota requirement of 30% on political party list of candidates for elections and party structures;
- ◆ Increased application and registration fees for elected positions within the presidency and legislature;
- ◆ Created an independent body to hear and determine complaints with members being seconded stipendiary judicial magistrates who cannot be dismissed or subjected to disciplinary action based on rulings;
- ◆ Expedited procurement approval processes between the NEC and the Public Procurement and Concession Commission for unplanned elections;
- ◆ Changed the method of appointing NEC Commissioners through public vetting rather than by direct presidential appointment; and
- ◆ Amended how county electoral magistrates are selected prior to elections.

Some of the key amendments vetoed by former President Weah include but are not limited to the following points:

- ◆ Introduction of a vetting committee composed of civil society members plus state integrity institutions to recommend names to the president for appointment as NEC Commissioners;
- ◆ Removal of the two-term tenure of NEC Commissioners and that Commissioners must retire when they reach age 70;
- ◆ That the Bar Association and Civil Service Agency be members of NEC's vetting committee for the positions of legal staff and executive director;
- ◆ That stipendiary magistrates within the Judiciary be seconded to hear electoral complaints; and
- ◆ That legislative candidates declared winners by NEC be certificated and seated while complaints are being adjudicated.

The 30% gender quota for women candidates, NEC internal administrative procedures, appointment of commissioners with public vetting and scrutiny, and streamlining the procedures for hearing electoral complaints are all important issues that continue to be crucial to improving electoral and democratic processes in Liberia. The partially vetoed 2022 ERB also includes other provisions that support progressive changes for an enhanced electoral system. The failure to pass an amended electoral law with sufficient time to implement the new

provisions before the 2023 general elections pushes the impetus for progressive electoral reform to the 55th Legislature.⁷

Liberia’s legislature is currently experiencing a significant lack of female representation, primarily due to various institutional, financial, and cultural barriers to participation. Providing some relief to this condition can be supported by legal intervention that contributes to women’s political participation. Notably, the proposed and passed legal provision in Section 4.5 (30% gender quota) of the 2022 ERB was not vetoed by former President Weah. Unfortunately, the low representation of women in the Liberian legislature contradicts the global focus on women’s empowerment, which may portray Liberia as a country that lacks interest in promoting women’s involvement in politics.

If the proposed law establishing and enforcing the 30% gender quota for women candidates is not enacted, Liberia may continue to witness a decline in the number of female representatives in the governance space. In contrast, other countries, like Sierra Leone, have taken initiative-taking measures by passing the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act. As a result, Sierra Leone experienced a significant increase in the percentage of elected females, rising from 14.5% to 30.4% during the June 24, 2023, parliamentary elections.⁸ Liberia’s failure to pass an affirmative gender quota law could contribute to the decline in women’s representation in future legislatures and negatively impact Liberia’s international image regarding efforts to include women through policy actions.

Furthermore, NEC must enhance the clarity and accountability of its administrative procedures by further defining the roles and functions of commissioners, county magistrates, and the co-chairperson in the absence of the chairperson. The 2022 ERB aims to address these issues, including NEC’s role as both player and referee in electoral dispute resolution (EDR). As expectations for transparent democratic processes increase, clarifying the status of the 2022 ERB and subsequent NEL becomes an imperative for the 55th Legislature to enable and empower clear administrative procedures for NEC during future electoral events.

3. Pre-election Political Environment

3.1 Political Party Developments

Prior to the start of the 2023 electoral cycle, key political events unfolded that set the pace for the presidential and legislative elections. Immediately following the 2017 general elections, LEON observed that a group of major political parties – Unity Party (UP), Liberty Party (LP), Alternative National Congress (ANC), and All-Liberian Party (ALP) – formed an alliance called the Collaborating Political Parties (CPP). The formation of CPP and subsequent events that characterized its demise represented significant political developments before the 2023 general elections.

⁷ Global practice recommends that amendments to an electoral law not take place less than 12 months prior to election day. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) maintains that “No substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six (6) months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of Political actors.” See Art.2(1) of the *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism For Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security* <<https://www.eisa.org/pdf/ecowas2001protocol.pdf>>.

⁸ Inter-Parliamentary Union. “Record number of women MPs elected in Sierra Leone,” (Jul. 12, 2023) <<https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2023-07/record-number-women-mps-elected-in-sierra-leone>>.

At the peak of its popularity, CPP supported candidates during the 2020 senatorial election and won several key seats across the country. The political success of CPP, however, soon faded due to internal accusations of tampering with the framework document that bound the political parties together. The accusations were made when the political parties in the alliance could not agree on a clear method for selecting the CPP's standard bearer for the 2023 presidential election. The presiding CPP chairperson and ANC leader, Alexander B. Cummings, and LP chairperson, Musa Bility, were at the center of the accusations and inter-party conflict.

CPP became divided along support lines between UP leader, Joseph N. Boakai, and the ANC leader Cummings for CPP standard bearer. This internal division spilled over to the leadership of some constituent parties within the alliance. The division within LP was most notable, between the political leader supporting UP Boakai and the chairperson supporting ANC Cummings. Similar allegations of altering the LP constitution was made against Chairperson Bility, heightening tensions between the party leaders and leading to court actions to find legal remedy to the impasse. Though the court decided that LP return to the *status quo ante*, LP remained divided along these political support lines.

Within CPP, a lawsuit was filed against ANC Cummings by Benoni Urey of ALP, alleging that Cummings altered the CPP alliance framework document. This lawsuit further deepened the divide that led to UP and ALP and a portion of LP to withdraw from CPP. ANC and the LP Bility faction remained with CPP but with significantly weakened political influence.

Despite the inherent tensions and rivalries that often accompany electoral contests, LEON assessed that there was a prevailing commitment among political stakeholders to uphold the democratic principles of fairness, transparency, and non-violence through the signing of the Farmington River Declaration on April 4, 2023. Political leaders and grassroots activists alike emphasized the importance of peaceful participation and respect for the electoral process and rule of law, setting a tone of unity and cooperation in the lead up to the 2023 general elections.

3.2 Political Party Coalitions

Leading up to the 2023 general elections, LEON observed a political landscape that contained contentious issues that reflect the complex dynamics of the country's political environment. A notable feature of this period was the formation of coalitions among opposition parties, a strategic move aimed at consolidating their strength to challenge the incumbent government.

The Rainbow Alliance, headed by McDella M. Cooper, was one of the largest alliances of smaller opposition parties. The Rainbow Alliance consisted of Liberian Restoration Party (LRP), Change Democratic Action (CDA), Movement for Economic Empowerment (MOVEE), Democratic Justice Party (DJP), Victory for Change Party (VCP), Grassroot Democratic Party of Liberia (GDPL), Redemption Democratic Congress (RDC), People Unification Party (PUP), Vision for Liberia Transformation Party (VOLT), New Liberia Party (NLP), True Whig Party (TWP), and Movement for One Liberia (MOL).

Another alliance included the National Democratic Coalition (NDC), whose members are the New Deal Movement (NDM), National Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), Liberian Peoples' Party (LPP), United People's Party (UPP), Liberia Equal Rights Party (LERP), and Labor Party of Liberia (LPL).

These coalitions, however, faced internal challenges that proved detrimental to their unity and the effectiveness of some. Differences in beliefs and manifestos emerged as key points of

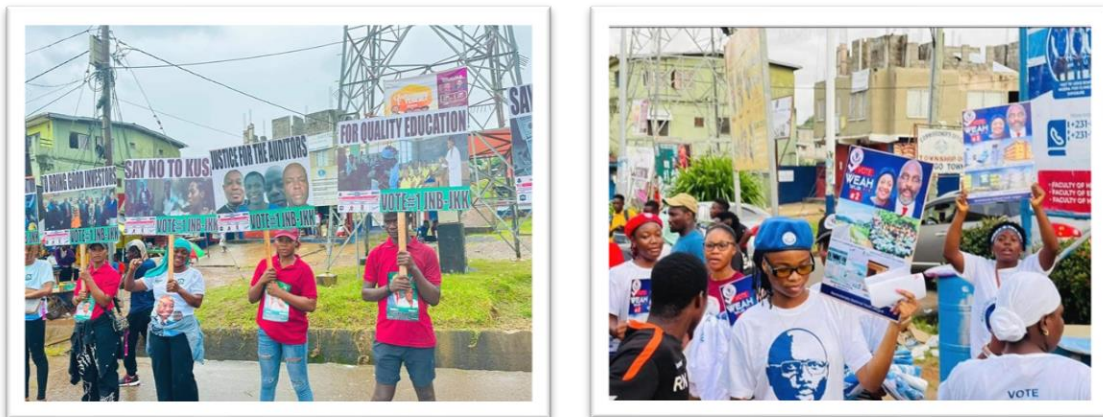
contention, undermining the cohesion necessary for a successful opposition front. The divergent political agendas within these alliances contributed to internal conflicts, weakening their collective ability to mount a formidable challenge to the ruling government.

As noted earlier, CPP initially consisted of LP, UP, ANC, and ALP but later split due to internal divisions over who should be the presidential candidate. The division disrupted its collaborative efforts but also eroded the trust that citizens seeking alternative national governance had placed in the opposition’s ability to provide a credible alternative to the ruling party.

Incumbent President Weah headed the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) since its formation in January 2017. The coalition initially consisted of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), National Patriotic Party (NPP), and Liberia Peoples’ Democratic Party (LPDP), who nominated George Weah as its presidential candidate. The coalition expanded to include the original members; the Union of Liberian Democrats (ULD); and Rainbow Alliance members UPP, CDA, and MOVEE.

3.3 Political Party and Stakeholder Dynamics

NEC played its role in fostering a transparent and inclusive electoral process by maintaining continuous engagement with political parties and local CSOs throughout the elections. This proactive approach occurred centrally and in the 15 counties, as reported by LEON’s LTOs based in the 73 electoral districts. NEC sought to address concerns, promote cooperation, and ensure a fair and credible electoral process.



UP supporters (left) and CDC supporters (right) during campaign rallies (Images from Facebook)

LEON notes that a significant aspect of this engagement was regular meetings of the Inter-Party Consultative Committee (IPCC). The IPCC served as a platform where representatives from different political parties and CSOs could come together to discuss various aspects of the electoral process, share their perspectives, and raise any issues or concerns they might have encountered. These meetings played a crucial role in fostering a spirit of collaboration and understanding among stakeholders.

LEON observed that the continuous engagement between NEC, political parties, and CSOs served as a mechanism for conflict resolution and issue mitigation. By addressing concerns in a timely and collaborative manner, the electoral process could move forward smoothly, enhancing the legitimacy and credibility of the election outcomes.

An outcome of these sustained interactions was the formulation and signing of the Farmington River Declaration in April 2023. LEON assessed that this declaration likely emerged because of consensus reached through the continuous dialogue facilitated by NEC and IPCC. The Farmington River Declaration encompass a set of principles, commitments, and resolutions agreed upon by the various stakeholders involved in the electoral process. The declaration included provisions related to the conduct of political parties, role of CSOs, and commitments to upholding democratic values, peaceful competition, and the rule of law.

LEON observed that NEC’s continuous engagement with political parties and CSOs, as demonstrated through the regular meetings of the IPCC, played a crucial role in shaping the electoral process. The Farmington River Declaration was a product of stakeholder dynamics and engagement, and LEON considers this template as a guiding document for future elections. The electoral cycle can be more effective and peaceful when a framework for ethical conduct, transparency, and cooperation among political parties and CSOs is agreed upon and held up as a model for stakeholder ethics and behavior and roadmap for collaborative efforts of stakeholders to ensure a genuine and credible democratic process.

4. Key Electoral Institutions and Stakeholders

4.1 National Elections Commission

When the members of the NEC’s Board of Commissioners were announced in early 2018, LEON observed that public responses were speculative regarding some of the new commissioners’ experience and their affiliations with the ruling party CDC and other parties. The initial doubts expressed by stakeholders lingered, affecting NEC’s public image; however, perception changed following NEC’s performance during the 2020 Special Senatorial election. LEON assessed that NEC organized and administered credible senate elections with the majority of opposition and independent candidates winning seats over candidates from the incumbent party CDC. NEC’s commitment to announcing results genuinely expressed by the voters changed and improved the NEC’s public perception. LEON observed in its final report that NEC’s professionalism was further demonstrated during the 2021 by-election for the House of Representatives.⁹

NEC continued to build its good will among the public, as it prepared for the 2023 electoral cycle, by publishing guidelines and timelines for the 2023 presidential and legislative elections. The key activities included the BVR process, civic and voter education, candidate nomination, opening and closing of campaigns, and election and complaints periods. Even though some stakeholders made calls to extend some deadlines, NEC held fast and achieved these activities despite stakeholder pressure. LEON commends NEC for consistently meeting its electoral activity timeline to deliver the events as required by the legal framework.

Through the holding of stakeholder consultation, LEON observed demonstrated proficiency by NEC in the conduct and management of the 2023 general elections. From the conduct of pre-election activities to the final announcement of election results, LEON assessed that the NEC exhibited substantial efficiency, notwithstanding with some challenges in certain areas. Generally, LEON observed that NEC’s conduct and management of the 2023 general elections

⁹ Liberia Elections Observation Network. “2021 By-election for the House of Representatives – Final Report,” (Nov. 16, 2021).

were well-organized, professional, transparent, and accountable, with leadership who functioned as impartial custodians of public trust in performing its constitutional mandate.

4.2 National Steering Committee for Elections

The Government of Liberia established a National Steering Committee for Elections (NSCE), chaired by Attorney-General Counsellor Frank Musah Dean, Minister of Justice and co-chaired by Madam Christine N. Umutoni, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and Her Excellency Josephine Nkrumah, ECOWAS Representative in Liberia. The NSCE consisted of key national government ministers and heads of security forces, ambassadors from international missions, and other high-ranking officials from local institutions and international development partners.

The NSCE held regular coordinating sessions in the months leading up to the legislative and first round of the presidential elections. NEC and other NSCE members provided regular progress updates, noted pending issues, asked questions, and followed-up on answers from session-to-session in a transparent and professional manner. LEON observed these sessions and noted that they were well-organized and helpful for the various agencies and entities to share information, address issues, receive formal meeting minutes, and thereby increase cross-institutional communication and coordination.

4.3 National Police and Security Forces

A joint security command headed by the Ministry of Justice was formed to coordinate security for the 2023 general elections. For the first time since the first post-war election in 2005, electoral security was the sole responsibility of the Liberian government. Due to the low number of police officers available, a joint-security task force was established among the Liberia National Police (LNP), Liberia Immigration Service (LIS), and Liberia National Drug Enforcement Agency (LNDEA). The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) stood ready to provide logistical support or respond to security crises; however, AFL publicly expressed its neutrality during the elections and was reluctant to engage directly with the process unless well-coordinated among civilian security agencies and political parties.



LEON observers and LNP officers near Tappita City (Apr. 2024) (Image by LEON)

To maintain the safety of political party leaders, LNP assigned officers to party standard bearers to provide for their public security. This approach intended to demonstrate equal protection for all candidates and to increase public confidence in LNP's ability to deliver safe elections.

According to the joint-task force, approximately 5,000 security personnel were deployed to cover election-related activities across the country. The Ministry of Justice held several joint coordination meetings both with security agencies and partners alike to ensure that the security of the election was on course. During both rounds of elections, LEON observed a security presence at approximately 98% of all polling precincts in its areas of deployment.

During radio interviews and other public presentations, LEON observed that the AFL Chief of Staff repeatedly clarified that the military would not be used during any unlawful intervention in the electoral process. AFL distanced itself from any perception of being influenced by political authorities to dispel any concerns that citizens might have about the risk of intimidation. AFL succeeded in this approach, and LEON observed no incidents involving military personnel during the elections.

Amid the gains made by the security sector, LEON observed instances where some state security personnel, especially from the Executive Protection Agency, were seen wearing campaign materials belonging to the ruling party CDC. LEON deploras such unprofessionalism and echoes the concerns from stakeholders who frowned on the cases, terming them as unacceptable. Despite this situation and some sporadic and isolated instances of electoral violence between political party supporters, LEON assessed the general security atmosphere around the election to be largely calm and peaceful.

4.4 Political Parties

There are 46 registered political parties in Liberia, from which 33 parties contested during the 2023 general elections. Most of these political parties formed coalitions or alliances before the initial elections on October 10, 2023. LEON observer that political party participation was largely peaceful. LEON recorded some incidences of electoral violence in Nimba, Lofa, and Montserrado counties, where regrettably some citizens were injured, and others lost their lives.

LEON observed that most political parties participated in pre-campaigning in the form of community engagement and holding public programs where political speeches were made. Very few political parties had county offices across the country, and for the few who maintained party sub-offices, LEON noted that these offices were barely functional and lacked the resources that would represent a national political party.



Aspiring presidential candidates during Internews-sponsored event (Oct. 2023) (Images by LEON)

LEON noted that most political parties did not adhere to the legal requirements associated with campaign expenditure and reporting as provided for by law. The 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), Section 7, requires political parties to fully disclose the amount and sources of their campaign funds. LEON did not observe instances when parties declared the sources for campaign funding or stated the amounts raised for their campaigns. This lack of reporting made observing the extent of compliance with the law difficult for domestic observation groups. LEON also

observed that some political parties did not have the capacity to properly file cases during disputes over election results.

4.5 Election Observation Groups

During the 2023 general elections, several election observation missions (EOMs) were deployed by domestic and international organizations. LEON and ECC are the two leading domestic observation groups in the country. LEON receives financial support from Sida, while ECC receives funding from USAID. LEON deployed 73 LTO/county supervisors, 56 field coordinators, and approximately 1,000 STOs to a statistically relevant sample of polling places across the country, using a sample-based observation methodology. ECC deployed 19 county coordinators, 73 district observers, and approximately 1,500 STOs using both a fixed and mobile observation methodology.¹⁰ Together, LEON and ECC deployed approximately 2,500 Election Day observers during the legislative and first round of presidential elections.

Prior to the presidential and legislative elections, LEON and ECC signed a memorandum of understanding in July 2023 in which the two groups agreed to coordinate information sharing, publish joint statements (if deemed necessary), cooperate on observer deployment, and standardize payments to observers. LEON acknowledges the sound work of its collegial partner ECC but also recognizes that greater collaboration from both groups would benefit domestic observation during future elections to leverage mutual strengths for more comprehensive monitoring and reporting.



LEON observers, EISA country director and legal analyst, and TCC-DP technical advisor, Monrovia (Oct. 2023) (Images by LEON)

The 2023 general elections were also observed by international and regional EOMs to enable a broad range of observation and bring greater accountability to the electoral process. The European Union,¹¹ ECOWAS, and African Union (AU) conducted EOMs. USAID funded an EOM by the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).¹² USAID also

¹⁰ Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), “Final Observation Report: General Elections 2023,” Liberia Independent Domestic Election Observation (LIDEO) Activity (May 2024).

¹¹ European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM), “Liberia 2023: Final Report: General Elections and Presidential Run-off (10 October 2023 and 14 November 2023),” (Mar. 2024) <<https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2023/EU%20EOM%20Liberia%202023%20Preliminary%20Statement%20run-off%20FINAL.pdf>>.

¹² Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, “EISA International Election Observer Mission Report No. 72: Liberia 2023 Presidential and Legislative Elections 10 October 2023 and Presidential Run-off Election 14 November 2023,” (2024).

supports democracy promotion in Liberia through Democracy International (DI) who implements the Elections and Democracy Activity (EDA). Regional groups also deployed observers, such as West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS) and YIAGA Africa (Nigeria).

LEON notes that the presence of domestic and international EOMs contributed to building public and stakeholder confidence by identifying possible flaws during the elections and making actionable recommendations after the elections. LEON commends all EOMs as highly professional and credible in their observation methodologies and reporting.

4.6 Media Outlets

The media landscape in Liberia remains constrained with most of the media outlets being owned by private parties, some of whom are politicians. Regulations for providing equal airtime for candidates is non-existent. Media outlets use their discretion or receive payment for allotting time to candidates or discussing a particular political party. This situation allows for possible media bias or information manipulation, which poses challenges to genuine reporting. For example, LEON observed that during the announcement of preliminary election results, some media outlets announced results that were different from the NEC's official results.

The political ownership of media outlets and lack of enforceable regulations resulted in unprofessional reportage by some media outlets. The EU-EOM observed that the Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), the state-owned radio station, was one-sided and biased in its time allocation to opposition political parties.¹³ Most of its airtime and political promotions were directed to the ruling party CDC and its campaign activities. This imbalance in media ownership and lack of content regulation, and enforcement in case of violation, represents a media setting that is vulnerable to information manipulation.

5. Social Media Monitoring

Social media revolves around the social, political, economic, and religious lives of people, impacting their attitudes, behaviors, values, and views on different issues. LEON observed that even though it has the potential to increase political engagement for socio-economic and political change, social media has also been used to foment violence and spread mis/dis-information, particularly before, during, and after electoral processes in Liberia.

During the 2023 general elections, social media was one of the means used by politicians to propagate their messages around campaign-related activities. LEON monitored social media, as a means of linking its content to the impact created on governance and election-related activities. LEON conducted in-depth analysis of social media engagements for over 50 accounts of political elites and influencers across prominent platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter).

Between the first and second rounds of the presidential election, from October 24 until November 13, 2023, LEON's social media observers systematically collected 2,487 social media posts. After coding and analyzing 158 relevant posts, LEON observed that the overall

¹³ EU-EOM, "Liberia 2023: Final Report: General Elections and Presidential Run-off (10 October 2023 and 14 November 2023)," (Mar. 2024) p. 2, para. 3.

tone was largely positive, although a lower percentage was offensive, discrediting, and speculative of voter card buying schemes (see pre-election statement, Annex I).¹⁴

Similar to the prevailing peaceful environment around the campaign period across the country, LEON’s analysis found the prevailing sentiment on social media as largely positive: 68.4% of posts had positive intonation, compared to 31.6% that carried a negative tone.

LEON monitored that positive posts called on Liberians to disavow violence and encouraging citizens to get out and vote for a candidate of their choice in the second round. Partisan posts were optimistic of the chances of their candidates and the value of recent endorsements of their political party.

LEON monitored that negative posts were dedicated to criticizing and discrediting NEC, expressing concerns over election irregularities, and casting doubt on aspects of the electoral process. The accuracy of the claims and whether they propagate disinformation remained objectively unchecked but opposing and refuting comments were often seen under such posts.

LEON also observed that 18% of the social media posts constituted offensive speech, which should be discouraged. Posts were derogatory and targeted individuals and ethnicities in counties, deriding the choice voters made to generally vote for the two leading political parties.

6. Gender Equity, Disability, and Social Inclusion

In 2012, Liberia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), among other international frameworks, which guarantees promotion and protection and provides for the full and equal enjoyment of the freedom and rights of persons with disabilities.

In 2023, LEON observed that NEC supported female candidates and people with disabilities by seeking to remove barriers to their participation in terms of campaign accessibility and accommodation during the electoral process. Examples of lowering barriers include introducing the tactile ballot guide, making polling places accessible for persons with disabilities, and adhering to Section 3.2b of the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), which gives preference to persons with disabilities at registration centers. Despite these efforts, LEON calls on NEC to consider additional measures in support of participation by marginalized groups.



NEC conducts post-election workshop on improving gender equity and social inclusion during elections (Apr. 2024) (Image by LEON)

In Liberia, women’s representation at the legislature continues to decline from a high of 15% in 2006 to 12% in 2012, and then to less than 11% in 2017 where it stood ahead of the 2023 elections. During the 2017 general elections, LEON observed only one of 24 registered political parties or coalitions (Liberia Restoration Party) nominating 30% or more women in keeping

¹⁴ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

with the electoral law. On May 11, 2023, political parties and NEC signed a memorandum of understanding, which included political parties committing to nominating women for at least 30% of candidate lists during the 2023 general elections. This agreement aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Liberia’s National Gender Policy 2009–22, which aimed to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Only two of 31 political parties, alliances, and coalitions, however, met the 30% quota in 2023 (Liberia Transformation Party and Reformers National Congress).

During the 2023 general elections, NEC reported 1,029 total accepted candidates, with females accounting for 159 (15.5%) and males accounting for 870 (84.5%). There were 197 (19%) independent candidates (44 females, 153 males) and 832 (8%) candidates who ran on political party tickets. Amongst these candidates, there were only two persons with disabilities – a male and a female. The female candidate was a sitting representative for Electoral District 1, Rivercess County, while the male candidate ran in Electoral District 8, Montserrado County. NEC reported that both candidates lost their elections.

7. **Election Administration and Finance**

7.1 NEC Electoral Calendar

DATES	EVENTS
March 16–April 30, 2021	Period of the development of 2023 presidential and legislative election budget
May 26–June 9, 2021	Period for the submission of 2023 elections budget to the legislature for funding
August 31–October 15, 2022	CSOs/CBOs accreditation for VR process begins and ends
August 31–October 15, 2022	Publication of voter registration regulations
January 23–March 10, 2023	Accreditation of party agents, media and observers for voter registration
February 6–20, 2023	Period for the publication of voter registration centers
February 20, 2023	Official launch of civic education for voter registration
March 20–May 11	Voter registration period
May 1–June 17, 2023	Civic voter education for exhibition of the provisional registration roll
May 5, 2023	Publication of all elections regulations
May 9, 2023	Issuance of the writ of elections
June 12–17 2023	Exhibition of provisional registration roll
June 12–24 2023	Objection and appeal on exhibition held and determined
June 10–September 11, 2023	Accreditation of political party agents, media, and observers for elections
June 14–July 14, 2023	Candidate nomination
July 1, 2023	Release of final voter registration data

DATES	EVENTS
July 4, 2023	Official launch of civic voter education for 2023 general elections
July 18, 2023	Preliminary list of candidates published
July 20, 2023	Last day for challenge to preliminary list of candidates
August 5–October 8, 2023	Presidential and legislative campaign period
August 14–19, 2023	Replacement of lost and damaged voter registration cards
September 18, 2023	List of voting precincts published for 2023 general elections
October 10, 2023	Election day
October 10, 2023	Complaints and adjudication start
October 11–12, 2023	Announcement of provisional election results
October 24, 2023	NEC announces final presidential and legislative election results
October 25, 2023	Last day for announcing final election results
October 24–November 12, 2023	Presidential runoff campaign period
November 14, 2023	Presidential runoff election day
November 20, 2023	NEC announces final presidential runoff election results
November 28, 2023	Last day for announcing final election results

7.2 Electoral Management

NEC's managerial and administrative structure plays a pivotal role in ensuring the efficient management and functioning of the electoral process to achieve integrity and transparency. At the helm of NEC stands the Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, Davidetta Browne Lansanah, who serves as the NEC's principal leader and decision-maker. Supporting the chairperson is a deputy and are five other commissioners, forming a core leadership team of seven commissioners who collectively oversee the operations and activities of the commission.



*NEC Board of Commissioners, Monrovia (Nov. 2023)
(Image by LEON)*

NEC also employs an executive director who is entrusted with the responsibility of managing and coordinating the day-to-day administrative affairs to enable and organizational objectives

are met efficiently and effectively. With authority over various administrative functions, the executive director and deputy play key roles in streamlining processes and facilitating communications both within the commission and with external stakeholders.

NEC also relies on the expertise and dedication of 19 county-based election magistrates to execute its mandate and conduct elections.¹⁵ These Magistrates are tasked with overseeing specific electoral jurisdictions, ensuring compliance with electoral laws and regulations, and resolving any disputes or irregularities that may arise during the electoral process. By distributing responsibilities among a team of magistrates, NEC can more effectively manage the logistical complexities associated with organizing and conducting elections across diverse and remote geographical regions. Many of NEC’s administrative and electoral processes, however, remain centralized to the headquarters in Monrovia, such as candidate nomination and observer accreditation, which can create inefficiency and barriers to participation.

Together, LEON observed that the NEC’s chairperson, commissioners, executive director, and election magistrates form a cohesive framework, working collaboratively to uphold the principles of democracy and safeguard the integrity of the electoral process. Through their collective efforts, NEC endeavors to facilitate transparent, inclusive, and credible elections that reflect the will of the electorate and strengthen the foundations of Liberian democracy.

7.3 Electoral Finance and Budgeting

NEC receives budgetary support for conducting elections through the Government of Liberia and international partners, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In previous years, Liberia’s elections were heavily supported by both the government and international partners. The 2023 general elections, however, were solely financed and administered by the Liberian government and NEC for the first time since the end of the civil war in 2003. The overall cost for conducting the election was financed through the national budget and based on the election budget submitted by NEC.

In line with Section 11.2 of the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), NEC submitted a draft budget of US\$91,958,547.72 to the 54th Legislature in June 2023 for conducting the presidential and legislative elections. LEON observed that the budget submitted had several different components: BVR pilot project, BVR exercise, public information, and geographic information system (GIS), among other costs. In NEC chairperson’s communication to the legislature, the breakdown for each component was as follows:

NO.	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1.	US\$3,968,304.84	Biometric voter registration pilot project
2.	US\$29,680,200.06	Biometric voter registration
3.	US\$795,590	Public information
4.	US\$561,932.44	Geographic information system
5.	US\$3,442,340	Data center operations
6.	US\$6,881,655	Civic and voter education activities

¹⁵ NEC deploys two magistrates in upper and lower jurisdictions within the four most populous counties: Montserrado, Nimba, Lofa, and Bong.

NO.	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
7.	US\$1,308,510	Gender-based voter education activities
8.	US\$16,560,425.46	Conduct 2023 general elections
9.	US\$12,062,033.05	Presidential runoff election (if required)
10.	US\$8,932,053.56	NEC headquarters administrative operations
11.	US\$3,454,682.80	County-based field operations
12.	US\$3,838,680	Personnel and other related expenses
13.	US\$471,840.50	Monitoring and evaluation

The NEC's proposed budget of US\$91,958,547.72, according to NEC's finance office, for conducting the 2023 general elections was reduced to US\$61,000,000 by the legislature. The reduction forced NEC to reprogram the scope of its activities, affecting each budget line. Notably, NEC did not receive the full amount but only received US\$53,000,000 to deliver the elections. The funds received were categorized as follows:

- US\$20,000,000 was allocated for conducting the BVR process, hiring of temporary registration staff, and procuring logistical materials and services; and
- US\$33,000,000 was allocated for conducting elections, paying temporary polling staff, and printing of ballot papers, including ballots for a possible runoff election.

8. ELECTORAL ACTIVITY OBSERVATION

LEON observed and reported on key activities associated with the 2023 electoral cycle. NEC's electoral calendar provided for civic and voter education, BVR procurement and registration, candidate nomination, observer accreditation, and campaigning. These electoral activities all took place prior to conducting the presidential and legislative elections.

8.1 Civic and Voter Education

NEC launched a nationwide civic and voter education (CVE) campaign on February 24, 2023, in Montserrado, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Gbarpolu, and Margibi counties. LEON observed that the CVE launch aimed to encourage all citizens who had attained the age of 18 years and above to register during the voter registration exercise that began on March 20 and ended May 11, 2023. The launch theme was "Citizens Participation a Must," emphasizing the fundamental role that citizens play for active involvement in the democratic process.

NEC outsourced CVE activities to 81 community-based organizations (CBOs) in the 19 magisterial jurisdictions, 73 electoral districts, and 15 counties of Liberia. NEC reported that it accredited and certified 400 CSOs to assist in conducting voter education activities. These 400 CSOs, however, were not funded by NEC to conduct electoral education activities.

LEON observed that by disseminating accurate and accessible information in the pre-election period, NEC aimed to explain electoral procedures, state the importance of voting, and emphasize the role of citizens in shaping the governance of their country.

LEON also observed the rollout of additional CVE on the runoff election across the electoral districts as represented by the following examples of NEC products highlighting how to mark the ballot and to carefully identify candidates.



NEC civic and voter education materials for the second round of the 2023 presidential elections (Images by NEC)

LEON also conducted CVE during the campaign period, voter registration, replacement of lost and damaged card, candidates’ nomination and voter roll exhibition periods. The platforms of choice were Facebook, X/Twitter and its website.

Sample LEON CVE Materials



LEON also analyzed CVE activities in the 15 counties. The following table indicates the observation of CVE by LEON’s LTOs at the county level. LTOs reported whether they observed CVE taking places in their respective districts (yes/no) during the runoff to the legislative and first round of the presidential elections in October 2023. LEON observed CVE taking place in approximately 67% of the electoral districts.

IS THERE VOTER EDUCATION ONGOING IN YOUR DISTRICT?			
COUNTY	NO	YES	TOTAL
Bomi	0%	2.8%	2.8%
Bong	1.8%	4.1%	6%
Gbarpolu	2.3%	0.9%	3.2%
Grand Bassa	2.3%	8.3%	10.6%
Grand Cape Mount	2.3%	1.8%	4.1%
Grand Gedeh	2.8%	4.1%	6.9%
Grand Kru	0%	1.4%	1.4%
Lofa	5%	6.4%	11.5%
Margibi	3.7%	4.1%	7.8%
Maryland	0.9%	2.8%	3.7%
Montserrado	7.8%	12.4%	20.2%
Nimba	2.3%	10.1%	12.4%
Rivercess	0%	3.2%	3.2%
River Gee	0.5%	4.1%	4.6%
Sinoe	1.4%	0.5%	1.8%
TOTAL	33%	67%	100%

8.2 Biometric Voter Registration

The 2023 biometric voter registration (BVR) process took place in compliance with Article 83 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and section 2.9(y) of the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), which mandate NEC to mobilize and register eligible Liberians throughout the country to vote in all called public elections. In contrast to the optical mark recognition (OMR) voter registration process used by NEC in past elections, NEC elected to introduce a BVR system during the 2023 general elections. NEC successfully captured the facial features and fingerprints of eligible citizens 18-years and older to produce a biometric voter registration roll for the first time in Liberia.

NEC conducted the BVR in two phases. The first was conducted from March 21 to April 9, 2023, in six counties: Grand Bassa, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Margibi, and Montserrado. The second from April 21 to May 11, 2023, and included the other nine counties: Bong, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Maryland, Nimba, Rivercess, River Gee, and Sinoe.

LEON observed the entire BVR exercise, including NEC awarding a contract for supplying BVR kits, recruitment and training of BVR staff, civic and voter education around BVR, rollout of the BVR exercise, and announcement of provisional registration results (see BVR report, Annex B). After training its 73 LTOs on BVR technology and process, LEON deployed 36 LTOs during the first phase and 37 during the second phase. Predefined checklists and critical incident forms were developed for gathering and reporting process data. Observers filed daily reports from the districts to an online database for aggregation and analysis. These were analyzed and developed into weekly observation reports. Each LTO was required to observe

two voter registration centers per day and over three days a week. The data sent in was reviewed, evaluated, and processed to generate the findings presented in LEON’s final BVR report.¹⁶

A total of 2,471,617 voters were registered for the 2023 general elections. Of these, 1,237,257 were women (50.06%) and 1,234,360 were men (49.94%). NEC conducted a deduplication of the voters roll, which resulted in the removal of 27,287 double registrants caused by the repetition of 3,635 persons and 529 underaged voters were identified and removed during the process. These double registrants were allowed to vote only at the polling precinct where they first registered.

TOTAL REGISTERED VOTERS		
Year	Voters Registered	Percentage Growth
2005	1,352,730	baseline
2011	1,798,930	33%
2017	2,183,683	21.4%
2023	2,471,617	13.2%

Sources: NEC Portal and LEON Analysis (2023)

LEON assessed that the BVR exercise (March–May 2023) was largely successful, especially the effective deduplication of double registrants and identification and removal of under-age individuals. The growth in the voter roll in 2023 was lower than during previous registration exercises in 2011 and 2017, likely due to NEC introducing the BVR system to create a brand new roll and not updating a previous roll. LEON observed that insufficient amounts of public information were available on the purpose and process of the BVR, and additional civic education is needed during the next registration.

8.2.1 BVR Procurement Observation

On June 17, 2022, NEC issued an international competitive offer that invited bids for the supply and delivery of BVR kits, software, and materials to conduct a first-time national BVR exercise. The BVR was initially scheduled to begin on December 15, 2022.

After submissions were reviewed by a team of NEC staff, five of six companies submitting bids were invited to demonstrate their products’ fitness for the national BVR exercise. NEC did not disclose the reasons for not inviting the sixth company. LEON observed that the invited companies made presentations and NEC subsequently selected Ekemp International (a Chinese, Nigerian, and Liberian partnership) as winner of the bid.

In keeping with procurement laws and regulations, NEC wrote to PPCC requesting its “no objection” approval of Ekemp’s tender. PPCC, however, denied approval on the grounds of the inadequate financial position of the Liberian partner in the group who had proposed to pre-finance the contract award. According to NEC and PPCC, the financial statement of Palm Insurance, on December 31, 2021, showed it had total equity and liabilities of US\$2,899,027,

¹⁶ Liberia Elections Observation Network. “Biometric Voter Report,” (Mar. 20, 2023) <<https://leonobservation.org/2023/03/20/biometric-voters-registration/>>.

which fell far short of the required amount needed to procure BVR kits. PPCC subsequently requested NEC to rerun the bid evaluation exercise and video-record the presentation.

LEON observed the second bid evaluation process among the following five companies:

- ◆ **Laxton Group** with headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, United States of America, was represented by seven persons. Their presentation referred to 30 years of experience with BVR work referenced in Tanzania (20m voters), Guinea Bissau (1m voters), Mozambique (20m voters), Ghana and Zimbabwe (2018–23), Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018–19), and Malawi (2017–22).
- ◆ **Ekemp International** presented a joint-venture bid with Nigerian company, INITS and Liberian company, Palm Insurance. They indicated 12 years of experience referencing their work on BVR in Nigeria 2022, Guinea Bissau, Namibia (2014–18), Kenya (2013–17), Colombia (2022), and Switzerland.
- ◆ **HID Global Professional Services** proposed a joint-venture with Liberian citizens. Its team of presenters comprised three persons. HID noted 39 years of experience but failed to list references for BVR work done in other countries.
- ◆ **Waymark Infotech** proposed a joint-venture with Liberian IT company, Mwetana. The company presented no recent BVR experience. The references listed for BVR were partnerships with NEC and other universities in Liberia.
- ◆ **Electoral Services International (ESI)** is a Canadian firm. ESI presented on 35 years of experience, referencing BVR work in Kenya (2010), Gambia (2015), Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

LEON observed that the public bid evaluation panel consisted of five NEC staff members as listed in the following table:

NO.	NAME	POSITION	GENDER
1.	Isaac Zahn	Director of Data Center	Male
2.	Marlene G. Wogbeh	Director of Finance	Female
3.	Matthew Kollie	Director of Technical Communication	Male
4.	Edna Freeman	Deputy Director of information Technology	Female
5.	Alvin Teage Jallah	Head of Legal Session	Male

LEON observed that the panel could have placed more premium on gathering adequate background on the companies, their past performances and challenges, and the quality of the materials and equipment proposed. LEON assessed that technical and insightful questions to presenters were limited. The panel appeared to take the companies assertions at face value without question. The audience was allowed to ask questions to the presenters.

NEC selected the Laxton Group who collaborated with Aratek Biometrics and Neurotechnology to implement the BVR system for the 2023 general elections.

8.2.2 Replacement of Lost or Damages Voter Registration Cards

LEON observed the week-long period for replacing lost or damaged voter cards that ran from August 14 to 29, 2023. LTOs in the magisterial districts assessed NEC procedures to determine if obtaining replacement cards was transparent and accessible to all eligible voters and contributed to participation during the electoral process.

The 1986 NEL (Amended 2014) requires that anyone applying for the replacement of a lost or damaged voter registration card must pay an amount of \$5.00 USD or its equivalent in Liberian dollars. To obtain or replace a voter card, each electorate was required to go to the NEC magistrate's county office and receive and complete a Liberian Revenue Authority (LRA) deposit form, and then pay the required amount at a bank. The voter would then take the LRA form and bank payment receipt to the magistrate's office to process a new voter card.

LEON considers the financial requirement to serve multiple purposes within the electoral legal framework. First, the nominal fee is intended to cover administrative costs associated with the issuance of replacement cards, including the printing and processing expenses incurred by NEC. Second, the fee structure was designed to encourage responsible handling of voter registration cards, discouraging individuals from neglecting or mishandling their cards, thereby minimizing the need for replacements.

Regardless, LEON observed that establishing a standardized fee for replacing voter registration cards, coupled with the exclusive provision of this service at NEC magisterial offices, inadvertently creates disparities among citizens. This was particularly evident in cases where individuals faced challenges arising from traveling long distances to NEC offices and having limited financial resources to pay for the replacement card.

LEON notes that the imposition of a fixed fee and access only at a NEC magisterial office posed a burden on citizens with lower income levels. For individuals already grappling with financial constraints, the additional cost of replacing a lost or damaged voter identification card presented an added economic challenge. This financial barrier not only hindered their ability to participate fully in the democratic process but also underscored the potential for socio-economic inequities in the electoral system. Citizens residing in remote or rural areas encountered difficulties accessing magisterial offices due to the considerable distances involved. The resulting inconvenience was exacerbated by limited transportation options and, in some instances, challenging geographical terrain.

8.3 Candidate Nomination

Candidate nomination began on June 14 and ended on July 14, 2023, but the most intensive period was during the final two weeks from July 3 to 14, 2023. LEON observed the entire process, from picking up and dropping off candidate nomination forms to NEC processing the aspirant applications at the designated nomination center, the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex in Monrovia.

LEON's four regional coordinators observed the nomination exercise and were divided into a team of two and deployed on a rotational basis. A systematic checklist was used to collect data during the observation, which was submitted to an online data aggregation platform for analysis and reporting. Despite being present, LEON was unable to verify whether aspirant applications were being corrected or rejected by NEC officials during the nomination process because observers were only allowed to observe from the help desk. Neither LEON nor ECC or any other observer group had access to the applications submitted, as NEC has the mandate to oversee those applications, which contain confidential information.

LEON observed that extra fees were charged in the sum of \$500 USD for independent aspirants for the purpose of submitting 300 endorsed names, which is not required by the electoral law. Police and security forces were present, and LEON observed a calm setting with no tension or intimidation witnessed or reported during the process.

8.4 Observer Accreditation

Accreditation of domestic and international observers by NEC is required to empower and enable accountability of the electoral process by monitoring and assessing the standards and quality of activities as they progress through the phases of the electoral cycle.

During the 2023 general elections, NEC had prescribed timelines for all observer missions to submit a list of their observers for accreditation and permission to observe the electoral activities. The required deadline for submission of observer lists, however, did not take into consideration major electoral events and at times posed unnecessary challenges to observer groups. LEON observed that the uncoordinated timing had implications for its observer training and deployment in cases where accredited observers do not show up or must be replaced after a background check on neutrality and political affiliation.

Delays by NEC in the timely release of accreditations to observer missions affected programing, logistics, and budgeting during the elections. When accreditation badges are delayed beyond training and deployment schedules, as was experienced by LEON, a new logistical and budgeting plan must be developed to accommodate the time lost and ensure that all observers across the country receive accreditation. Such delays in the accreditation process could potentially disrupt or prevent a successful observation mission.

LEON observed that there was no process for replacing observer badges at the central or magisterial offices when changes were required on the list originally submitted to NEC. For example, NEC did not intend to issue new observer badges during the presidential runoff election despite the need by LEON, ECC, and other observer groups to replace some observers after the first round. Even though NEC attempted to accommodate new badges at the last minute, observer groups were forced to adjust plans to enable accreditation.

LEON observed that NEC centralizes the accreditation process to the headquarters in Monrovia, rather than decentralizing the administrative process to the magisterial offices in the counties. This creates bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies that could be resolved through decentralization in the future to create a smooth distribution plan for observers with less financial cost and logistical burden.

8.5 Campaigns and Rallies

LEON observed the campaign periods during the legislative elections, and both rounds of the presidential election (August–November 2023) (see pre-election statement, Annex I).¹⁷ LEON assessed the campaign periods as mostly peaceful but remains concerned by several electoral violence incidents. Observable incidents of vote buying, information manipulation, and deaths and injuries attributable to electoral violence in some places cast shade on what was essentially a calm and commendable campaign environment.

¹⁷ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

8.5.1 Legislative and First-Round Presidential Campaign Observation

The initial campaign period for the legislative elections and first round of the presidential election covered August 5 to October 8, 2023 (see pre-election statement, Annex I).¹⁸ LEON observed the first round of the campaign, which was characterized by various activities, reflecting the diverse strategies employed by political parties to connect with voters.

Large rallies served as a prominent feature during the initial campaign phase. Political leaders and candidates took to the streets, public squares, and designated venues to address mass gatherings of supporters and undecided voters. These rallies provided a platform for candidates to articulate their policy agendas, showcase their vision for the future, and energize their base.

LEON observed that jingles also played a significant role in creating a memorable and catchy presence for candidates. Jingles often encapsulated key campaign messages, slogans, and themes, contributing to the overall branding and identity of each political campaign.

During the initial campaign period, LEON observed political party campaign rallies in all 15 counties. Reports from LEON's 73 LTOs were based on witnessing 218 separate events during the October 10, 2023 legislative and presidential elections:

County	Number of Rallies	Percentage of Campaign	County	Number of Rallies	Percentage of Campaign
Bomi	6	2.8%	Margibi	17	7.8%
Bong	13	6.0%	Maryland	8	3.7%
Gbarpolu	7	3.2%	Montserrado	44	20.2%
Grand Bassa	23	10.6%	Nimba	27	12.4%
Grand Cape Mount	9	4.1%	Rivercess	7	3.2%
Grand Gedeh	15	6.9%	River Gee	10	4.6%
Grand Kru	3	1.4%	Sinoe	4	1.8%
Lofa	25	11.5%	TOTAL	218	--

LEON also observed diverse types of campaign methods employed by political parties during the campaign period running from August 5 until October 8, 2023:

Campaign Type	Number of Instances Observed
Churches/Mosques	21
Door to Door	115
Drive-by	75
Large Gatherings	151
Social media	1
Radio/TV	6

¹⁸ Liberia Elections Observation Network, "Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election," (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

Campaign Type	Number of Instances Observed
Social media	54
Town Criers	50
Other	31
TOTAL	504

8.5.2 Campaign Security, Malpractice, and Other Observation

Based on LEON’s observations, the following findings highlight the largely peaceful and engaging campaign style of the political parties during the legislative and first round of the presidential elections (see pre-election statement, Annex I):¹⁹

- ◆ When asked if LEON observers had seen government properties or assets being used during campaign rallies, they reported “no” during 75.7% and “yes” during 24.3% of the 218 events observed.
- ◆ When asked if LEON observers witnessed or heard of any political party or independent candidate buying or attempting to buy voter cards, they reported “no” during 93.1% and “yes” during 6.9% of the 218 events observed.
- ◆ When asked if LEON observers witnessed threats of violence during their observation, they reported “no” during 92.7% and “yes” during 7.3% of the 218 events observed. Examples of violence reported were stone throwing and fighting among party supporters.
- ◆ When asked if LEON observers witnessed the presence of police or security personnel, they reported “no” during 25.2% and “yes” during 74.8% of the 218 events observed.

8.5.3 Second-Round Presidential Campaign Observation

The leadership within the two political parties competing in the 2023 presidential runoff election – CDC and UP – actively courted and received endorsements and support from the 18 defeated political parties who contested for the presidency and from among the multiplicity of successful and failed legislative candidates and other political luminaries (see pre-election statement, Annex I).²⁰ Interparty maneuvering resulted in several party endorsements favoring both parties but also revealed fractures within some parties or coalition parties with breakaway segments of the same parties cross-endorsing one of the two runoff parties.

During the period between the end of the general elections on October 10 and the runoff election on November 14, 2023, CPP, ALP, and the youth leagues of 10 opposition political parties,²¹ among other parties, endorsed the CDC presidential candidate. In addition, several

¹⁹ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

²⁰ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

²¹ The parties include Alternative National Congress (ANC), African Liberation League (ALL), Liberia Rebuilding Party (LRP), All Liberian Party (ALP), Liberian People’s Party (LPP), National Democratic Coalition (NDC), Liberia National Union (LNC), Liberty Party (LP), All Liberian Coalition Party (ALCP), and

prominent citizens also endorsed CDC's reelection bid, such as defeated presidential candidate Joshua T. Turner of the Rebuild Liberia Movement (RLM); former Liberian Senate President Pro-tempore and former Foreign Minister, Gbehzohngar M. Findley; Madam Edith Gongloe-Weh, former Superintendent of Nimba and sister of LPP's Standard-bearer, Tiawan Saye Gongloe; and Henry Costa, a critic of the Weah Government.

During the same period, the GDM, ALCOP, LPP, LFM, NDA, VOLT, and other parties and prominent citizens endorsed UP's presidential candidate. Some defeated legislative candidates who contested the 2023 general elections also supported UP's election bid, including Senator J. Milton Teahjay of Sinoe County and Senatorial candidate Nya Twan of Nimba County, among others.

In some cases, political party standard bearers and other leaders decided to remain neutral, such as the CPP's presidential candidate, while their executive committees supported a runoff candidate. While the contest for endorsements abounded, allegations of "endorsement buying" and other *quid pro quo* tradeoffs circulated in newspapers, on radio and television shows, and on social media,²² suggesting that concerted efforts and even questionable tactics were being applied to solicit political support in a tight runoff election.

The second-round of the campaign period concluded with UP's rally on November 11 and CDC's on November 12, 2023. LEON received no reports of any conflicts in Monrovia during the period but rather LEON observed peaceful final campaign rallies.

In contrast to the first round of campaigning that saw incidents of violence leading to several deaths and injuries,²³ LEON assessed runoff campaigning as mostly peaceful. There were, however, reports of a clash between UP and CDC supporters in Nimba County, Electoral District 3, on November 10, 2023.²⁴ The details of the incident were unclear, given conflicting accounts from both sides, but LNP successfully intervened when gunshots were fired, and multiple injuries were reported.²⁵

In addition to the contest for political endorsements during the presidential runoff election, LEON observed in Montserrado and other counties that party agents of the CDC and UP were actively engaged in door-to-door canvassing seeking voters support on Election Day. LTOs

the Movement for Progress Change (MPC). See "CDC Gets Runoff Boost Yet Again-Youth Leagues of 10 Opposition Political Parties Endorse Weah," *The Analyst* (6 Nov. 2023) <<https://analystliberiaonline.com/cdc-gets-runoff-boost-yet-again-youth-leagues-of-10-opposition-political-parties-endorse-weah/>>

²² Endorsements Epidemic Overwhelms Campaigns -CDC, UP Lobby Political Groups, Other heavy weights," *The Analyst* (3 Nov. 2023) <<https://analystliberiaonline.com/endorsements-epidemic-overwhelms-campaigns-cdc-up-lobby-political-groups-other-heavy-weights/>>.

²³ Three people killed in Liberia election campaign clashes, *TRT AFRIKA*, October 1, 2023 <<https://www.trtafrika.com/africa/three-people-killed-in-liberia-election-campaign-clashes-15206236>> (Accessed Nov. 9, 2023); Worzi Alvin. "Liberia: Deadly Clash Mars Climax of Tension-Packed Campaign," *Liberian Observer* October 9, 2023 <<https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-deadly-clash-mars-climax-tension-packed-campaign>> (accessed Nov. 9, 2023).

²⁴ Doloquee, F., "Liberia: Several Hospitalized As Sen. Prince Johnson And Up Vice Running Mate Senator Jeremiah Koung Narrowly Escape Death In Ambush," *Front Page Africa* (Nov. 13, 2023) <<https://frontpageafricaonline.com/politics/liberia-several-hospitalized-as-sen-prince-johnson-and-up-vice-running-mate-senator-jeremiah-koung-narrowly-escape-death-in-ambush/>>

²⁵ "LIBERIA: Zuolay, Nimba COUNTY Turns Battle Ground Amidst Rival Casualties," *The Independent Probe Newspaper* (Nov. 13, 2023) <<https://independentprobe.com/2023/11/13/liberia-zuolay-nimba-county-turns-battle-ground-amidst-rival-casualties/>>.

reported campaigning in rural and urban communities among market women; at church gatherings; and among the chiefs, elders, and with other leaders across the 15 counties: both parties were seeking to influence the influencers to garner added support.



CDC (left) and UP (right) appealing to youth in Montserrado County (Nov. 11, 2023) (Images Online)

LEON observed that political parties were involved mainly in door-to-door campaigning, showing voters how to mark the ballot in their favor during the runoff period. The parties and their supporters also used strategies like radio jingles, social media postings, and billboards to canvass for their preferred parties and candidates.

LEON observed that parties were campaigning extensively in the battleground counties of Bong, Margibi, Gbarpolu, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, and Montserrado, where the difference in votes between the two runoff candidates had narrow margins during the first round of the presidential election. The intensive and more personal approach included party stalwarts and stars traveling from district to district to canvass support from local leaders and voters and the heavy use of party propaganda and advertisement.

In stronghold counties, the two competing political parties rallied their supporters for a clear sweep of the votes. For example, both in Nimba and Grand Kru counties, “operation zero vote” for the ruling and opposition parties was launched, respectively.²⁶ LEON considers this type of campaigning as concerning in that it held the potential for encouraging local supporters to interfere with the electoral process or intimidate opposing party supporters to not cast their ballots during the runoff election.

LEON also received concerning reports from its LTOs of undemocratic practices to sway voters in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, and Lofa counties. There were allegations related to buying of voter identification cards for the purpose of destroying them and thereby reducing votes to the opposing party UP. LEON was unable to verify or confirm this information firsthand; however, LEON’s LTOs reported that political parties were seen distributing money to communities and providing other items, such as rice, lappas, t-shirts, Bluetooth speakers, and other items to incentivize voters to cast a ballot in their favor.

²⁶ Contributing writer. “Liberia: Pro-Temp Chie Launches “Operation Weah 100%, Boakai Zero” Campaign in Grand Kru County,” *FrontPage Africa* November 7, 2023 <<https://frontpageafricaonline.com/politics/liberia-pro-temp-chie-launches-operation-weah-100-boakai-zero-campaign-in-grand-kru-county/>> (Accessed Nov. 9, 2023).

In LEON’s pre-runoff election statement of November 13, 2023,²⁷ LEON encouraged political parties to compete fairly and to abide by the electoral laws of Liberia and appealed to voters to not be swayed by the buying of their vote that incentivizes their decision.



Sample political advertisements from CDC (left) and UP (right) (Images by Parties)

V. ELECTORAL OBSERVATION

LEON observed and reported on NEC’s electoral preparedness to conduct the 2023 general elections during the runup to the presidential and legislative election day on October 10 and presidential runoff election day on November 14, 2023. LEON also observed NEC’s performance and the election process more generally during both rounds of voting, counting, and tabulation of results, using a sample-based observation methodology.

LEON assessed NEC’s electoral preparedness as sufficient to deliver the 2023 general elections. NEC staff were centrally recruited and largely trained in a timely manner. LEON notes that delays in government funding led to postponement of some activities, such as training. In addition, logistical challenges, such as poor roads, access to trucks and boats, inclement weather, and river flooding, delayed distribution or resulted in damaged materials in some remote locations.

LEON assessed election day opening of polls, voting, closing of polls, and counting during the legislative elections and first round of the presidential election (October 10, 2023) as well administered, and properly coordinated. During the second round of the presidential election (November 14, 2023), election day was also largely well administered, properly coordinated, and NEC improved its adherence to its procedures and timelines to deliver the final results.

LEON assessed NEC’s results management process as systematic and appropriate. Despite some NEC website access issues during the first round of the results announcement period, daily NEC press conferences and reading of the detailed results contributed to public

²⁷ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Pre-election Statement on the Second Round of the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 13, 2023 [12:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

confidence in the outcome. LEON notes that NEC remained legally compliant with the time allowed for final results announcement during both rounds of elections.

9. Electoral Preparedness—First and Second Rounds of Presidential Election

NEC adhered to its constitutional mandate by putting in place the operational and logistical modalities to prepare for and deliver the October 10 presidential and legislative elections and the November 14, 2023, presidential runoff election.

9.1 Legislative and Presidential Elections

Prior to the October 10, 2023, elections, NEC successfully planned and conducted the operational activities necessary to deliver the elections on time. Regulations, policies, and procedures were updated and distributed through guidelines and manuals. Sensitive materials (e.g., ballots, seals, indelible ink, etc.) and non-sensitive materials (e.g., ballot boxes, voting booths, printed journals and forms, stationeries, etc.) were procured, delivered, distributed, and collected with no major logistical delays or discrepancies despite some issues with weather and road conditions.



ANC Political Leader Alexander Cummings (left) campaigning (Image from Facebook) and Vice President Jeremaiah Koung (right) campaigning in Nimba County (Images by LEON)

Approximately 30,000 temporary election workers (TEWs) were recruited using an open and online application process, trained by experienced NEC election officials, and deployed to their respective polling precincts and places and/or tally centers. Payments to some TEWs, however, was delayed due to verification on mobile money transfer numbers after the first round of elections. Locations for polling precincts and places and magisterial level tally centers were scouted, assessed, secured, and provisioned so that most were functional and capable of conducting the polls, delivering counted results, and tabulating the result forms

9.2 Presidential Runoff Election

NEC increased its preliminary preparations for the conduct of the presidential runoff elections on November 14, 2023, immediately after announcement of final results from the first round. Similar activities, as noted above, were set in motion and successfully achieved prior to the runoff election day. On October 25, 2023, NEC informed the National Steering Committee on

Elections (NSCE) about its initial review of successes, challenges, lessons, and status of preparation for the conduct of the presidential runoff election.²⁸

After NEC identified key preparation indicators in its NSCE report, NEC updated the Technical Working Group on Elections (TWGE) on November 9, and issued a public bulletin on the status of preparations on November 10, 2023.²⁹ LEON observed the following progress on NEC’s electoral preparation during the three-week period between elections:

1. Report to NSCE noted a need for all runoff election funds to be available; update to TWGE informed that NEC received all \$53 million in total 2023 election-related funding.
2. Report to NSCE noted the beginning of electoral materials packaging from NEC’s central warehouse for county deployment; NEC’s public bulletin informed packaging is completed for 2,080 precincts and 5,890 polling places and deployed to all 19 magisterial areas.
3. Report to NSCE noted the beginning of a redesign of runoff ballot; update to TWGE informed that NEC incorporated recommendations from observers and others on ballot design to mitigate the risk of invalid balloting.
4. Report to NSCE noted the start of printing of the final registration roll (FRR) for the runoff; update to TWGE informed that both the FRR and ballots were printed and undergoing distribution to the magisterial areas.
5. Report to NSCE noted plans for brush-up training of NEC staff; NEC’s public bulletin informed that cascade polling and counting training of the 30,812 TEWs began the week prior and will end as scheduled for the November 14 polls. Training of election results tally staff was ongoing, while NEC sorted out challenges with payments to some TEWs from the first round of elections.
6. NEC’s public bulletin informed that NEC’s civic and voter education focused on the issue of a high number of invalid ballots that characterized the first round of elections; NEC deployed headquarters staff across the country to assist voter education on how to mark the ballot correctly, among other topics.

Prior to the November 14, 2023, election day, LEON assessed that NEC was on track to effectively administer the runoff election. LTOs observed the arrival of runoff ballots in the country on October 31, 2023, and reported that NEC had begun training of polling staff, including on how to properly mark the Record of Count Forms and inking of voters’ fingers. LTOs also observed the rollout of civic and voter education about the runoff election across the 73 electoral districts.

²⁸ National Elections Commission, “Chair’s Talking Points at National Steering in Elections – 25 October 2023.”

²⁹ National Elections Commission, “NEC Weekly Information Bulletin (Nov. 3–10, 2023).”

10. LEON's Sample-based Observation Methodology

LEON used data collected from its sample-based observation (SBO) throughout the 2023 electoral cycle to independently assess the overall quality and integrity of the legislative elections and the first and second rounds of the presidential election.

The SBO approach is a proven, statistically based methodology that has been used in more than 40 countries for over three decades to evaluate an electoral process. Conducting an SBO meant that LEON's observation was comprehensive, and its election day data was collected from a statistically relevant sample of polling places from all 73 electoral districts for internal analysis and cross-verification. The STOs were assigned to a randomly selected, representative sample of polling places in all electoral districts. LEON's observers followed voting and counting processes at sampling locations and recorded NEC results data posted publicly at the polling places observed. Results data reported by observers were validated by photos of signed results sheets and cross-verified by LEON's clerks at its data center prior to issuing its statements.

During the legislative and first round of presidential elections, LEON deployed 904 NEC-accredited STOs, supported by a team of 73 LTOs and 53 field coordinators (FCs). During the second round of the presidential election, LEON added to this same group 18 mobile field observers (MFOs) to monitor incidents and report on issues. LEON's observers signed a pledge of impartiality and neutrality and upheld domestic and international observation standards.

As a result of its SBO approach, LEON produced viable data samples during both rounds of the presidential election that enabled it to project a midpoint result estimate for each candidate from within an estimated range of possible results. The midpoint value is NOT an exact value against which to directly compare NEC's official results. Rather, the midpoint is the best estimate based on data collected through a sample and is the middle value within a margin of error. The estimated range is the margin of error, which is represented by the lowest and highest value that each candidate could be expected to achieve, within which NEC's official results from all 5,890 polling places should fall. During both presidential election rounds, LEON's results data analysis was consistent with NEC's official results, and thus the public could feel confident in NEC's official results.



LEON Data Center, Monrovia (Oct. 2023) (Image by LEON)

In addition to the SBO, LEON also observed how NEC implemented its procedures for the opening of polls, voting, closing of polls, counting, and results tabulation during the legislative and both rounds of the presidential election. LEON assessed that NEC largely adhered to its policies and procedures and delivered credible election results.

11. Election Day Observation–First Round

11.1 Observer Deployment

On October 10, 2023, LEON deployed 1,030 NEC accredited observers, including 73 LTOs, assigned to each electoral district; 904 STOs, assigned to randomly selected polling places using the SBO methodology; and 53 FCs, assigned to support data collection (see deployment statement, Annex C).³⁰ The assigned polling places represented a viable statistical presence in all 15 counties. LEON’s observer coverage included approximately 15% of all polling places among the 73 electoral districts. LEON observed and reported on the following findings from the opening of polls.

11.2 Opening of Polls

LEON noted that approximately 90% of polling places observed opened within the first 30 minutes from the official poll opening time (see election day opening statement, Annex D).³¹ LEON found that NEC experienced insufficient staff at approximately 21% of polling places observed. LEON observed that the presence of electoral materials at polling places ranged as high as 98.4%. Approximately 40% of NEC staff were women at the polling places observed.

LEON observed the presence of party agents/poll watchers at most polling places observed. The top three political parties with agents/watchers present were as follows: Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC), with approximately 89%, Unity Party (UP), with approximately 83%, and Collaborating Political Parties (CPP), with approximately 61%. LEON recorded the presence of other electoral observers at polling places observed, with ECC at the highest rate of 31.4%, while security forces presence was at approximately 97% of polling places observed.

11.3 Voting

LEON reported the following procedural findings from polling places observed (see election day closing statement, Annex E).³² Notably, most NEC polling place officials “always” adhered to procedures in eight categories between approximately 72% and 97% of the time. The “mostly” category range was between approximately 1% and 17%. The combined range for procedural adherence was 89% to 99%. Observer data indicated that NEC officials



NEC Polling Place, Monrovia (Oct. 10, 2023) (Image by LEON)

³⁰ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Press Release: LEON to Observe Liberia’s Presidential and Legislative Elections on October 10, 2023,” (Oct. 8, 2023) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

³¹ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Day Observation: Opening of Polls Situational Report,” (Oct. 10, 2023) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

³² Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Day Observation: Voting and Closing of Polls Situational Report,” (Oct. 11, 2023 [9:00AM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

appeared to understand and implement NEC’s procedures during election day at the polling places observed.

LEON expressed concern that important procedural steps were observed as “sometimes” or “never” being adhered to. For example, observers reported that queue controllers did not check for valid voter cards at approximately 7% of polling places, identification officers did not tick voter names on the final registration roll at approximately 7% of polling places, ballot issuers did not explain how to cast a ballot correctly at approximately 9% of polling places, and use of the tactile ballot by visually impaired voters was not explained at an alarming rate of approximately 11% of polling places observed. LEON recommended that NEC continue improving its training methods and emphasized the needs of visually impaired so they can more fully participate during elections.

LEON reported that in approximately 10% of polling places observed, individuals were allowed to vote without a valid voter card and people were seen campaigning at the polling place during voting. LEON noted that even though procedural adherence was reported at approximately 90% of places, the lack of full adherence to these areas remains an important area for procedural improvement and policy enforcement.

LEON reported that the pace of voting was inefficient at approximately 33% of places observed, with one voter taking between five and 10 minutes to cast ballots. LEON observed that NEC experienced challenges during opening of polls when some polling staff did not report to duty and issues around queue control contributed to slower voter processing times. Given the high turnout rates, LEON recommended NEC to expedite the processing rate during future electoral events to improve efficiency.

LEON commended NEC for providing a polling place layout that enabled political party agents/poll watchers and domestic observers to view the electoral process “very well” at approximately 81% of places and “well” at approximately 17% of places, for a notable combined rate for agent/observer access of approximately 98% of places observed.

11.4 Closing of Polls

LEON reported that approximately two-thirds of polling places observed closed after 6:01 PM due primarily to the presence of voters in the queue at NEC’s official closing time of 6:00 PM (see election day closing statement, Annex E).³³ When comparing the time range for closure against the number of voters in line at 6:00 PM, LEON noted that the high turnout throughout the day continued until the end of the day.



Poll closing in Nimba county, Oct. 10, 2023 (Image by LEON)

³³ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Day Observation: Voting and Closing of Polls Situational Report,” (Oct. 11, 2023 [9:00AM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

Approximately 25% of polling places closed after 7:00 PM and approximately 39% of polling places still had more than 20 voters in line.

LEON observed that voters in line at the close of polls were permitted to vote approximately 90% of the time; however, they were also denied at a concerning rate of approximately 11% of polling places observed. LEON noted positively that NEC officials sealed ballot boxes at the end of voting at approximately 99% of polling places and packed voting materials away before counting at approximately 95% of polling places observed.

LEON’s observers assessed the election day process as “very good” at approximately 66% or “good” at approximately 30% of polling places observed, with a combined assessment of 96% considering the process as good or very good. LEON commended NEC for deploying well-trained polling officials who generally adhered to the policies and procedures to professionally deliver the general elections.

11.5 Counting

LEON reported that six main counting procedures were implemented by NEC at rates ranging from approximately 97% to 99% at polling places observed (see counting statement, Annex F).³⁴ Notably, LEON observed that party agents/poll watchers for top vote recipients signed the presidential counting forms at approximately 97% of polling places and that the presidential counting forms were posted for public viewing at the polling places observed approximately 98% of the time.

LEON notes that party agents/poll watchers signing the counting forms is a clear sign of acceptance of those results. This high rate of procedural compliance during the counting process provides further confidence that NEC officials performed their duties in a professional and transparent manner among the polling places where LEON observed.

11.6 Results Tallying

LEON noted that NEC had to process 17,670 counting forms – one each for the presidential, senatorial, and representative seats from 5,890 polling places (see counting statement, Annex F).³⁵ Consequently, NEC had to ensure accuracy in tabulation and aggregation, as credible results are essential to a genuine electoral outcome. LEON cautioned the public that results tallying takes time, as NEC must take care as it certifies and announces the official results.

LEON reported the following findings from observing the results tabulation process in NEC’s 19 tally centers in the 15 counties:

- ◆ Party agents/poll watchers and domestic and international observers were provided access to observe the results tabulation process in all tally centers:
 - CDC, CPP, and UP agents/watchers were present in nearly all centers.
 - Domestic observers and international observers were present in most centers.
- ◆ Counting forms were projected for public display per NEC procedures in most cases.

³⁴ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Counting and Results Tabulation Situational Report,” (Oct. 14, 2023 [5:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

³⁵ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Counting and Results Tabulation Situational Report,” (Oct. 14, 2023 [5:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

- ◆ Party agents and observers were given a copy of results sheets in most cases.



Tally Center in Bong (left) and Montserrado (right) counties (Oct. 2023) (Images by LEON)

12. LEON’s First-Round Presidential Election SBO Findings–October 10, 2023

LEON’s results analysis during the first presidential election on October 10, 2023, was based on counting data submitted by observers at 860 of 904 (95.1%) assigned polling places (see results statement, Annex G).³⁶ This provided LEON with a viable data sample and enabled LEON to provide an estimated range – the lowest and highest value that each candidate could be expected to achieve – within which the official results from all polling places could be expected to fall. Notably, LEON’s results analysis, using the SBO methodology, shows that no candidate could have reached the 50% plus one threshold required by the constitution for a first-round victory during the 2023 presidential election.

The NEC’s official results, as of October 24, 2023, when compared against LEON’s estimated percentage ranges of expected results for each of the 20 candidates, demonstrate consistency between the two sets of results data. LEON notes that consistent SBO findings are a strong indicator that the NEC’s results are as should have been expected from the polling places:

CANDIDATE	NEC RESULTS (100%)	LEON ESTIMATED % MIDPOINT	LEON ESTIMATED % RANGE	CONSISTENT
GEORGE MANNEH WEAH (CDC)	43.83%	43.39%	41.6–44.2%	YES
JOSEPH BOAKAI (UP)	43.44%	43.40%	42.7–45.3%	YES
EDWARD APPLETON JR (GDM)	2.20%	2.12%	1.9–2.3%	YES
LUSINEE KAMARA SR (ALCOP)	1.96%	1.66%	1.4–2.0%	YES
ALEXANDER CUMMINGS (CPP)	1.61%	1.70%	1.5–1.9%	YES

³⁶ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Results Tabulation Situational Report,” (Oct. 18, 2023 [2:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

CANDIDATE	NEC RESULTS (100%)	LEON ESTIMATED % MIDPOINT	LEON ESTIMATED % RANGE	CONSISTENT
TIAWAN SAYE GONGLOE (LPP)	1.44%	1.81%	1.3–2.3%	YES
ALLEN BROWN JR (LRP)	0.85%	0.87%	0.7–1.0%	YES
SIMEON FREEMAN (MPC)	0.72%	0.74%	0.6–0.9%	YES
WILLIAM WIAH TUIDER (DNA)	0.61%	0.60%	0.5–0.7%	YES
JOSHUA TOM TURNER (NLP)	0.53%	0.51%	0.4–0.6%	YES
JEREMIAH WHAPOE (VOLT)	0.50%	0.37%	0.2–0.5%	YES
LUTHER YORFEE (REBUILDERS)	0.35%	0.34%	0.2–0.5%	YES
BENDU ALEHMA KROMAH (IND)	0.33%	0.33%	0.2–0.4%	YES
CLARENCE MONIBA (LINU)	0.29%	0.30%	0.2–0.4%	YES
DAVID KIAMU (DPPL)	0.28%	0.30%	0.2–0.4%	YES
SHEIKH KOUYATEH (LFM)	0.28%	0.26%	0.2–0.3%	YES
ALEXANDER KOLLIE (RNC)	0.24%	0.27%	0.2–0.3%	YES
SARA BEYSOLOW NYANTI (ALL)	0.20%	0.25%	0.2–0.4%	YES
ROBERT FRANZ MORRIS (IND)	0.18%	0.26%	0.1–0.4%	YES
RICHARD SAYE MILLER (LFP)	0.16%	0.17%	0.1–0.3%	YES
INVALID VOTES	5.88%	5.33%	3.9–6.7%	YES

Sources: NEC Results Portal and LEON Analysis (2023)

On October 24, 2023, NEC officially announced 100% of the election results, confirming that CDC candidate President George W. Weah had secured a narrow simple majority of valid votes with 43.8% over UP candidate Joseph N. Boakai with 43.4%; however, an absolute majority required by the constitution to win the election was not achieved. According to NEC results, CDC Weah received 804,087 valid votes and UP Boakai received 796,961 valid votes among a total of 1,834,516 valid votes (114,639 invalid votes), representing a 78.9% voter turnout and 5.9% invalid vote rate for the first round of the presidential election.

Given that the presidential election was remarkably close between incumbent candidate President Weah and opposition candidate Boakai, Article 83(b) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides that if no candidate obtains the required absolute majority of valid votes (50%+1) to be declared winner in the presidential election, then a runoff election must be held between the two top candidates. After none of the candidates achieved the absolute majority threshold, NEC scheduled a second-round runoff between CDC Weah and UP Boakai presidential candidates for November 14, 2023.

LEON observed that NEC scheduled the runoff election approximately three weeks after the announcement of final results, even though Article 83(b) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides that “a second ballot shall be conducted on the second Tuesday following the expiry of the time provided in Article 83(c).” NEC interpreted Article 83(c) to allow for the seven-day complaint filing period following the announcement of results in addition to the 14-day period provided for in Article 83(b) to produce a three-week period to conduct the presidential runoff election. While some stakeholders questioned this interpretation, no groups challenged NEC’s decision in court, and thus NEC prepared for and conducted the November 14, 2023, runoff election as scheduled across the 15 counties.



LEON announced Oct. 10, 2023, observation findings with national stakeholders and international community, Monrovia (Oct. 18, 2023) (Image by LEON)

13. Election Day Observation–Second Round Presidential Election

13.1 Observer Deployment

On November 14, 2023, and similar to the first round, LEON deployed 1,048 NEC-accredited observers, including 73 LTOs, assigned to each electoral district; 904 STOs, assigned to randomly selected polling places; 53 FCs, assigned to support data collection; and 18 MFOs, assigned to designated counties (see deployment statement, Annex H).³⁷ LEON’s four steering committee members also deployed to monitor electoral proceedings in Monrovia. All observers were fully accredited by NEC. The same polling places were assigned as in the first round for consistency in reporting, continuing to represent a viable statistical presence in all counties. LEON reported the following findings from the presidential runoff election.

³⁷ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: LEON to Observe the Second Round of Liberia’s Presidential Election on November 14, 2023,” (Nov. 12, 2023 [4:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

13.2 Opening of Polls

LEON reported that approximately 98.3% of polling places observed opened within the first 30 minutes from the official poll opening time (see election day opening statement, Annex J).³⁸ This figure is approximately 8% higher than the approximately 89.1% recorded during the October 10, 2023, elections. LEON observed the following findings:

- ◆ **Accessibility of Polling Places:** LEON reported that over 80% of polling places observed were accessible to persons with disabilities. LEON called on NEC to continue improving its polling place identification process so that this figure is 100% during future elections.
- ◆ **Polling Materials:** LEON reported that electoral materials present exceeded 99% at polling places observed. LEON commended NEC for providing these materials to polling precincts.
- ◆ **Display of Ballot Boxes:** LEON reported that ballot boxes were shown to be opened at 99.9% of polling places observed. LEON noted that approximately 33.6% of NEC staff were females at the polling places observed.
- ◆ **Polling Place Staffing:** LEON observed the distribution of males and females among the five positions for electoral officials within a polling place. LEON expressed concern that women constituted a low figure of approximately 16.4% of Presiding Officers at polling places observed. Ballot Issuers and Box Controllers showed greater parity between males and females; however, Identification Officers and Queue Controllers showed a large difference between males and females.
- ◆ **Party Agents and Poll Watchers:** LEON reported the presence of party agents/poll watchers at polling places observed: CDC, with approximately 96.9% and UP with approximately 98%. LEON noted that these figures were higher than CDC's 90% and UP's 84.5% presence as observed during the October 10, 2023, elections.



Citizens voting in Grand Bassa county (Nov. 14, 2023) (Images by LEON)

³⁸ Liberia Elections Observation Network, "LEON's Election Observation: Situational Report for Opening of Polls during 2023 Presidential Runoff Election," (Nov. 14, 2023 [12:45PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

13.3 Voting

LEON observed that a high number of NEC officials appeared to “always” and “mostly” understand and implement the NEC’s procedures during runoff Election Day at the polling places observed (see election day opening statement, Annex J).³⁹ NEC officials “always” adhered to procedures in eight categories; however, in two categories – “Ballot Issuer Explained How to Vote Correctly” and “Voters Left Polling Place After Voting” – compliance was at approximately 78.4% of polling places observed for both points. The remaining six categories ranged between approximately 90.4% and 97.5% of polling places observed. The “mostly” category for the two lower categories was 12.7% and 16.1%, respectively, while the other six categories ranged from 1.8% to 5.2% of polling places observed. The range for combined figures for procedural adherence was a more reassuring 94.5% to 99.3% of polling places observed.

LEON expressed concern that important procedural steps were observed as “sometimes” or “never” being adhered to. For example, observers reported that queue controllers did not check for valid voter cards in approximately 3.1% of polling places, identification officers did not tick voter names on the final registration roll in approximately 3.9% of polling places, and ballot issuers did not explain how to cast a ballot correctly in approximately 3.0% of polling places observed.



Political party agents monitoring voting at NEC polling place, Monrovia (Nov. 14, 2023) (Image by LEON)

Notably, NEC officials improved on explaining the use of the tactile ballot to visually impaired voters with observers noting that the voter aid tool was explained “always” in approximately 90.6% of polling places observed, compared to 77.9% during the October 10, 2023, elections. Queue controllers checking for valid voter card was observed as “always” in approximately 90.4% of polling places observed, compared to 85.3% in the previous elections.

LEON noted that voters departed the polling places “always” and “mostly” at a higher rate of approximately 94.5% compared to the approximately 89.4% of polling places observed during the October 10, 2023, elections.

13.4 Closing of Polls

LEON reported a marked increase in the number of polling places closing on time at 6:00 PM, improving from 30% to 72.6% when compared to the October 10, 2023, elections ((see election day closing statement, Annex K).⁴⁰ The number of polling places closing after 6:31 PM also

³⁹ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Situational Report for Voting, Closing of Polls, and Counting during 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 15, 2023 [2:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

⁴⁰ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Situational Report for Voting, Closing of Polls, and Counting during 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 15, 2023 [2:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

decreased from 42.5% to 3.2%, comparatively. LEON noted that there were no voters in line at 6:00 PM at 70% of polling places observed, which is a large difference from the 27.9% observed during the October 10, 2023, elections. Instances where there were more than 20 voters in line after 7:00 PM also decreased considerably from 38.7% to 5.4%, comparatively.

LEON reported that voters in line at the close of the polls were permitted to vote at approximately 95.9% of polling places observed, an increase from the 89% observed during the October 10, 2023, elections. Notably, the voters not permitted to vote also decreased from 11% to 4.1%, comparatively. LEON noted positively that NEC officials sealed ballot boxes at the end of voting in approximately 99.8% of polling places and packed voting materials away before counting in approximately 96.1% of polling places observed.

LEON assessed the runoff election day process as “very good” at approximately 74.7% or “good” at approximately 23.6% of the polling places observed, with a combined assessment of approximately 98.3% considering the process as good or very good. Observer assessments increased from the 66.2% “very good” but slightly decreased from the 29.9% “good” for a combined increase from the assessment of 96% during the October 10, 2023, elections. LEON commended NEC for continuing to deploy well-trained polling officials who generally adhered to the policies and procedures and delivered a credible presidential runoff election.

13.5 Counting

LEON reported that five key counting procedures were implemented by NEC officials at high rates ranging from approximately 99.3% to 100% at the polling places observed (see election day closing statement, Annex K).⁴¹ LEON noted that presidential counting forms were posted for public viewing at approximately 99.4% of polling places observed.

LEON reported that party agents/poll watchers were present at 99.8% of polling places and they signed the presidential counting forms in approximately 99.9% of polling places observed. LEON noted that agents/ watchers signing the counting forms was a clear sign of acceptance of those results. This high rate of procedural compliance during the counting process provided further confidence that NEC officials performed their duties in a professional and transparent manner among the polling places observed.

13.6 Results Tallying

NEC conducted the results tallying at a faster pace than during the first-round presidential election due to the ballot only containing two options instead of 20 candidates. The 19 NEC tally centers started operations on November 15, and most results (99.6%) were tallied and announced by NEC



*LEON Observer at the Tally Center in Nimba county, Nov. 2023
(Image by LEON)*

⁴¹ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Situational Report for Voting, Closing of Polls, and Counting during 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 15, 2023 [2:00PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

by Friday, November 17, 2023. LEON observed NEC collecting and collating the sealed results forms from the same polling places as during the first-round election as largely compliant with the NEC’s updated procedures that were developed for the runoff election. LEON reported no major issues during the second-round presidential election results tallying, but noted that party agents caused disruptions in the NEC’s Upper and Lower Nimba tally centers due to uncertainty about the complaint filing process.

14. **LEON’s Second-Round Presidential election SBO Findings–November 14, 2023**

At a higher rate of reporting than during the first-round presidential election, LEON’s results analysis during the runoff election, using the SBO methodology, was based on counting data submitted by its observers from 890 of 904 (98.5%) assigned polling places (see results statement, Annex L).⁴² By statistical principles, the actual result for each candidate could have fallen anywhere within the estimated ranges listed below; however, the NEC’s official results, when compared against LEON’s estimated midpoint of expected results for each candidate, again demonstrated consistency between the two sets of results data, which can give the public greater confidence in the results:

CANDIDATE	NEC RESULTS (100%)	LEON ESTIMATED % MIDPOINT	LEON ESTIMATED % RANGE	CONSISTENT
JOSEPH N. BOAKAI (UP)	50.64%	50.14%	48.8%–51.5%	Yes
GEORGE MANNEH WEAH (CDC)	49.36%	49.86%	48.5%–51.2%	Yes
INVALID VOTES	1.58%	1.59%	1.49%–1.7%	Yes

Sources: NEC Results Portal and LEON Analysis (2023)

On Friday night, November 17, 2023, after NEC announced 99.6% of the preliminary results that showed UP candidate Boakai leading the runoff election, CDC candidate President Weah conceded the race with a statement delivered live to local television and radio stations. LEON commends President Weah for his grace and dignity in accepting the results and not seeking to delay the results process with complaints or other measures. LEON observed that tensions among supporters from both CDC and UP were high that night and the concession and call for acceptance of the results by President Weah likely mitigated the risk of a political crisis.

On November 18, 2023, NEC conducted a rerun election for a polling place in Nimba county (Varmie Public School Polling Place No. 4, Polling Precinct No. 33090, Electoral District No. 9) due to an irregularity revealed during the tallying process. NEC discovered 50 more ballots than registered voters, which triggered NEC protocols and led to the Board of Commissioners to order a rerun election. LEON observed that turnout was low (17.3%), when compared to the range of turnout on election day in the four other polling places at this precinct (53.1–69%).

On November 20, 2023, NEC officially announced 100% of the election results, confirming that UP candidate Boakai had in fact won the election by the narrow margin of 1.3% (20,567

⁴² Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s Election Observation: Situational Report on the Outcome of Results from the 2023 Presidential Runoff Election,” (Nov. 18, 2023 [10:00AM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

valid votes). According to NEC results, UP Boakai received 814,481 valid votes and CDC Weah received 793,914 valid votes among a total of 1,608,395 valid votes, representing a 66.1% voter turnout for the runoff election.

VI. ELECTORAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION–COMPLAINTS

The Liberian legislative elections are conducted using a first-past-the-post electoral system, which contributes to some political parties and candidates feeling dissatisfied with the announced outcome of senatorial and representative elections. The presidential election requires an absolute majority and provides for a runoff mechanism between the top two candidates with the most valid votes. The legal framework provides disaffected parties with a recourse by filing formal complaints to NEC on specific election issues and allowing for an appeal taken first to the NEC Board of Commissioners and a second appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia as the final arbiter of disputes. LEON notes that the administrative and court bodies are intended to address complaints promptly and properly to deliver its decisions.

15. Competent Bodies to Hear Complaints

NEC has a legal section at its central office responsible for performing all legal duties related to the administration of the elections law. Sections 2.13 and 2.14 of the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014) gives the NEC Board of Commissioners the exclusive power to appoint legal counsel and research officers at the legal section by an open and transparent selection process. One of the two appointed legal counsels is the Head of the Legal Section. Except for research officers who may be an attorney-at-law, anyone appointed as legal counsel must be a qualified lawyer and meet the status of Counselor-at-Law, and must have practiced for not less than five years prior to their appointment. The 19 county-level election magistrates serve as liaison between NEC headquarters and the county or district they represent relating to administrative and operational election matters, including being the first recipient of electoral complaints.

The legal framework provides for four levels of administrative and judicial recourse for filing complaints during the presidential and legislative elections. In the first instance, the election magistrates are empowered to receive and decide complaints. In the second instance, NEC may appoint hearing officers to assess, investigate, and assist magistrates to determine complaints, and a chief hearing officer to make an initial determination on complaints to the commission. In the third instance, complainants can appeal the hearing officer’s decision to the NEC’s Board of Commissioners. The board consists of a chairperson, co-chairperson, and five other commissioners; each with oversight of assigned political subdivisions, with the chairperson having oversight of the most populous region. The fourth and final instance is the Supreme Court of Liberia, with any appeal required within 48 hours of a formal decision at any stage of the proceedings. A complainant must first exhaust all remedies available from NEC, and NEC must issue an adverse decision before a complainant may proceed to the Supreme Court.

LEON notes that NEC’s 2023 complaints regulation, only gives grounds to political parties, coalitions, and independent candidates that have had good standing with the commission to file a complaint relating to the conduct of the presidential and legislative elections. LEON observed that this regulation does not conform to Section 5.9 of the 1986 NEL (Amended 2014), which provides that “a voter, candidate, or registered political party may file a complaint with the commission alleging that an offence against the constitution or elections law or a violation of

a regulation issued by the commission has occurred in connection with the administration of an election, during any stage of the election.”

16. Pre-election Electoral Dispute Resolution

During candidate nomination for the 2023 presidential and legislative elections, NEC received 50 objection cases against aspirants between June 14 and July 14, 2023. LEON observed several candidate objection complaints being dismissed during the candidate nomination period because the complainants did not meet the NEC’s regulatory standard for filing complaints with the commission.

17. Post-first-round Electoral Dispute Resolution

LEON tracked formal electoral complaints received by NEC that alleged various irregularities from the October 10, 2023, presidential and legislative elections. According to LEON’s analysis, the complaints included claims of late opening of polling centers, late counting, denial of complaint forms, shortages of poll workers, improper counting of valid votes, election day campaigning, altering of vote counts, and refusal to give party agents copies of the record of count forms, among others. Several complaints requested relief with a recount and/or rerun of certain senatorial and representative elections.

17.1 Presidential Election Complaint

Regarding the presidential election, LEON observed that NEC received two letters but not formal complaints that raised issues around the conduct of the election. In the first instance, a joint letter, signed by the standard bearers of the ALL, CPP, and LINU parties, was sent to NEC on October 21, 2023, expressing deep concerns about the announced results of the October 10, 2023, elections and requesting forensic examination of the ballot papers at the parties’ own expense.⁴³ In the second instance, opposition UP wrote NEC on October 24, 2023, with its observations from the first-round election, indicating that there is “cause for concern,”⁴⁴ citing among others the “unusually high number of invalid votes, attempts to alter vote counts, delays in tallying, and stolen ballot boxes.” LEON is unaware of any NEC statement or response to either letter from opposition political parties.

There was only one formal complaint filed against the presidential election. LEON observed that NEC’s Board of Commissioners heard arguments related to a complaint and appeal by the Vision for Liberia Transformation Party (VOLT), claiming its presidential run was affected by NEC mislabeling the name of its party on the ballot for the name of another party. Even though the VOLT logo was correct on the ballot, the name of the party was incorrect, with the ballot showing “Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM).” NEC dismissed the complaint and appeal based on failure of the complainant to show sufficient legal authorization to file a complaint, the complainant having validated the model ballot with the party’s name in error with his signature, and that the combined results of the two affected parties would not affect the outcome of the election.

⁴³ Cummings A., Nyanti S., Moniba C., “Request for forensic examination of the ballot papers” to Madam Davidetta Browne Lansanah, Chairperson, National Elections Commission of Liberia (Oct. 21, 2023).

⁴⁴ Tweh, A. “Unity party’s observation on the conduct of the October 10, 2023 elections” to Madam Davidetta Browne Lansanah, Chairperson, National Elections Commission of Liberia (Oct. 24, 2023).

Initially, VOLT’s chairperson indicated he would file an appeal to the Supreme Court, which if accepted, could have delayed the runoff election date. On November 10, 2023, VOLT announced that it would not seek redress from the Supreme Court, paving the way for the runoff election to take place as scheduled on November 14, 2023.

LEON notes that NEC did not take responsibility for the party name error in the first place in its formal decision, and NEC should have been more diligent in quality checking such an important document like the presidential election ballot.



*VOLT ballot sample signed by Chairperson, Nov. 2023
(Image by NEC)*

17.2 Legislative Election Complaints

Following the conduct of the October 10, 2023, general elections, NEC received official complaints filed by political parties and independent candidates on the returns of the elections. Among the 57 cases filed with NEC, 23 were appealed to the Board of Commissioners and 10 of those were appealed to the Supreme Court. Among the 13 cases decided by the Board of Commissioners and not appealed to the Supreme Court, eight were not perfected, four were withdrawn, and one was concluded. All 23 cases before the Board of Commissioners were largely filed based on claims of irregularities and fraud. Among the 10 Supreme Court cases, the court ruled that six winners be certificated, ordered recounts for two polling places in two separate representative elections, and ordered a rerun in two polling places for one representative election, while one appeal was not perfected.

LEON assessed the 2023 EDR process following the presidential and legislative elections as more effective compared to the 2017 general elections. The total number of complaints filed related to the legislative elections decreased from 89 in 2017⁴⁵ to 57⁴⁶ in 2023, with only one complaint, compared to two in 2017, related to the presidential election. All election disputes followed the established EDR procedures, starting from presiding officers to the county magistrates, hearing officers, Board of Commissioners, and finally, the Supreme Court, where final decisions were rendered. Unlike in 2017, the 2023 EDR was implemented with no threat to legislative certification or presidential inauguration. LEON notes the legal timeline provided for EDR was exceeded in 2023 and has been historically inadequate and future electoral reform should consider extending the timeline to enable consistent compliance.

17.3 Court-Ordered Reruns and Recounts

By January 2024, the Supreme Court issued five decisions for one rerun in Maryland county, three recounts in Nimba, Grand Bassa, and Rivercess counties; one case dismissal in Grand

⁴⁵ The Carter Center. “Election Report: national Elections in Liberia, Fall 2017, Final Report,” (2018): p. 76 <<https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/liberia-121018.html>>.

⁴⁶ Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), “Final Observation Report: General Elections 2023,” Liberia Independent Domestic Election Observation (LIDEO) Activity (May 2024): p. 14.

Bassa county (District No. 2). NEC conducted these four events to complete the remaining legal challenges from the 2023 legislative elections. LEON observed the rerun and recounts and reported no major issues. The results of all four events reaffirmed the declared winners.

LEON observed the Supreme Court-ordered rerun for two polling places in the House of Representatives election in District No. 2, Maryland county, on January 25, 2024. The total registered voters are 960. LEON observed high tension and tight security presence at each polling place. The winning candidate originally declared by NEC, Anthony F. Williams (UP), had his victory reaffirmed by defeating his opponent, former-House Speaker Bhofal Chambers (CDC), by 84 votes, with a gain of three votes from the October 10, 2023, election results.

LEON observed the Supreme Court-ordered recount in the House of Representative election in District No. 4, Nimba county, on January 19, 2024. Strangely, the recount showed an increase in votes for the declared winner, Ernest Manseah (MDR), from a margin of five to 479 valid votes. Agents for contesting candidate, Gonpue Kargon (CDC), boycotted the process in the middle of the recount, claiming ballot box seals had been changed. LEON notes that such a large change in valid votes during a recount is abnormal and raises unanswered questions on why there was such a large discrepancy during the initial counting on October 10, 2023.

LEON observed the Supreme Court-ordered recounts in the House of Representatives elections in District No. 2, Rivercess county and District No. 5, Grand Bassa county. The Rivercess recount started on January 23 and ended on January 24, 2024. The results in Rivercess showed NEC's previously declared winner, Steve Tequah (IND), maintaining his lead over his challenger, Ruth Sawmadal (CDC), by 633 votes.

The Grand Bassa recount started on January 23 and ended on January 26, 2024. In the Grand Bassa election, NEC declared winner, Thomas Goshua (CPP), maintained his lead over his challenger, Juah Setro Dennis (UP), after the recount but with the winning margin falling from 49 to 29 valid votes during the recount. LEON observed that none of the candidates were given access to the complaint sheet.

18. Post-second-round Electoral Dispute Resolution

After the presidential runoff election on November 14, 2023, the CDC party filed a complaint with NEC against the UP party on November 16, 2023, alleging ballot stuffing in Nimba county.⁴⁷ After the November 17, 2023, concession of the election by former President Weah, CDC did not pursue this complaint, and it expired on the seventh day following the announcement of official results. Agents for UP filed a complaint with the Grand Kru NEC election magistrate on November 16, 2023, but the claim of excessive balloting was researched and rejected by NEC and a decision issued with no change to the results.

19. Election Winner Certification

NEC certificated 73 of 88 winning candidates from the 2023 legislative elections on December 8, 2023 at the Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Ministerial complex in Congo Town. LEON observed that the certification program was graced by representatives from the United Nations Liberia,

⁴⁷ Coalition for Democratic Change, Letter to Multon G. Paye, Election Magistrate, Upper Nimba County, National Elections Commission, "Official Complaint of Elections Irregularities Observed during the 2023 Presidential Run-off Elections in Nimba County," (Nov. 16, 2023).

ECOWAS, ECC, NSCE, National Civil Society Organization, representatives of diplomatic missions, and the Monrovia community mass choir.

The NEC chairperson said the remaining 15 winners of the senatorial representative elections would be certificated following the completion of complaint cases arising from the conduct of the elections. NEC certificated the winner of the presidential run-off election on December 26, 2023. The remaining legislative winners were certificated in January 2024 after all court challenges were resolved.

VII. POST-ELECTION DATA ANALYSIS

20. Presidential Election Voter Turnout Trends—First and Second Rounds

All Liberian presidential elections since 2005 required a runoff election, demonstrating the difficulty of one political party securing an absolute majority from the electorate. LEON researched comparative voter turnout data between 2005 and 2023, showing that both the 2023 first- and second-round presidential election turnouts were the highest since 2005. Previously, turnout for a second-round election had decreased by 13% or more during each runoff election.

Election	First Round Turnout	Second Round Turnout	Percent Decrease
2005 Presidential	74.9%	61%	(13.9%)
2011 Presidential	71.6%	38.6%	(33%)
2017 Presidential	75.2%	55.8%	(19.4%)
2023 Presidential	78.9%	66.1%	(12.8%)

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023)

LEON commends the Liberian electorate for a record high turnout during the first-round presidential election with 78.9% in 2023, topping the record of 75.2% in 2017. According to NEC, three counties – Bomi, Bong, and Nimba – reached over 80% in voter turnout.

First-round Presidential Election Turnout Data

County	Valid Votes	Invalid Votes	Total Valid and Invalid Votes	Registered Voters in County	Percentage
Bomi	48,170	2,755	50,925	63,112	80.69%
Bong	175,795	16,578	192,373	234,787	81.94%
Grand Bassa	105,280	11,397	116,677	158,463	73.63%
Grand Cape Mount	60,927	4,211	65,138	86,529	75.28%
Grand Gedeh	44,457	2,653	47,110	63,942	73.68%
Grand Kru	30,722	2,678	33,400	42,396	78.78%
Lofa	131,336	7,709	139,045	177,129	78.50%
Margibi	134,741	8,864	143,605	185,301	77.50%
Maryland	49,014	4,393	53,407	67,600	79.00%
Montserrado	692,999	26,539	719,538	901,162	79.85%
Nimba	231,930	16,422	248,352	307,254	80.83%
Rivercess	26,320	2,688	29,008	39,941	72.63%
Sinoe	37,949	3,023	40,972	55,579	73.72%
River Gee	27,366	2,346	29,712	37,807	78.59%
Gbarpolu	37,510	2,383	39,893	50,615	78.82%
TOTAL	1,834,516	114,639	1,949,155	2,471,617	78.86%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023)

Prior to the 2023 presidential runoff election, LEON considered the question whether voters would return to the polls in similar numbers. Over the past three runoff elections, the turnout decreased by 13.9% in 2005, 33% in 2011, and 19.4% in 2017.

During the runoff campaign, CDC and UP candidates competed to maintain their momentum, convince voters to turnout again, and attract voters who supported other candidates in the hope of overcoming the tight difference from the first-round election. During the 2023 runoff election, the turnout was the highest since 2005 at 66.1% with the lowest decrease of 12.8%.

Second-round Presidential Election Turnout Data

County	Valid Votes (a)	Invalid Votes (b)	Total Valid and Invalid Votes (c) = (a)+(b)	Total Registered Voters in County (f)	Percentage of Total Votes vs Registered Voters in County (g) = (c) / (f)
Bomi	39,179	531	39,710	63,112	62.92%
Bong	136,353	2,742	139,095	234,787	59.24%
Gbarpolu	29,471	678	30,149	50,615	59.57%
Grand Bassa	80,727	1,827	82,554	158,463	52.10%
Grand Cape Mount	46,839	913	47,752	86,529	55.19%
Grand Gedeh	43,430	832	44,262	63,942	69.22%
Grand Kru	31,784	583	32,367	42,396	76.34%
Lofa	116,671	2,067	118,738	177,129	67.03%
Margibi	118,836	1,881	120,717	185,301	65.15%
Maryland	42,412	1,152	43,564	67,600	64.44%
Montserrado	651,009	6,984	657,993	901,162	73.02%
Nimba	195,099	3,801	198,900	307,254	64.73%
River Gee	23,592	520	24,112	37,807	63.78%
Rivercess	20,779	572	21,351	39,941	53.46%
Sinoe	32,214	705	32,919	55,579	59.23%
TOTAL	1,608,395	25,788	1,634,183	2,471,617	66.12%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023)

LEON notes that a comparative analysis between the number of valid votes secured by the two leading presidential candidates shows that during the second round the UP candidate Boakai was able to erase the first-round difference of 7,126 valid votes that had enabled the CDC candidate President Weah to achieve a simple majority. During the second round, the CDC candidate received 10,173 less valid votes between the first (804,087) and second (793,914) rounds, while the UP candidate received 17,520 more valid votes between the first (796,961) and second (814,481) rounds.

LEON observed that the decrease from the first-round turnout of 78.9% (1,834,516 valid votes) to the second-round turnout of 66.1% (1,608,395 valid votes) was 226,121 valid votes. There was also a substantial decrease in the number of first-round invalid votes from 5.9% (114,639) to 1.6% (25,788). The decreases in both voter turnout and invalid votes resulted in the UP candidate Boakai winning the election by a narrow margin of 1.3% (20,567 valid votes).

21. Legislative Elections Voter Turnout Trends

The legislature in Liberia consists of an upper house (with 30 senators) and lower house (with 73 representatives). The 2005 general elections were the first elections after the civil war ended in 2003 and 15 senators were elected for nine-year terms and 15 were elected for six-year terms to enable offsetting senatorial elections going forward. Since 2011, general elections include 15 of 30 senatorial seats with one from each county, all 73 representative seats from each

electoral district, and the presidential seat for the country. A mid-term election is held for 15 of 30 senatorial seats from each county, along with any periodic by-elections that may be required.

Since 2011, the senatorial elections are divided into two separate events with 15 seats at stake during each election. In 2011, general elections were conducted that included the 15 senatorial seats with six-year terms that were elected in 2005. In 2014, a special senatorial election was conducted for the 15 seats with nine-year terms that were elected in 2005. In 2020, a mid-term senatorial election was conducted for 15 seats that were elected for nine-year terms in 2011. As a result, no senatorial seats were contested in 2017, as both groups of seats are on nine-year electoral cycles. In 2023, the general elections were conducted for 15 seats that were elected for nine-year terms in 2014. The next two senatorial elections will be held during the 2029 general and 2032 mid-term elections, respectively.

Presidential and Legislative Electoral Cycles–2005-32

Election	Seat	Term Start	Term End	Note
General	Presidential	2005	2011	1 seat (6 years)
General	Senatorial (Sr.)	2005	2014	15 seats (9 years)
General	Senatorial (Jr.)	2005	2011	15 seats (6 years)
General	Representative	2005	2011	64 seats (6 years)
General	Presidential	2011	2017	1 seat (6 years)
General	Senatorial	2011	2020	15 seats (9 years)
General	Representative	2011	2017	73 seats (6 years)
Special	Senatorial	2014	2023	15 seats (9 years)
General	Presidential	2017	2023	1 seat (6 years)
General	Representative	2017	2023	73 seats (6 years)
Mid-term	Senatorial	2020	2029	15 seats (9 years)
General	Presidential	2023	2029	1 seat (6 years)
General	Senatorial	2023	2032	15 seats (9 years)
General	Representative	2023	2029	73 seats (6 years)

Source: NEC Results Portal (2024)

The 2014 special and 2020 mid-term senatorial elections recorded substantially lower voter turnout than during senate elections conducted during general elections. Voter turnout during representative elections have recorded more than 70% since 2011, with the highest rate of 78.1% achieved during the 2023 general elections.

Comparative National Senatorial and Representative Elections Turnout 2005-23

Senatorial Elections	Year	Turnout	Turnout %	Representative Elections	Year	Turnout	Turnout %
Joint-Senatorial Elections (x30 seats)	2005	1,722,108	78.6%	Representative Elections	2005	1,291,541	76.5%

Senatorial Elections	Year	Turnout	Turnout %	Representative Elections	Year	Turnout	Turnout %
General Senatorial Elections (x15 seats)	2011	1,283,087	71.3%	Representative Elections	2011	1,274,186	70.8%
Special Senatorial Elections (x15 seats)	2014	479,936	25.2%	No Representative Elections	--	--	--
No Senatorial Elections	2017	--	--	Representative Elections	2017	1,622,929	74.3%
Mid-term Senatorial Elections (x15 seats)	2020	9,26,773	37.4%	No Representative Elections	--	--	--
General Senatorial Elections (x15 seats)	2023	1,940,857	78.5%	Representative Elections	2023	1,930,972	78.1%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

During periodic by-elections, voter turnout is substantially lower than during general elections. Senatorial by-elections are county-based and attract higher turnout than the district-based representative elections.

Comparative National Legislative By-election Turnout–2018-24

Election	Year	Turnout	Turnout %	Elections	Year	Turnout	Turnout %
Senate	2018	202,435	19.57%	Representative	2018	15,634	0.72%
Senate	2019	25,759	38.8%%	Representative	2020	34,380	1.39%
Senate	2022	62,519	33.39%	Representative	2021	42,772	1.73%
Senate	2024	115,435	37.57%	Representative	2024	10,536	0.43%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

LEON analyzed the 2023 senatorial and representative election results and observed a high rate of turnover from incumbents to new legislators. Among the 15 senate races at stake, 11 of 15 (73%) seats were won by a challenging candidate. Among the 73 representative races, 55 of 73 (75.3%) seats were won by a challenging candidate. LEON assessed that these substantial turnover rates indicate that the electorate were dissatisfied with the sitting legislators and replaced them with new legislative representatives.

22. Comparative Invalid Vote Analysis

22.1 2023 First and Second Rounds of Presidential Elections

During the first round of the 2023 presidential election, NEC reported a total of 114,639 (5.9%) invalid votes from among all ballots cast,⁴⁸ which is an increase from the 88,574 (5.4%) recorded during the first round of the 2017 presidential election. LEON notes that a numeric increase can be expected given that more voters were registered since the previous election in 2017; however, the slight percentage increase is concerning as it indicates that many voters are still not marking their ballots correctly. Liberia’s national average for invalid votes of 5.9%, when compared to an estimated average of 4.3% for invalid votes during national elections held globally since 2000,⁴⁹ demonstrates that this phenomenon requires more concerted efforts by all electoral stakeholders to address the invalid vote issue.

After the official results from the 2023 presidential election first round election, LEON analyzed and compared the invalid votes to the 2017 presidential election. LEON observed that 14 of 15 counties increased in the number of invalid votes (except for Grand Kru) in 2023. Notably, 8 of 15 counties increased by less than 1% compared to invalid votes in 2017, and thus the increase is marginal and consistent with the previous election. Conversely, in 6 of 15 counties, there were increases between 1.3% and 3% in Bong, Rivercess, River Gee, Sinoe, and Maryland counties, with Grand Bassa county spiking by 3% to reach an alarming rate of 9.8% of all presidential ballots cast. In contrast, Grand Kru county decreased its number of invalid ballots from the high rate of 9.1% in 2017 to a still concerning rate of 8% in 2023.



Invalid Ballot per Presidential Election



Percentage county distribution of invalid votes 2017 & 2023 presidential elections



Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

During the second round of the presidential election, the total turnout was 1,634,183 (66.1%), but the invalid votes were substantially lower at 25,788 (1.9%) of the overall votes cast. LEON notes in the following table that six counties (in color below) recorded a 5% or more decrease in invalid votes between first and second rounds of the presidential election.

⁴⁸ National Tally, 2023 Presidential Elections Results; National Election Commission of Liberia [National Elections Commission - Results Portal \(necliberia.org\)](https://necliberia.org).

⁴⁹ “What is a ‘normal threshold’ of invalid votes?” *Ace Project – The Electoral Knowledge Network*, citing International IDEA Voter Turnout Database (accessed on Nov. 11, 2023) <<https://aceproject.org/today/forum/spotlight-on/what-is-a-normal-threshold-of-invalid>>.

Invalid Votes during 2023 First and Second Rounds of Presidential Election

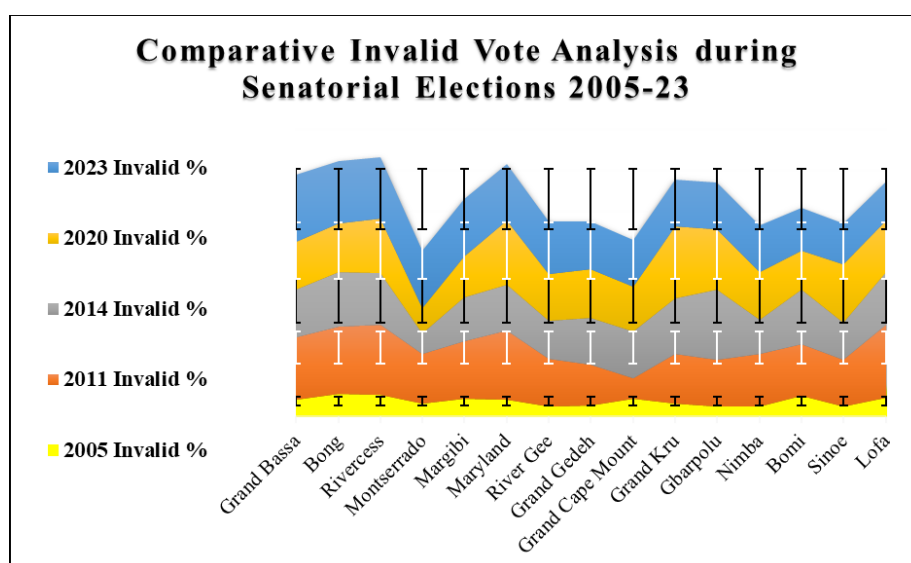
County	1st Rd	2nd Rd	County	1st Rd	2nd Rd
Bomi	5.4%	1.3%	Margibi	6.2%	1.6%
Bong	8.6%	2.0%	Maryland	6.2%	1.6%
Gbarpolu	6.0%	2.2%	Montserrado	3.7%	1.1%
Grand Bassa	9.8%	2.2%	Nimba	6.6%	1.9%
Grand Cape Mount	6.5%	1.9%	River Gee	7.9%	2.2%
Grand Gedeh	5.6%	1.9%	Rivercess	9.3%	2.7%
Grand Kru	8.0%	1.8%	Sinoe	7.4%	2.1%
Lofa	5.5%	1.7%	TOTAL	6.9%	1.9%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

22.2 Senatorial Elections Invalid Vote Analysis

LEON notes that the pattern of invalid votes during senatorial elections depends on whether the election was conducted during “general,” “special,” or “mid-term” elections. LEON analyzed the percentage of invalid votes during the five sets of elections held between 2005 and 2023 and observed that during the 2011 and 2023 general elections, the average turnout was over 71.3% and 78.5%, respectively, while the average invalid votes were higher at 6.6% and 6.3% per each election. During the 2014 special elections and 2020 mid-term elections, however, when average turnout was 25.2% and 37.4%, respectively, the average invalid votes were lower at 5.7% and 6.1% per each election. The 2005 general elections is an outlier with the lowest average rate of invalid votes recorded at 1.9% with 78.6% average turnout, when voters selected 30 senators but for different terms of office for the first and last time to enable off-setting senatorial elections with 15 seats at stake per electoral cycle for nine-year terms.

The following graph illustrates the peaks and valleys of invalid votes during the five national elections conducted by the 15 counties since 2005. The county data is ordered from high to low based on the 2023 general elections to enable an election-by-election comparison. The associated data table provides the precise invalid votes by county by election.



Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

Comparative Invalid Vote Analysis during Senatorial Elections 2005-23 (Sorted High to Low by 2023)

County	2005	Invalid %	2011	Invalid %	2014	Invalid %	2020	Invalid %	2023	Invalid %
Grand Bassa	2,526	2.1%	6,127	7.6%	1,749	5.8%	3,385	5.9%	9,556	8.2%
Bong	5,075	2.8%	10,194	8.2%	2,761	6.6%	4,891	6%	14,587	7.6%
Rivercess	560	2.6%	1,634	8.6%	580	6.3%	1,014	6.7%	2,149	7.5%
Montserrado	10,438	1.6%	28,034	6%	3,378	2.6%	10,327	3%	51,001	7.1%
Margibi	2,673	2.2%	5,993	7%	1,470	5.4%	3,096	5%	9,939	7.0%
Maryland	1,003	2.1%	2,656	8.4%	950	5.6%	2,109	7.9%	3,686	6.9%
River Gee	351	1.2%	1,118	5.9%	496	4.6%	901	5.7%	1,886	6.4%
Grand Gedeh	558	1.3%	1,612	5.1%	1,042	5.7%	1,280	5.9%	2,786	5.9%
Grand Cape Mount	974	2.2%	1,001	2.5%	1,331	5.7%	1,745	5.5%	3,716	5.7%
Grand Kru	347	1.6%	1,186	6%	924	6.9%	1,561	8.8%	1,886	5.7%
Gbarpolu	266	1.2%	1,485	5.7%	1,091	8.6%	1,518	7.4%	2,243	5.7%
Nimba	2,879	1.2%	11,233	6.4%	2,495	4.2%	6,592	5.9%	14,066	5.7%
Bomi	1,129	2.5%	2,295	6.4%	1,338	6.6%	1,525	4.8%	2,603	5.2%
Sinoe	373	1.2%	1,396	5.7%	647	4.6%	1,302	7.1%	2,037	5.0%
Lofa	2,054	2.3%	8,970	8.9%	3,414	6.5%	4,338	6.3%	6,553	4.7%
TOTAL	31,206	1.9%	84,934	6.6%	23,666	5.7%	45,584	6.1%	128,694	6.3%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

LEON's analysis shows that only 5 of 15 counties increased in the number of invalid votes when comparing 2011 to 2023 general elections, and 8 of 15 counties showed improvement with decreasing invalid votes, while two counties – Margibi and Gbarpolu – remained the same.

Comparative Invalid Vote Analysis General Senatorial Elections 2011 and 2023 (Sorted by High to Low 2023 County Data)

County	2011	%	2023	%	County	2011	%	2023	%
Grand Bassa	6,127	7.6%	9,556	8.2%	Grand Cape Mount	1,001	2.5%	3,716	5.7%
Bong	10,194	8.2%	14,587	7.6%	Grand Kru	1,186	6.0%	1,886	5.7%
Rivercess	1,634	8.6%	2,149	7.5%	Gbarpolu	1,485	5.7%	2,243	5.7%
Montserrado	28,034	6.0%	51,001	7.1%	Nimba	11,233	6.4%	14,066	5.7%
Margibi	5,993	7.0%	9,939	7.0%	Bomi	2,295	6.4%	2,603	5.2%
Maryland	2,656	8.4%	3,686	6.9%	Sinoe	1,396	5.7%	2,037	5.0%
River Gee	1,118	5.9%	1,886	6.4%	Lofa	8,970	8.9%	6,553	4.7%
Grand Gedeh	1,612	5.1%	2,786	5.9%	TOTAL	84,934	6.6%	128,694	6.3%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

Conversely, during the 2014 special and 2020 mid-term senatorial elections, only 6 of 15 counties decreased its invalid votes, while 9 of 15 counties increased its invalid votes.

Comparative Invalid Vote Analysis General Senatorial Elections 2014 and 2020 (Sorted by High to Low 2023 County Data)

County	2014	%	2020	%	County	2014	%	2020	%
Grand Bassa	1,749	5.8%	3,385	5.9%	Grand Cape Mount	1,331	5.7%	1,745	5.5%
Bong	2,761	6.6%	4,891	6.0%	Grand Kru	924	6.9%	1,561	8.8%
Rivercess	580	6.3%	1,014	6.7%	Gbarpolu	1,091	8.6%	1,518	7.4%
Montserrado	3,378	2.6%	10,327	3.0%	Nimba	2,495	4.2%	6,592	5.9%
Margibi	1,470	5.4%	3,096	5.0%	Bomi	1,338	6.6%	1,525	4.8%
Maryland	950	5.6%	2,109	7.9%	Sinoe	647	4.6%	1,302	7.1%
River Gee	496	4.6%	901	5.7%	Lofa	3,414	6.5%	4,338	6.3%
Grand Gedeh	1,042	5.7%	1,280	5.9%	TOTAL	23,666	5.7%	45,584	6.1%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

The 2029 general senatorial elections will test this pattern of turnout to invalid votes to determine if a higher number of ballots cast overall could be related to the higher number of invalid ballots cast by a higher number of voters.

22.3 Representative Elections Invalid Vote Analysis

LEON analyzed that during the 2017 representative elections, 5.3% of all votes cast were invalid compared to the 2023 representative elections, when 6.1% of all votes cast were invalid for a marginal increase of 0.8%. LEON notes that 8 of 15 counties recorded 5% or higher invalid votes during both elections and 12 of 15 counties recorded an increase in the number of invalid votes cast between 2017 and 2023. The first through third highest counties for invalid votes in 2023 are Grand Bassa (8.2%), Rivercess (7.7%), and Bong (7%). Only 3 of 15 counties decreased (see green color below) in the number of invalid votes between the 2017 and 2023 general elections.

Comparative Invalid Votes during 2017 and 2023 Representative Elections

County	2017	%	2023	%	County	2017	%	2023	%
Bomi	1,788	4.0%	2,370	4.7%	Margibi	6,409	5.7%	9,333	6.6%
Bong	9,787	6.0%	13,261	7.0%	Maryland	2,636	6.5%	3,558	6.7%
Grand Bassa	6,634	6.3%	9,470	8.2%	Montserrado	26,680	4.6%	40,733	5.7%
Gbarpolu	1,714	4.7%	2,087	5.3%	Nimba	11,458	5.4%	13,012	5.3%
Grand Cape Mount	2,711	5.3%	3,471	5.4%	Rivercess	1,529	6.1%	2,217	7.7%
Grand Gedeh	1,846	4.5%	2,786	6.0%	River Gee	1,198	4.7%	1,862	6.3%
Grand Kru	1,824	7.1%	2,015	6.1%	Sinoe	1,568	4.6%	2,283	5.6%
Lofa	5,645	4.6%	5,977	4.3%	TOTAL	83,428	5.3%	114,435	6.1%

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

22.4 2023 Presidential Election District-level Invalid Vote Analysis

LEON analyzed the first-round presidential election invalid vote data from all 73 electoral districts within the 15 counties. Most invalid votes numbered greater than or equal to 1,000 voters per electoral district in 39 of 73 (53.4%) of the districts. Invalid votes were less than or equal to 1,000 votes per electoral district in 19 of 73 (26%) of the districts. Montserrado county recorded an alarming 10 of 17 (58.8%) districts with greater than or equal to both 2,000 and 3,000 invalid voters per electoral district.

LEON notes that NEC and other electoral stakeholders could use the following table to identify the priority districts—especially in Montserrado—that require greater civic and voter education and other efforts to address the invalid vote issue and enable more citizens to cast votes that count for their candidates.

Distribution of Invalid Votes by County and Electoral District for the First Round of the 2023 Presidential Election

County	Invalid Voted ≤ 1,000 Votes By District	Invalid Votes Above ≥ 1,000 Votes By District	Invalid Votes Above ≥ 2,000 Votes By District	Invalid Votes Above ≥ 3,000 Votes By District
Bomi	D1, D2	D3	--	--
Bong	--	D1, D2, D3, D4, D6	D5, D7	--
Gbarpolu	D1, D2, D3	-	--	--
Grand Bassa	--	D1, D3, D4, D5	D2	--
Grand Cape Mount	D1	D2, D3	--	--
Grand Gedeh	D1, D2, D3	-	--	--
Grand Kru	D1	D2	--	--
Lofa	D2, D3	D1, D4, D5	--	--
Margibi	--	D2, D3, D4, D5	--	D1
Maryland	--	D1, D2, D3	--	--
Montserrado	--	D7, D8, D9, D10, D14, D15, D16	D3, D5, D6, D12, D13	D1, D2, D4, D11, D17
Nimba	D9	D1, D3, D4, D5, D6, D7, D8	D2	--
Rivercess	--	D1, D2	--	--
River Gee	D1, D2, D3	--	--	--
Sinoe	D1, D2, D3	--	--	--
TOTAL	19 of 73 (26%)	39 of 73 (53.4%)	9 of 73 (12.3%)	6 of 73 (0.8%)

Source: NEC Results Portal (2023–24)

22.5 LEON’s Observation on Reasons for Invalid Votes

In May 2023, LEON published an analysis of invalid votes and electoral participation based on NEC data from the 2017 general elections, 2020 senatorial election and constitutional referendum, and 2021 legislative by-elections.⁵⁰ LEON’s analysis reveals that all 15 counties deserve special attention, but especially Montserrado, Nimba, and Bong counties.

LEON found in its report and continues to maintain that presidential and legislative elections show how a high number of invalid votes may be indicative of several perennial issues. These include challenges with civic and voter education among first-time, illiterate, and elderly voters, resulting in voters not understanding how to mark their ballot properly. Research also shows that poorly designed ballot papers can result in voter confusion and incorrect marking. Additional issues are voter rejection of the choices presented on the ballot and voter confusion

⁵⁰ “Data Driven Election Reform Advocacy to Increase Participation and Inclusion: The Case of Invalid Votes and Electoral Participation in Liberia,” *Liberia Elections Observation Network (LEON)* (May 2023) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

from handling multiple ballot papers (presidential, senatorial, and representative ballots) inside the polling booth. Research also notes that the use of ink finger-print pads inside the polling booth can leave inadvertent and disqualifying marks on the ballots.⁵¹

LEON calls on NEC, political parties, civil society organizations, and other groups to provide greater and more targeted civic and voter education to citizens on how to mark their ballots properly and empower them to have their votes count.

VIII. POST-ELECTION OBSERVATION

During the period following the 2023 runoff election, LEON continued observing and analyzing the electoral environment by conducting a post-election public perception survey in December 2023. LEON also monitored the transition from the previous to new presidential administration from November 2023 and subsequent presidential inauguration and opening of the legislature in January 2024. LEON also observed the legislative by-elections in April 2024.

23. LEON's Post-election Survey–Summary

LEON assigned the 73 LTOs assigned to each of the electoral districts to conduct a post-election survey to provide insight into citizens' perspectives on the 2023 general elections and their expectations for the newly elected administration.⁵² The survey involved disaggregating data by county, gender, and geo-position to provide a clearer understanding of sentiments.

Demographic alignment of counties' participation showed that Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi, and Grand Bassa had more citizens participating in the survey. LEON collected data during this exercise using a smartphone application that transmitted data for collation, analysis, and interpretation by LEON's survey data team.

The study used a quantitative, randomized, systematic sampling method, with an interval of every 15 households. To protect the rights of respondents, interviewees signed a predefined survey consent form before participating.

Name	Percentage by county
Bomi	4.4%
Bong	4.4%
Gbarpolu	4.4%
Grand Bassa	7.3%
Grand Cape Mont	2.9%
Grand Gedeh	4.4%
Grand Kru	2.9%
Lofa	7.5%
Margibi	13.2%
MaryLand	4.4%
Montserrado	22.0%
Nimba	11.7%
River-Cess	1.5%
River-Gee	4.4%
Sinoe	4.4%

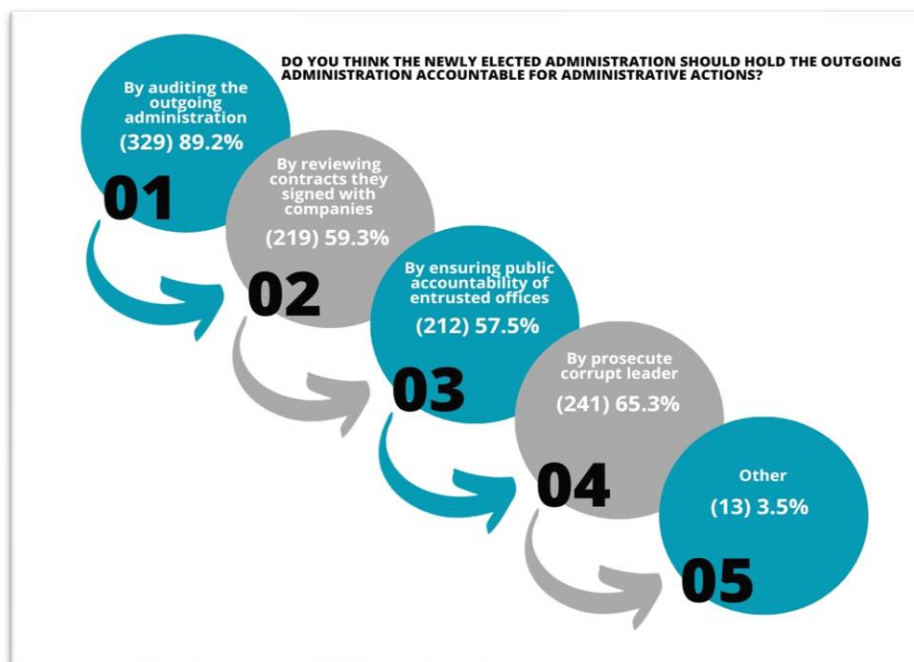
Percentage distribution of respondents by county

⁵¹ LEON notes that EISA conducted fresh research on the invalid voting issue in June and July 2024: see Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) – Liberia International Election Observation Mission activity (LIOEM), “2023 Presidential Election Result Invalid Vote Assessment (IVA) Report” (Jul. 2024) [Draft].

⁵² Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON 2023 Post-election Assessment and Survey,” (Mar. 2024) [Draft].

Summary of Key Findings

1. The survey recorded data from 477 respondents (52.8% female and 47.2% male) from all 73 electoral districts across the 15 counties.
2. When asked if the respondent had voted during the 2023 general elections, approximately 95.2% said “yes,” with this figure adding validity to the high turnout recorded during the elections.
3. When asked if the newly elected administration should hold the outgoing administration accountable for administrative actions, approximately 77.4% of respondents said “yes,” suggesting that accountability is important for respondents. The following graphic illustrates the types of activities the new administration could take to hold the previous administration more accountable.



4. When asked if the newly elected government needs to increase public transparency and accountability, approximately 84.1% of respondents said “yes” to “public officials declaring their assets,” approximately 76.4% said “yes” to “auditing past government officials,” approximately 57.8% said “yes” to “ensuring that anti-graft institutions are backed by law,” approximately 50.3% said “yes” to “reviewing goods and services in the country.”
5. When asked how transparent the outgoing administration was in its decision-making process, approximately 47.4% of respondents said the outgoing government was “not transparent,” while approximately 20.1% said “somewhat transparent,” approximately 19.7% said “transparent, and approximately 12.8% said “very transparent.”
6. When asked how satisfied the respondents are with the level of rule of law in their community, approximately 35% were “not satisfied,” while 33.1% were “satisfied,” 21.4% were “somewhat satisfied,” and 10.5% were “very satisfied.”

7. When asked about how the community thinks of the outgoing administration’s performance in certain areas of governance, approximately 76.5% cited “bad governance,” approximately 73.8% cited “corruption,” approximately 49.1% cited “no respect for the rule of law,” and approximately 46.3% cited “abuse of human rights.”

The following table summarizes in priority order what actions respondents indicated must be taken for a newly elected government to increase transparency and accountability:

RECOMMENDATION FOR IN-COMING GOVERNMENT	YES	NO
Improve health sector	87.4%	12.6%
Improve quality education	83.9%	16.1%
Enforce drugs law	75.7%	24.3%
Increase economic empowerment	71.1%	28.9%
Review goods and services in the country	65.2%	34.8%
Increase youth development programs	59.3%	40.7%
Improve gender and disability inclusion	58.5%	41.5%
Respect the rule of law	57.9%	42.1%
Increase infrastructure development	50.7%	49.3%
Review transportation law	42.8%	57.2%

Pre-election and Post-election Survey Analysis

Considering LEON’s pre-election baseline survey, the post-election survey findings further support that the Liberian electorate were ready to vote for a change in presidential and legislative representatives. More than three-quarters of respondents want to hold the previous government accountable for administrative actions through audits, reviewing signed contracts, ensuring accountability of office holders, and prosecuting corrupt leaders. More than four-fifths of respondents want the new government to increase public transparency and accountability by declaring assets, auditing past officials, and enabling anti-graft agencies through laws. Nearly half of respondents said the previous administration was not transparent, while more than a third are not satisfied with the level of the rule of law in their communities. Finally, about two-thirds cited bad governance and corruption as opinions about the previous administration.

Taking both survey findings together, LEON assesses that the electorate were dis-satisfied with the previous administration. Voters also expect the new administration to be more responsive to sound governance and provide more basic services, such as health, education, infrastructure, and development in addition to addressing social issues like gender and youth inclusion and drug abuse. Given that the electorate voted to change 11 of 15 (73%) senatorial seats and 46 of 73 (63%) of representative seats and voted out the incumbent president, the newly elected president and legislators can expect a population that demands them to address the governance and development needs of Liberia during the next electoral cycle.

24. Legislature Opening–January 15, 2024

The 55th Legislature took office on January 15, 2024, and elected its new leadership. The new Senate President Pro Tempore is the former UP campaign chairperson, Nyonblee Karngar Lawrence, representing Grand Bassa county. The new Speaker of the House is the former Deputy Speaker, Fonati Koffa, of District 2, Grand Kru county, representing CDC. The Senate leader was elected uncontested on a “white ballot,” and the House leader won 36 to 31 with 67 of 73 legislators voting. The race for the Speaker of the House had narrowed during the week of January 15, 2024, between CDC Representative Koffa and UP Representative Richard N. Koon of District 11, Montserrado county. LEON notes that President-elect Joseph N. Boakai reportedly hosted UP representatives at his home during the week where he requested their support for Representative Koon.



Rep. Fonati Koffa, being sworn in as the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Jan. 2024) (Image by LEON)

As of the week of January 22, 2024, five representative seats were pending court-ordered reruns or recounts, and one representative seat was vacated due to the death of the elected member, Erol Madison Gwion (CDC), from District No. 1, Grand Gedeh county, in early December 2023. In January and February, both legislative houses elected committee leaders and other positions. LEON monitored the sessions, collected data on the processes, and reported no major issues.

On February 2, 2024, the Senate and House of Representatives notified NEC to conduct two by-elections as provided for by the constitution and electoral law. The first by-election was for a senatorial seat from Nimba county that was vacated when the sitting senator, Jeremiah Kpan Koung (UP), was elected as Vice-president of Liberia. The second was for a representative seat in Grand Gedeh county that was vacated as noted above. NEC scheduled both by-elections for April 23, 2024.

25. Presidential Transition and Inauguration–November 2023-January 2024

25.1 Government Transition Observation

After the conclusion of the 2023 presidential election, President Weah established a government transition committee with President-elect Boakai. The committee was made up of government officials and representatives from the Boakai camp. LEON observed that the committee met on several occasions and the transition process proceeded in due course from November 2023 until January 2024 until the inauguration of the president.

LEON notes that Liberia has experienced two recent transitions from one democratically elected presidential administration to another.⁵³ The first one was in 2017, after over 70 years, and the second in 2023, six years following the first democratic transition. The consecutive transition from one presidential administration to another is a positive indicator of the ongoing governance progress demonstrated by Liberia’s dedication to upholding democratic principles and respecting the rule of law.

Nevertheless, there are no constitutional or regulatory frameworks specifying the limits on powers during the transition between the outgoing and incoming governments until the 55th Legislature ratified the presidential transition law in September 2024. LEON recommended in its June 2024 policy brief cited above that formal clarification is required to regulate the types of decisions that an outgoing and incoming president can make during the period from the end of the election until the inauguration. Fresh rules needed consideration to set the commencement of the transition period, duration of limited powers, and limits on public spending by the outgoing and incoming governments.

There is no standard procedure outlined in the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) for activities to be conducted during the transitional period between presidential administrations. The events LEON observed during the previous two transitions varied, with inconsistencies in timing for the setting up of the transition teams, reports to be gathered, scope of work to be conducted, changes in inauguration venues, and the budgeting that all these processes require, as well as the transfer of powers between the outgoing and incoming presidents.

LEON notes that the lack of relevant constitutional transition provisions detailing the steps to be taken during the democratic handover of power, could potentially result in heightened tensions during transitional periods and risk power being abused by either the outgoing or incoming government. If left unaddressed, this situation could have led to a similar scenario as in 2023, when LEON observed the outgoing president making a controversial appointment for an Associate Judge to the Supreme Court shortly before the new government assumed office. LEON asserts that such last-minute post-election appointments are inappropriate and can affect the authority of the incoming government. While recognizing that the president has the authority to make appointments, as outlined in Article 54 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011), establishing clear limitations on executive powers is essential during presidential transitions to avoid misuse and advance Liberia’s democracy.

LEON commends the 55th Legislature for developing a new law that guides the process of transitioning from one elected presidential administration to another so that appropriate limits are set on political, fiscal, and other authorities.

25.2 Presidential Inauguration Observation

President Joseph N. Boakai was inaugurated into office on January 22, 2024, as the 26th President of the Republic of Liberia. LEON observed that international guests attended the inauguration. United States President Joseph R. Biden sent a delegation to represent the United States. Outgoing President Weah addressed the nation prior to inauguration when he wished the incoming administration well and promised to continue engaging in national politics.

⁵³ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Policy Brief No. 1: Strengthen Constitutional Reform, Clarify Electoral Legal Framework, Establish New Electoral Districts, Regulate Governmental Transition Process, and Enact Cybersecurity Measures,” (Jun. 2024) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

During February and March 2024, President Boakai appointed and formed his cabinet of ministers and issued many appointments for various ministries, agencies, and commissions, as he formed his government. LEON observed that the Senate processed the appointments at the proper time and confirmed most but denied some as provided for by the legal framework.



President Joseph N. Boakai during inauguration event (Jan. 2024) (Image by HoR Press)

26. Legislative By-Election Observation–April 23, 2024

LEON observed the conduct of the April 23, 2024, senatorial by-election in Nimba county and representative by-election for Electoral District No. 1 in Grand Gedeh county (see by-election statement, Annex M).⁵⁴ Despite low numbers of citizens casting ballots during both by-elections, LEON noted that the pre-election and by-election day periods were marked by peaceful and professional campaigning. LEON observed adequate preparations by NEC, LNP, competing political parties, and domestic and international observer groups. LEON also observed orderly and consistent conduct of the by-elections at polling places observed.

26.1 Expert Observation Approach

Innovating from conventional observation methods, LEON implemented an expert approach, marking a shift in its strategy to enable insightful and targeted scrutiny of the electoral cycle process with ongoing analysis and fewer observers assigned at polling places. LEON leveraged a team of experienced analysts with expertise in fields such as electoral procedures, governance, and data analysis to focus on monitoring the electoral environment and observing the NEC’s application of laws, regulations, and procedures governing Liberia’s elections. This approach enabled LEON to provide actionable recommendations in its 2023 electoral cycle observation report to enhance the electoral process.

⁵⁴ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON Introduces Expert Observation Approach During Legislative By-Elections In Nimba And Grand Gedeh Counties,” (Apr. 17, 2024) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

In addition to LEON’s core team in Monrovia, LEON deployed six electoral analysts from its secretariat as STOs to join seven LTOs in Nimba and two LTOs in Grand Gedeh counties. LEON employed a mobile observation method to monitor at polling places for a period (45-60 minutes) before visiting another polling place. In Nimba, LEON monitored at 39 of 262 (14.9%) polling precincts and 63 of 736 (8.6%) polling places in 8 of 9 (88.8%) electoral districts. In Grand Gedeh, LEON observed 10 of 11 (90.9%) polling precincts and 10 of 46 (21.7%) polling places in Electoral District No. 1. Together, LEON’s analysts and LTOs observed and reported on the pre-election, by-election day, and post-election periods.

26.2 Pre-election Nomination and Campaign Processes

NEC conducted the candidate nomination period from March 6 until 19, 2024.⁵⁵ LEON observed a compliant process that took place at the NEC headquarters in Monrovia (see by-election statement, Annex N).⁵⁶ At the end of the period, four male candidates were nominated for the senatorial race in Nimba,⁵⁷ and 12 male and 3 female candidates were nominated for the representative race in Grand Gedeh.⁵⁸

NEC set the campaign period from April 4 until 20, 2024,⁵⁹ with a 48-hour period of no campaigning prior to the April 23, 2024, by-election day. LEON’s LTOs in Nimba and Grand Gedeh monitored campaign rallies and observed them as generally peaceful. According to the NEC Magistrate for Upper Nimba County, the competing candidates provided their campaign rally schedules and respected the planned dates, which constituted an effective electoral violence mitigation measure that contributed to no conflicts among respective supporters.

During interviews with LNP commanders in Sannequellie and Ganta, respectively, on April 20, 2024, LEON confirmed that campaigning remained calm and peaceful with no incidents of electoral violence. This assessment was further confirmed during interviews with the NEC Magistrate for Upper Nimba, an Immigration Services commander, the Ganta City Mayor, the UP-County Chairperson, and a stipendiary magistrate with the Ministry of Justice in Yekepa between April 19 and 22, 2024.

LEON commends the candidates in both legislative races for maintaining a professional and civil campaign process that resulted in a peaceful process. This form of competitive but tolerant political behavior reflects ongoing consolidation of sound democratic practices in Liberia and sets an example that citizens and supporters may have followed during the campaign period.

⁵⁵ National Elections Commission. “Key Electoral Dates – Nimba County Senate By Election & Grand Gedeh County District #1 House of Representatives By-election – By-election Day – April 23, 2024.”

⁵⁶ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s 2024 Legislative By-Election Observation: Pre-Election and By-Election Day Situational Report,” (Apr. 24, 2024 [6:30PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

⁵⁷ National Elections Commission. “2024 Nimba County Senatorial By-Election Preliminary List of Aspirants.”

⁵⁸ National Elections Commission. “2024 Grand Gedeh County District #1 By-Election Preliminary List of Aspirants.”

⁵⁹ National Elections Commission. “Key Electoral Dates – Nimba County Senate By Election & Grand Gedeh County District #1 House of Representatives By-election – By-election Day – April 23, 2024.”

26.3 Pre-election Stakeholder Preparations

LEON observed preparations by NEC, LNP, political parties and candidates, and domestic and international observation groups during the pre-election period (see by-election statement, Annex N).⁶⁰

NEC appeared well-prepared to conduct both legislative by-elections. In Nimba, NEC Magistrates for the upper and lower electoral districts informed LEON during interviews that they had received adequate managerial and material support from NEC headquarters, with the arrival of other county magistrates to support preparations and delivery of all necessary sensitive and non-sensitive electoral materials.

NEC recruited, trained, and deployed experienced temporary election workers (TEWs), and had measures in place to avoid payment delays, as experienced during the 2023 general elections. NEC reported approximately 3,680 TEWs were deployed in Nimba. NEC's logistical preparations were well-organized in Sannequellie with a steady flow of polling place materials seen by LEON being deployed from an orderly warehouse on April 20 and 22, 2024. The LEON LTOs in Grand Gedeh reported a similar situation at NEC's magisterial office in Zwedru. The key challenge noted by NEC in Nimba was insufficient mobility resources to enable access to remote areas to deliver TEWs and materials.



LEON interviewing NEC Magistrate, Upper Nimba, Sannequellie (Apr. 20, 2024) (Image by LEON)

LNP were well-prepared to protect the electoral processes in both counties; however, LNP seemed to be operating as its own entity and not under a joint-security mechanism with the Immigration Services or other security forces. Neither LNP commander with whom LEON interviewed in Nimba would comment on the status of the joint-security task force, focusing exclusively on LNP preparations. The Immigration Services commander with whom LEON interviewed in Ganta noted that he had not been briefed or informed on the electoral security preparations and that LNP had taken charge of the security arrangements in Nimba.

According to the Assistant Chief of Police in Nimba, LNP's force of 209 officers (43 females) were reinforced by a group of 420 additional officers from Monrovia and other counties. LEON observed the police forces preparing for field deployment around the Ganta police station appeared well-provisioned in fresh uniforms and were a mix of male and female officers. The police commanders said they conducted a threat assessment prior to the electoral period to identify potential hotspots based on historical knowledge and had set-up mobile command posts in key towns and prepositioned quick reaction forces in case of any incidents or issues. The challenges noted by both commanders was the lack of non-mobile network

⁶⁰ Liberia Elections Observation Network, "LEON's 2024 Legislative By-Election Observation: Pre-Election and By-Election Day Situational Report," (Apr. 24, 2024 [6:30PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

communications equipment such as Motorola radios and insufficient mobility resources like vehicles or motorbikes to access remote areas and provide security services to polling precincts.

Two of the four political parties fielding candidates in Nimba County – UP and People’s Unification Party (PUP) – appeared well-prepared and campaign materials were seen in many towns. Both parties deployed poll watchers as agents to all the polling places where LEON observed in Nimba. During the closing and counting processes, LEON noted that UP and PUP party agents had been trained prior to the by-elections, comported themselves professionally and peacefully, and demonstrated clear knowledge of NEC’s procedures. LEON observed that female agents were present primarily in the urban polling places, while male agents were predominant in the rural or smaller town polling places. No incidents during counting were reported at the polling places where LEON observed. Party or candidate agents were also present in Grand Gedeh polling places.



Candidate posters for PUP and UP, Ganta, Nimba (Apr. 20, 2024) (Image by LEON)

In Ganta, the Movement to Elect Twayen Nya for Senate established a “situation room” to track and collect by-election day data and results from its party agents. The movement’s secretary told LEON on April 24, 2024, that they had dispatched 736 polling agents, 135 supervisors, and 63 coordinators. The secretary said that the situation room received no reports of violence from its field team. The secretary said all polling place results data would be entered into its computing system by April 24, 2024. He also said the situation room was operated and funded by the electoral movement and not by UP.

Domestic and international observer organizations and diplomatic missions prepared for the by-elections by forming a joint-coordination group to observe and report on the electoral cycle. In addition to LEON, ECC deployed a substantial domestic election observation mission, while EISA and Democracy International (DI) fielded modest teams of mobile observers in Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. Diplomatic mission observers included officials from the United States, Sweden, and Ireland. LEON notes the importance of domestic and international electoral observation and commended the international community’s electoral support.

LEON notes that CVE is a cross-cutting aspect of electoral preparations and conducting the electoral cycle. CVE is a responsibility for all stakeholders to enable and empower voter participation through knowledge and awareness. LEON observed that NEC reactivated its nine electoral district CVE cells in Nimba and one CVE cell in Electoral District No. 1 in Grand Gedeh prior to the by-elections. Stakeholders told LEON that they had seen CVE activities by NEC in Ganta, Tappita, Yekepa, Zwedru, and other towns visited. LEON observed NEC posters and banners along the road between Sannequellie and Karnplay as well as Ganta and Tappita.

26.4 By-election Day Observation

During the conduct of both by-elections, LEON witnessed opening of polls, voting throughout the day, closing of polls, counting at the end of the day, and tallying of results at the magisterial offices (see by-election statement, Annex N).⁶¹ LEON observed NEC polling officials consistently applying electoral procedures during the time when LEON monitored those polling places during each phase of the polling process. LEON observed instances of meticulous adherence to procedures, such as the turning away of a voter from the duplicate list in Karnplay and reference to NEC’s 2024 procedural manual to confirm an invalid vote in Sannequellie. LEON was informed by the respective Presiding Officers that they had received all required sensitive and non-sensitive materials.



NEC polling officials taking the oath of office during opening of polls, Karnplay, Nimba (left); NEC polling officials preparing for counting, Sannequellie, Nimba (right) (Apr. 23, 2024) (Image by LEON)

LEON noted that NEC polling places included male and female officials, with many of the Presiding Officers being female, but did not observe any persons with disabilities as poll workers. Polling officials told LEON that they were experienced from previous electoral events, including voter registration. LEON noted that the NEC’s Final Registration Roll (FRR) was posted outside each polling place and various polling forms appeared on large-size paper with ample room to record required data. LEON commended NEC’s willingness to learn from elections by including a polling official survey to receive evaluative feedback to identify internal lessons for improving the implementation of future electoral events.

The security outside all polling places LEON monitored included the presence of LNP officers who had no weapons visible. When interacting with LEON observers, the officers were professional, well-mannered, and appeared in fresh uniforms. LEON observed no security incidents, and none were reported to LEON, when officers were asked if there had been any incidents prior to the observers’ arrival.

According to LTOs in Grand Gedeh, the by-election day processes went smoothly. At all polling places observed, political party agents had a copy of the FRR. When a voter entered the polling place, he or she would call his or her name aloud, and then both the NEC’s voter identification officer and respective party agents would check their FRRs to verify the

⁶¹ Liberia Elections Observation Network, “LEON’s 2024 Legislative By-Election Observation: Pre-Election and By-Election Day Situational Report,” (Apr. 24, 2024 [6:30PM]) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

registered voter. LEON notes that this is a departure from NEC’s prescribed procedures and could also violate the privacy of voters by enabling party agents to know and record who voted, even though the secrecy of who they voted for was not affected at those polling places where LEON observed.

LEON observed a low volume of voters participating in the electoral process throughout the by-election day in Nimba and Electoral District No. 1 in Grand Gedeh. When asked, NEC Presiding Officers told LEON observers that the pace of citizens coming to cast ballots was much lower than during the 2023 general elections. LEON notes that NEC provided the necessary conditions for voter participation; however, whether a registered voter decides to participate and cast a ballot is a personal decision that NEC has no influence over.

LEON observed the post-election period, as NEC aggregated polling place results in its respective magisterial office tally centers in Sannequellie, Tappita, and Zwedru. NEC continued to apply its policies and procedures with attention to detail and consistency throughout the two days of results tallying. NEC completed its results aggregation by April 25, 2024, and announced final results on April 27, 2024, in Monrovia.

26.5 2024 By-election Assessment

LEON assessed the legislative by-elections as professionally conducted with NEC largely complying with its policies and procedures to deliver genuine and credible results. LEON observed that political parties and stakeholders were patient and respected the electoral process to maintain transparent, safe, and inclusive by-elections for a senator and representative. LEON congratulated the Liberians in Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties who participated in a peaceful exercise of their constitutional right to vote and participate in their democracy.

27. House of Representatives Constituency Boundary Delimitation

LEON notes that in the inter-election period between the 2023 and 2029 general elections, the 55th Legislature and NEC must work in collaboration and conduct voter awareness, citizen education, and stakeholder consultation to use 2022 population census data to establish new and legally compliant boundaries for the electoral districts setting the constituencies for the House of Representatives.⁶²

27.1 Constituency Delimitation Background

Article 39 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides that “the Legislature shall cause a census of the Republic to be undertaken every ten years.” Liberia held its first post-war census in 2008 and the next census year should have been 2018; however, the process was delayed until 2020. LEON observed that the census was held on November 11, 2022, by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS),⁶³ with technical support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Provisional results were announced by LISGIS

⁶² Liberia Elections Observation Network, “Policy Brief No. 1: Strengthen Constitutional Reform, Clarify Electoral Legal Framework, Establish New Electoral Districts, Regulate Governmental Transition Process, and Enact Cybersecurity Measures,” (Jun. 2024) <<https://leonobservation.org/>>.

⁶³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An Act to Further Amend the New Executive Law, Title 12, of the Liberian Code of Laws Revised, as amended, by Adding Thereto to New Chapter 50A, (Jul. 22, 2004) <<https://www.lisgis.gov.lr/document/lisgisact.pdf>>.

in February 2023.⁶⁴ Following results consolidation, LISGIS submitted the final results to the Census Steering Committee and the LISGIS Board of Directors for clearance.⁶⁵ LISGIS management then submitted them to the 54th Legislature in July 2023. After presenting the final results to the legislature, LISGIS complied with a request from the House of Representatives to further break down the results per administrative district. LISGIS then submitted the final results to the President of Liberia who approved and signed them.⁶⁶

LEON notes that the 55th Legislature must now use the 2022 census results for setting a population threshold for revised and/or additional electoral constituencies in line with Article 80 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011). LEON observed that as of early April 2024, the House of Representatives initiated a probe into reapportionment of constituencies prior to the 2029 general elections. The House Plenary forwarded the matter to its committees on Elections and Inauguration, Good Governance, and Judiciary, respectively. This decision was made on February 13, 2024, which was prompted by a February 7, 2024, communication from Representative Koon.⁶⁷ The three committees are tasked with engaging with LISGIS and NEC to ensure compliance with constitutional provisions and promote a transparent process for the 2029 general elections.

In the Liberian context, census data plays a crucial role economic development but also in constituency boundary delimitation and establishing new electoral districts (i.e., representative constituencies). Article 80(e) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides that “immediately following a national census and before the next elections, the Elections Commission shall reapportion the constituencies in accordance with the new population figures so that every constituency shall have as close to the same population as possible; provided, however, that a constituency must be solely within a county.” In short, the constitution mandates that NEC must adjust the constituencies for the House of Representatives based on updated census population data to enable approximate equality in population distribution, while also ensuring that each electoral district remains within the boundaries of the respective county.

Since the 2011 general elections, NEC has not been instructed by the legislature to delineate new electoral boundaries in advance of the 2017 or 2023 general elections. In 2010, the 52nd Legislature passed a joint resolution (LEG-002/2010) in the period between the release of the 2008 national census and conduct of the 2011 general elections. The joint resolution sought to address the issue of counties with insufficient population based on the new 2010 threshold for the upcoming elections. To accommodate political considerations, the 52nd Legislature instructed NEC to increase the 64 electoral districts by prescribing and establishing nine new electoral districts in six counties with higher populations, thereby creating 73 electoral districts.⁶⁸ The joint resolution also instructed NEC to delineate the boundaries of electoral

⁶⁴ The preliminary 2022 census report was released by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services (LISGIS) <<https://www.lisgis.gov.lr/document/LiberiaCensus2022Report.pdf>>

⁶⁵ Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services. *2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census, Final Results* (Jun. 2023) <<https://www.lisgis.gov.lr/census2022report.php>>.

⁶⁶ LEON was informed on May 30, 2024, that LISGIS is planning a 10-day workshop in June 2024 to review its 2022 census results and related reports to verify and update them as required.

⁶⁷ Koon, Richard Nagbe, Representative, District 11 Montserrado County, Letter to Hon. Cllr. J. Fornati Kofa, Speaker, 55th Legislature, The House of Representatives, “Reapportion Constituencies for the 2029 Elections” (Feb. 7, 2024).

⁶⁸ National Elections Commission, “County Threshold for the Establishment of Electoral Districts,” (Apr. 18, 2011) <https://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/County%20Threshold%20Guidelines.pdf>.

districts for each county,⁶⁹ but it did not set a population threshold based on the 2008 national census to enable NEC to reapportion new constituencies in line with Article 80(e) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011).

Furthermore, NEC, in its April 2011 guidelines for establishing electoral districts, decided to use registered voters as the basis for setting a county threshold for the size of each electoral district within each county, rather than population data from the 2008 census, as provided for by the constitution. For example, in 2011, Bomi County had 47,586 registered voters and this number was divided by three representative seats to create a threshold of 15,929 registered voters per district.⁷⁰ NEC then redrew the boundaries of the electoral districts based on the voter registration centers at the time to create 73 new districts. While this approach represents a proportional distribution of registered voters, the constitution requires proportional distribution by population.

27.2 Implications of Unequal Constituencies

Following the 2010 joint resolution, Liberia currently has electoral constituencies that exhibit significant disparities in size, with certain electoral districts being disproportionately larger than entire county populations. For example, according to NEC’s 2023 final registration roll, Montserrado Districts Nos. 2, 4, 6, and 17; and Margibi District No. 1 are notably larger than entire counties such as Sinoe, Gbarpolu, Grand Kru, Rivercess, and River Gee. The 2023 voter registry indicates that Montserrado District No. 4 has 75,517 registrants. When comparing that total to the individual districts in River Gee, the data shows that Montserrado District No. 4 is six times larger than each of the three electoral districts. This uneven distribution of electoral districts appears unjustified, constitutionally non-compliant, and may be subject to fresh legal challenges as the 55th Legislature is tasked with setting a population threshold for new legislative constituencies based on the 2022 census and the national legal framework.

LEON contends that the 2010 Joint Resolution was primarily intended to tackle the pressing political issue posed by the 2011 general elections, specifically concerning the uncertainty around the 2008 census figures and apprehension among political stakeholders that certain counties would lose their representative seats if population data were applied as mandated by the constitution. In 2023, there remains a risk that some less populous counties will have only one elected Member to the House of Representatives (but two senators) and more populous counties will have more representatives, and thus able to dominate the legislative agenda.

Article 48 of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) provides for at least one representative per legislative constituency of the counties and Article 80(d) provides for a maximum of 100 representative seats nationally, but there is no prescribed maximum seat number per county, relying on population growth to establish the proportional distribution of seats over time. Even though the 2010 joint resolution was passed into law prior to the 2011 general elections, LEON notes that all subsequent legislative elections, including the 2017 and 2023 general elections, were conducted on the authority of what appears to be a legally questionable political

⁶⁹ National Elections Commission, “Guidelines on the Establishment of Electoral Districts in Liberia,” (Apr. 18, 2011) <https://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/Guidelines%20on%20Establishing%20Electoral%20Districts.pdf>.

⁷⁰ National Elections Commission, “County Threshold for the Establishment of Electoral Districts,” (Apr. 18, 2011) <https://www.necliberia.org/pg_img/County%20Threshold%20Guidelines.pdf>.

accommodation made in 2010, without any formal renewal or due consideration of the provisions of the constitution during the subsequent national and periodic electoral cycles.

LEON reiterates that existing legislative constituencies exhibit substantial disparities in size and composition based on registered voters instead of census population and appear to lack constitutional compliance, both of which are a grave matter of concern for the validity of Liberia’s future elections and adherence to democratic standards. This situation could raise serious challenges and could be legally contested by petitions that assert the current districts violate Articles 80(d) and 80(e) of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011).

27.3 LEON’s Preliminary Population and Constituency Analysis

In anticipation of a fresh constituency delimitation exercise during the inter-election period, LEON has been analyzing the 2022 census data and calculating delimitation scenarios since June 2024. Some increase in the number of constituency seats can be anticipated due to the approximately 51% growth in population between the 2008 and 2022 census results (3.4m to 5.2m people). The method for determining the number of new seats in the House of Representatives will take further discussion, consultation, and data analysis by the legislature with inputs from NEC and LISGIS, among others.

The following table shows LEON’s preliminary analysis based on the current 73 representative constituencies (i.e., seats) and then a projection showing that 14 new seats would be needed to enable at least two House of Representative seats per county.⁷¹ The proportional population thresholds are based on a calculation of total population divided by the number of seats to produce a median population per county. The county population is then divided by the population threshold to generate the number of seats per county (rounded to nearest divisor).

Preliminary Analysis of Electoral Constituencies based on 2022 Census Data

Counties	Census Population 2022	Present Rep. District Allocation 2024	Table 1: Example of Apportionment of Seats using (71,635 Threshold)			Table 15: Example of Apportionment of Seats using (60,346 Threshold)		
			Pop. Median	No. of Seats	Change from Present	Pop. Median	No. of Seats	Change from Present
Montserrado	1,920,965	17	71,635	27	+10	60,346	32	+15
Nimba	621,841	9	71,635	9	0	60,346	10	+1
Bong	467,561	7	71,635	7	0	60,346	8	+1
Lofa	367,376	5	71,635	5	0	60,346	6	+1
Margibi	304,946	5	71,635	4	-1	60,346	5	0
Grand Bassa	293,689	5	71,635	4	-1	60,346	5	0

⁷¹ There is no legal requirement to maintain at least two seats per county, but this preference may stem from Section 4.3 of the December 2004 Electoral Reform Law: “For the 2005 elections, and in the absence of results of a recent population census, the sixty-four seats shall be distributed among the 15 counties on the basis of the total number of voters registered, provided that no county receives less than 2 seats.” This provision, however, was limited to the 2005 general elections, but the preference influenced political debate over constituency delimitation in 2009–10, leading to the joint resolution, and may continue to be expressed during the current exercise. <<https://www.ifes.org/tools-resources/election-materials/electoral-reform-law>>

Counties	Census Population 2022	Present Rep. District Allocation 2024	Table 1: Example of Apportionment of Seats using (71,635 Threshold)			Table 15: Example of Apportionment of Seats using (60,346 Threshold)		
			Pop. Median	No. of Seats	Change from Present	Pop. Median	No. of Seats	Change from Present
Grand Gedeh	216,692	3	71,635	3	0	60,346	4	+1
Grand Cape Mount	178,867	3	71,635	2	-1	60,346	3	0
Maryland	172,587	3	71,635	2	-1	60,346	3	0
Sinoe	151,149	3	71,635	2	-1	60,346	3	0
Bomi	133,705	3	71,635	2	-1	60,346	2	-1
River Gee	124,653	3	71,635	2	-1	60,346	2	-1
Grand Kru	109,342	2	71,635	2	0	60,346	2	0
Gbarpolu	95,995	3	71,635	1	-2	60,346	2	-1
Rivercess	90,819	2	71,635	1	-1	60,346	2	0
Total Population	5,250,187	73		73			87	

LEON recognizes the political sensitivity and financial implications around the prospect for an increase in the number of representative seats and the gain/loss potential for some counties. If the 87 total seats scenario is proposed by the legislature, then Montserrado county would benefit disproportionately from all other counties with 15 additional seats due to its larger population, while Bomi, River Gee, and Gbarpolu would each lose one seat due to their lower population. Four counties would increase by one seat – Nimba, Bong, Lofa, and Grand Gedeh – and seven counties would remain unchanged – Margibi, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Maryland, Sinoe, Grand Kru, and Rivercess.

The 55th Legislature is responsible for setting the population threshold and number of seats to be established based on the 2022 census data. NEC is responsible for the public consultation, voter awareness, civic education, and delimitation of new boundaries based on an instruction from the legislature. LISGIS is responsible for the 2022 population census, which was released in June 2023.⁷² NEC and LISGIS must work together to analyze population data organized by administrative districts according to current voter registration center maps, based on electoral districts. The administrative and electoral districts contain different geographical boundaries and thus data from both groups is essential to complete the delimitation process. LEON understands that NEC and LISGIS signed a memorandum of understanding to coordinate during constituency delimitation as of September 2024.

⁷² Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services. *2022 Liberia Population and Housing Census, Final Results* (Jun. 2023) <<https://www.lisgis.gov.lr/census2022report.php>>.

27.4 Call for Action to the National Legislature

LEON notes that the creation of noncompliant electoral districts was initially intended for the 2011 general elections, but has been used as the basis for the 2017 and 2023 legislative elections and periodic by-elections. Since then, however, there has been no new legislative resolution to either uphold or modify the 2010 joint resolution or to address the population threshold provided for by the constitution. Consequently, Liberia will continue to face issues, such as imbalanced electoral representation, unequal distribution of national budgets based on actual population, and difficulties in developmental planning, unless this legal question is properly addressed by the 55th Legislature, NEC, and national institutions.

LEON calls on the 55th Legislature to initiate the process of establishing new legislative electoral districts based on the 2022 national census final results and in compliance with the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and then instruct NEC accordingly to draw new House of Representative district boundaries well in advance of the 2029 general elections.

LEON will continue to monitor and report on the constituency delimitation exercise. LEON is planning to conduct research, advocacy, and legislative and stakeholder engagement activities in support of this process and lobby for maintaining constitutional compliance.

IX. CONCLUSION

28. Liberia Conducts a Successful 2023 General Elections

LEON observed that the commitment to peace during the 2023 general elections was evident in the conduct of voters, election officials, and security personnel across Liberia. Despite some logistical challenges and occasional incidents of minor disruptions, most polling precincts and polling places operated smoothly and without major incidents that could impact the overall outcome of the electoral process. Citizens exercised their democratic right to vote in a peaceful and orderly manner, demonstrating a collective determination to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process and respect the outcome of the election, whatever it may be.

After the 2023 general elections, the country remained united in its commitment to maintaining peace and stability during the post-election period. Political parties and candidates demonstrated leadership by accepting the results of the election and channeling any grievances through legal and institutional channels rather than resorting to violence or civil unrest. CSOs, community leaders, and religious institutions played a crucial role in promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and national unity after the elections, fostering an atmosphere of healing and solidarity across the country.

Furthermore, President Weah conceding defeat before NEC's final announcement of the runoff election results served as a beacon of hope for the peace that Liberia enjoys. This unprecedented act of leadership and humility set a powerful example of democratic maturity and respect for the rule of law, resonating deeply with citizens and stakeholders across Liberia and setting a positive example to other countries in the region and across the African continent.

LEON notes that by gracefully acknowledging the outcome of the election before it was officially confirmed by NEC, President Weah exhibited a rare display of humility and maturity in the face of political defeat. This gesture not only diffused tensions and quelled potential unrest but also reaffirmed the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. The concession

speech sent a clear message to supporters and opponents alike that the democratic will of the people would be honored and upheld, regardless of individual or partisan interests.

LEON also commends President Boakai for his leadership during and after the election, as his professionalism and experience provided a role model for domestic political actors and supporters. Furthermore, the Boakai administration moved resolutely to appoint its ministers and other government officials to carry-out the duties of the presidency. The acts of both top political party leaders demonstrated a profound commitment to the principles of democracy and peaceful transition of power. This act helped to reinforce public trust in the electoral system and fostered confidence in the legitimacy of the electoral outcomes.

29. LEON's Key Electoral Observation

Overall, LEON observed that the largely peaceful atmosphere before, during, and after the 2023 general elections in Liberia was the result of concerted efforts by political parties, independent candidates, CSOs, citizens, the president, and various other stakeholders to prioritize the greater good of the country above individual interests or partisan agendas. Through their collective commitment to democratic values and the rule of law, Liberians demonstrated resilience, maturity, and a shared vision for a peaceful future.

LEON observed largely peaceful candidate nomination and campaigning with no systematic use of intimidation or electoral violence. Regrettably, there were incidences of violence, leading to injuries, loss of lives, and property damage; however, these cases did not appear planned or orchestrated. Joint-security forces coordination was adequate with LEON reporting that in approximately 98% of polling places observed sufficient security was present. The run-off campaigning was largely focused on lobbying opinion makers or “influencing the influencers” as a targeted approach to win the support of other political parties and community leaders. LEON notes that increased and enhanced civic and voter education by NEC, political parties, CSOs, and other electoral stakeholders would empower citizens with knowledge and could contribute to fewer invalid votes on election day.

For the first time in Liberia, LEON conducted a sample-based observation methodology that allowed for a statistical projection of the outcome of the results within a given range of percentages. LEON notes that its projected results for both rounds of the presidential election were consistent with the NEC's official results. This consistency provided additional credibility to the results and NEC's overall performance and transparency in managing the elections.

LEON concludes that the 2023 general elections were conducted largely in compliance with the legal framework and administered professionally by NEC. Election procedures were adhered to, and the pronouncement of election results was completed transparently within the legal parameters. Significant activities characterized the 2023 general elections: introduction of the BVR process, candidate nomination that adhered to the timeline, recruitment of temporary NEC staff in a more transparent manner, timely announcement of preliminary and final results, and the overall professional conduct of the election. Even though both the financing and security components of the elections were overseen by the Liberian government for the first time in many years, the peaceful outcome of the elections was a historical milestone and commended by international diplomatic missions, observer groups, and implementing development partners. LEON assessed that the factors noted in this electoral cycle observation report support the credibility of the 2023 presidential and legislative elections in Liberia.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

LEON provides the following recommendations to the citizens, government, and legislature of Liberia; NEC; security forces; political parties; CSOs; media and social media outlets; and international community to promote, support, and advocate for specific and cross-cutting improvements to future presidential and legislative electoral cycles.

30. TO CITIZENS OF LIBERIA

1. Participate during voter registration updates and electoral events to exercise your constitutional right to elect your president and vice-president and legislative representatives on election days.
2. Educate themselves on electoral process and how to mark ballots correctly to enable their vote to count and avoid inadvertent invalidation of their selection.
3. Resist attempts by political parties or candidates to incentivize and influence their vote by offering goods, products, food stuffs, or other forms of vote buying.
4. Remain patient in voting queues, while awaiting turn to vote, to enable an orderly voting process and at the same time minimize property damage or violent behavior.
5. Exercise calm and patience during results tabulation and only accept results announced by NEC as the legal authority to release official results.
6. Respect the diversity of Liberian citizens and enable all registered voters to cast their ballots freely and without barriers to participation, including those that affect women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, and persons living with disabilities.
7. Hold elected representatives accountable for their performance by learning about their constitutional duties, monitoring their activities, and engaging with their legislative representatives.

31. TO GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

8. Support the Office of the President and 55th Legislature to champion a comprehensive review and reform of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) with the aim of drafting a new document that addresses political, electoral, and societal needs.
9. Resource and operationalize the Office of the Ombudsman as provided for by the 2014 Code of Conduct to enable monitoring and levying of sanctions for abuse of state resources during the electoral cycle and other periods.
10. Provide adequate and timely funding to NEC, security forces, and other government entities or agencies to enable a well-resourced electoral cycle.
11. Enhance the capacity of NEC and other relevant agencies to implement and enforce campaign finance regulations to enhance the equity, transparency, and accountability of electoral campaigns.
12. Continue upholding commitments to providing a secure environment that enables the conduct of credible, genuine, safe, inclusive, and transparent elections through effective state security deployment and response.

13. Investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of electoral violence, intimidation, manipulation, malpractice, and attacks on NEC tally centers, including those responsible for stealing ballot boxes in Nimba County and other counties during the 2023 general elections, to deter illegal behavior during future electoral cycles.

32. TO LEGISLATURE OF LIBERIA

14. Engage with national stakeholders to develop consensus and then an appropriate mechanism for reviewing and redrafting the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011).
15. Initiate a review process for reforming constitutional provisions that involve presidential and legislative elections, such as term limits, diaspora voting, and election dates, well in advance of the 2029 electoral cycle.
16. Examine the 1986 New Elections Law (NEL) (Amended 2014) to consider its constitutional implications, and work towards harmonizing the electoral reform process to enable compatible laws and regulations.
17. Evaluate the results of the 2011 and 2020 referendums and consider reintroducing their proposals to address electoral system issues, and raise any other matters that could improve future elections.
18. Clarify the status of the 2022 electoral reform bill to determine if the partially approved/vetoed bill is valid and the remaining amended provisions should be enacted into law as returned by the former president on March 9, 2023.
19. Analyze the 2022 national census final results and establish a new population threshold for NEC to use in defining electoral constituencies in compliance with the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) and complete by the end of 2025 to mitigate the risk of political interference during election periods.
20. Initiate changes to Chapter XIII of the 1986 Constitution (Amended 2011) on Transitional Provisions to align with democratic practices for transitioning between presidential administrations following an election.
21. Establish protocols outlining the timeline and limits of authority between an outgoing presidential administration and incoming administration (e.g., judicial appointments, contracting, budgeting, and tax collection from international organizations).
22. Champion the rights of women and persons with disabilities to participate more fully in electoral processes by adopting temporary special measures, such as gender quotas or reserve seats, to enable greater gender equity and social inclusion in the legislature.

33. TO NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION

23. Review the electoral legal framework and internal regulations to identify areas for improving the electoral system, electoral management body administration, and any other areas where lessons from the 2023 electoral cycle can be applied.
24. Work with the 55th Legislature to determine a constitutionally compliant method for establishing and delimiting boundaries for new electoral representative constituencies prior to the 2029 general elections.

25. Work with the Government of Liberia to establish an escrow account that allows for regular annual funding for NEC activities to support more robust, effective, and timely preparation for future electoral activities.
26. Pursue new measures for providing equal opportunity for all eligible Liberian citizens, including those in hospitals, prisons, universities, and living outside Liberia, to register to vote and participate in general and by-elections with constitutional reform or other legal amendments.
27. Strengthen and continue efforts to formulate, communicate, and publish electoral declarations, guidelines, and fines so that decisions, rules, and penalties are enforced and clear for all stakeholders.
28. Continue strengthening the NEC training section to review and revise electoral regulations and procedures for effectiveness during the 2023 electoral cycle and thereby enhance internal capacity to deliver genuine and credible general and by-elections.
29. Enhance political party and independent candidate capacity with targeted training of party/candidate agents on key electoral procedures, including voter registration, candidate nomination, campaign financing, and complaint filing and appeal.
30. Support greater and more diverse civic and voter education to increase voter inclusion and participation, especially among marginalized groups, such as women, youth, persons living with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, under-educated, illiterate, and elderly citizens.
31. Evaluate polling places used during the 2023 general elections to assess accessibility and adequate infrastructure for persons living with disabilities and citizens in need of special consideration and information on election days.
32. Enhance civic and voter education by diversifying public outreach strategies and providing civil society, political parties, media outlets, and community-based organizations with accurate and timely information on electoral process for distribution to those Liberians aspiring for elected office and to voters in urban and rural communities and remote locations across the country.
33. Evaluate the 2023 BVR exercise to identify operational improvements and determine next steps towards implementing regular or continuous voter registration updates.
34. Assess the number and location of voter registration centers in line with new electoral constituencies to enable reasonable access to centers by citizens and avoid overcrowding at polling precincts and places during election days.
35. Enable domestic and international observers greater access to all electoral processes but particularly to candidate nomination to better allow for an independent assessment of compliance with the electoral law.
36. Review and revise the NEC candidate nomination form to mainstream gender equity and social inclusion with a focus on greater access for women and persons living with disabilities.
37. Decentralize candidate nomination to the NEC magisterial offices to allow for more inclusive and accessible services to citizens aspiring for elected office.

38. Review, assess, and develop solutions to the following operational challenges observed during the 2023 general elections:
 - A. Protect ballot papers against natural threats, such as water and fire.
 - B. Provide NEC tally centers with adequate supplies and equipment to avoid delays in the results tabulation process.
 - C. Develop and publish policies and guidelines for the systematic release of official election results.
 - D. Ensure electoral disputes or formal complaints are determined on their merits and in adherence with the electoral laws, regulations, and procedures.
 - E. Engage more on social media and issue counter posts that are intended to undermine NEC's credibility with accurate information and references to factual details and reliable sources.
 - F. Increase NEC's awareness and understanding of citizens on the difference between objective and subjective criticism and speech that could be considered offensive to gender, tribe, or ethnicity.
39. Review and revise the NEC complaint form to include additional complainant data, including age, gender, and disability (if relevant) to enable domestic and international observation groups to better assess the involvement of youth, women, and persons with disabilities during electoral dispute resolution.
40. Furnish the public with more regular and detailed progress reports on electoral disputes as they are adjudicated by the Hearing Office, NEC Board of Commissioners, and Supreme Court to enable more effective monitoring by domestic and international observation groups.
41. Conduct further qualitative and quantitative research into the issues around high rates of invalid balloting to increase valid voting and cases of voter trucking to deter manipulation of electoral results, especially among legislative elections.

34. TO SECURITY FORCES

42. Strengthen intelligence-gathering capabilities to identify potential risks and monitor activities of groups or individuals that may pose a threat to the electoral process throughout the electoral cycle.
43. Improve collaboration and coordination among various security agencies, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies that embodies the effective communication essential for a comprehensive security approach.
44. Provide adequate funding and resources to county-based police and other security forces, such as officers, vehicles, and communication equipment, throughout the electoral cycle to enable sufficient capacity to address security incidents.
45. Maintain a visible presence of security forces and establish rapid response teams in key areas prior to and during voter registration, campaigning, and polling to deter potential troublemakers and reassure the public that the electoral process is safe.

46. Ensure that security forces are trained to know how to operate within the bounds of the law, respecting human rights and democratic principles, and thereby bolster public trust and international credibility.
47. Develop new strategies to protect ballot boxes in transit to NEC tally centers to avoid a repeat incidents of stolen or damaged ballot boxes.
48. Protect NEC tally centers during results tabulation to avoid incidents, attempts at intimidation, and threats to the electoral process.

35. TO POLITICAL PARTIES

49. Educate political party agents by engaging with NEC regularly to better understand the electoral process and relevant polices, regulations, and procedures and for party agents to receive training on all aspects of the electoral cycle.
50. Uphold the collective responsibility to protect Liberia’s electoral integrity by refraining from undemocratic behavior, such as the buying of voter cards and distribution of money and other items to garner favor from the electorate.
51. Proceed with caution when campaigning by focusing on policy issues that matter to convince voters to support their candidates.
52. Exemplify the spirit of the 2023 Farmington River Declaration by encouraging party leaders, officials, agents, representatives, and supporters to refrain from violence and the use of hate speech or foul language during campaigning.
53. Continue to positively engage NEC on issues of disagreement and pursue prescribed legal remedies under due process of law, as necessary.
54. Respect other parties and foster a peaceful, safe, democratic, and inclusive society that includes greater space for women, youth, persons living with disabilities, and other marginalized groups to participate in the electoral process.
55. Avoid making unsubstantiated allegations against citizen observation groups and international entities that undermine the electoral process.
56. Avoid making early claims of victory or loss before NEC releases its official results, as raising supporter expectations can lead to dangerous disappointment when final results determine the actual president and vice-president and legislative representatives.
57. Initiate early preparations to meet the 30% gender quota requirement as contained in the 2022 electoral reform bill by identifying potential women candidates who want to participate and mitigating for any potential justifications for non-adherence.
58. Increase the representation of women on party candidate lists by adhering to 30% of women on the final nomination list.
59. Establish and streamline gender equity and social inclusion policies and regulations to support inclusion of women, youth, persons living with disabilities, and other marginalized groups within political party processes.

36. TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

60. Engage with government, legislative, and electoral policymakers to advocate for electoral reforms based on lessons from the 2023 general elections to enhance transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and fairness.
61. Increase and enhance civic and voter education programs to inform the public about the electoral process, their rights, the importance of political participation, and how to correctly mark their ballots.
62. Increase the capacity to monitor and analyze electoral processes to enable transparency, accountability, accuracy, and fairness throughout the electoral cycle.
63. Communicate and collaborate with election management and monitoring bodies to identify and address any irregularities or concerns arising from electoral outcomes.
64. Engage with NEC, media outlets, and other CSOs to develop strategies for countering information manipulation during the electoral cycle, especially to dissuade the use of mis/dis-information, cyber-bullying, and abusive language on social media.
65. Establish a working group among domestic and international election observation missions and other governance monitoring CSOs to share information, collaborate on findings, and leverage mutual skills and abilities during the electoral cycle.

37. TO MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTLETS

66. Engage with NEC and other entities to increase knowledge of electoral process to contribute to accurate civic and voter education throughout the electoral cycle.
67. Allow for more equal time on air or online for all political parties and independent candidates to enable a more level playing field for media coverage of elections.
68. Strengthen cybersecurity measures to safeguard against potential cyber threats, disinformation, and attempts to manipulate public opinion.
69. Establish effective communication strategies to disseminate accurate information and counter false narratives that could contribute to unrest.
70. Advocate for a social media regulatory law that protects freedom of speech but also hold individuals accountable for inappropriate or offensive comments made online.

38. TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

71. Support domestic and international efforts that advocate for a comprehensive constitutional review and electoral reform process and provide resources for technical assistance to enhance democratic governance.
72. Hold accountable those persons who may seek to undermine or damage the credibility and integrity of the electoral process during presidential and legislative elections.
73. Continue to support credible and genuine democratic practices in Liberia with ongoing mentorship and technical assistance on sound governance within the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government and among independent agencies.

74. Support domestic and international non-governmental organizations to continue developing the capacity of aspiring women candidates and women’s organizations to empower them with knowledge and skills in political and electoral participation.
75. Bolster support to civil society organizations and other citizen-led initiatives to continue strengthening their capacity to monitor, report, and advocate for improved democratic governance practices in Liberia.

XI. ANNEX

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NOTES