

Liberia: 'Aware of Bassa Underdevelopment', Senator Submits Report

By Alpha Daffae Senkpeni

Buchanan — Senator Jonathan Lambort Kaipay has presented his first annual report to the people of Grand Bassa County and at the same time opened his legislative office in Buchanan City. Kaipay, a Liberty Party lawmaker, acquired the second Grand Bassa's seat at the Liberian Senate in a famous victory over former Pro-Temp Gbehzongar Findley and since then critics and supporters alike have kept keen eyes on his performances both at the capital and the county.

Senator Kaipay is hopeful his report reflects a commitment of realizing the dream of the county. Hailing the Liberty Party and its political leader, Cllr. Charles Walker Brumskine, United Methodist Church bishop, John Innis for his ascendancy and also praised people of the county for their support. "We have always been aware that Grand Bassa County is underdeveloped and that much work needs to be done in effecting change in the county," the Senator said. To jump start his development drive, Kaipay explained how he engaged the Liberian Agricultural Company (LAC) to rehabilitate two feeder roads in the county.

He further hinted that the rehabilitation of roads including Rally road in District Three, the Compound#2 through Senya to Bong County, Waka Town to District Two and the Buchanan-Rivercess County highway. With support from the UMC churches in Norway and pending implementation by the Department of Community Services (DCS), Methodist church in Liberia has offered to construct a modern school in the county as a token of appreciation for his ascendancy.

Senator Kaipay also mentioned his involvement along with other Grand Bassa's lawmakers in calming tension at the artisanal mining site - No Way Gold Mine in District One - when commotion and deaths were prevalent at the mines in 2015. He also turned over a double cabin pickup to the county and at the same time officially opened his legislative office. The Senator promised to also open branches of his office in all five electoral districts in the county and disclosed that he has employed 30 staff members.

"In a broader attempt to acquaint ourselves with the people of the county with a define objective of understanding their plight we vigorously embarked on a county wide tour with our first tour beginning from March 5 to April 9, 2015," he explained.

He added that the tour was 98% completed during the first hundred days at the Capitol while he was also engaged stakeholders of the county including youth, students, marketers, and motorcyclists amongst others. He highlighted reconciliation and unity as the main issues of discussion during his tour and meetings with constituents from across the county. On the other hand, he described as cordial the relationship between him and Senator Nyonblee Karnga-Lawrence and despite the public perception of a divide among county lawmakers, he hailed the cordiality amongst them.

Kaipay serves as Chair, Co-Chair and member of several committees at the Senate including the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), Senate committee on autonomous commission, standing committee on concessions and investment and senate special committee on legislative projects amongst others. But the impact of his three cardinal responsibilities, some attending the program, say must reflect positively in the county.

However, the Grand Bassa lawmaker disclosed that over the period under review, he submitted several important communications to the Senate's plenary. "On March 31, 2015 we wrote the plenary of the Liberian about ArcelorMittal Liberia intention to redundant over 300 of its work force. The letter requested the body to invite the Minister of Labor to give government's position and the way forward concerning the company's decision which was not in the interest of the workers, the country, the economy and security sectors of Liberia," Senator Kaipay explained.

He also spoke about his legislative role during the National Oil Company's (Nocal) meltdown, his critique of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf move to alter the Constitution Review Committee report and his 'meaningful contribution on the floor of the Liberian Senate' in the supreme interest of the country. He decried that sometimes his expert views was overshadowed on the floor of the Senate. "For example, we opposed the passage of the 2015 national budget because the budget did not substantively address core issues of national development."

Lobbying Overseas

Speaking on his travels across the world and how he built ties with Bassa citizens in the diaspora and foreign institutions in the United States. He mentioned the United Bassa Organization in the America (UNIBOA) as a partner in addressing the prevailing social-economic trend in the country and also held discussions with several senior US government officials including Congressmen to help formulate ideas and support that may benefit the county. While in the USA, Kaipay said he continued the drive for a US city - Buchanan City sister relationship.

" Currently as we speak, there's a sister city relationship that is being discuss and memorandum of understanding will be developed between the city of Buchanan and (a city in the US state) of Missouri, additional city relationship to be foster between the city of Chewton, New Jersey and the city of Buchanan."

He continued: "We are also in constant discussion with a partnership towards the GBCC (Bassa Community College) and an institution of higher learning in the US. We are in contact with Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri to link up with the GBCC. He revealed that discussions are underway to begin staff development and student exchange programs will be developed. With assistance from UNIBOA, Senator Kaipay assured that the diaspora Liberians group is soliciting support to acquire buses for the Grand Bassa Community College.

Public Reactions Appear Okay

Constituents from all walks of life showed up at the occasion and varieties of comments point to the acceptability of his report. Cultural performances by a traditional dancers and singers were side attractions that help spiced the occasion. Bassa Youth Caucus President, Othello Contour outlined the challenge of internal political battle in the county and encouraged Kaipay to make amends by uniting the people of the county. Contour argued that unity is a driving force for county development.

Representatives of the Liberian Marketing Association, the transport union and women group all emphasized the need for unity serving as a vehicle for the county progress. The President of GBCC, Dr. Levi Zarnga assumed that Kaipay can be judge by the content of his performance while hailing the entire caucus for ensuring that the renovation of the bridge connecting the GBCC new campus and Buchanan as well as efforts to formulate partnership with foreign colleges and resolved the salary tension at GBCC.

Madam Martha Karnga of the Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA) called on the county lawmakers to lobby for CDF budgetary allocation for women in the county. She also encouraged constituents to make use of the lawmaker's county office by reporting their concerns and acquiring relevant information.

UMC Bishop, John Innis who is regarded a mentor and brother-in-law of the Senator heaped praises at the lawmaker and described the event as 'a team leadership in action'. The senior Liberian clergyman mentioned that when all of the county leaders put together they can make a difference for the county. The head of the Muslim Community in Grand Bassa described the lawmaker's report as timely and a means of identifying with his constituents. He thanked the Liberty Party lawmaker for recognizing the Islamic community in the county with his new office now set to serve as a point of contact.

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