

At last, Jonathan signs FOI Bill

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President Goodluck Jonathan signed the Freedom of Information Bill into law on Saturday, 4 August 2012, ending a decade-long intense lobbying and agitation by the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), civil society groups, right activists and even individuals.

The outgoing Senate and the House of Representatives passed the bill last Thursday and sent it to the president for his assent on Friday. Expectedly, the passage of the Bill has continued to generate diverse reactions from Nigerians. The non-passage of the FOI Bill has really made it very difficult, if not impossible to get any information from state agencies in the country in the past.

With the passage of the Bill, all government information in the country, which has been classified as "top secret", or "classified" will now be accessible to the public on request.

According to Justin Abuah, the deputy director of information in the office of the special adviser to the president on media and publicity, "the objective of the Act is to make public records and information more freely available, and to also protect public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy.

"The Freedom of Information Act also seeks to protect serving public officers from any adverse consequences of disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorisation, and to establish procedures for the achievement of these purposes," the statement added.

Pleading that the passage of the FOI Bill will have negative implication on national security, former president Olusegun Obasanjo refused to give assent to the FOI Bill passed by the-then National Assembly.

Source: [allAfrica](#)