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Public Service Act: Amendments in perspective

The *Public Service Amendment Act, 2025* officially came into effect as one of the most significant reforms to South Africa's public administration system since 1994. President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the Act into law in March 2026. Introduced in response to ongoing concerns regarding political interference, instability in leadership, and declining public confidence, the amendments seek to strengthen accountability, improve professionalisation, and enhance service delivery across government departments.

Key amendments

Less political interference

- Ministers and MECs lose substantial direct control over hiring, discipline, transfers, and promotions in departments.
- More authority now rests with Heads of Department (HODs).

Stronger administrative powers for HODs

- HODs become the real accounting and administrative authorities in departments.
- They now manage labour relations, discipline, staffing, and operational decisions more directly.

Professionalisation of public service

- Amendments aim to separate politics from administration.
- Senior officials are restricted from holding political office in political parties whilst serving in key administrative roles.

Stronger accountability

- The role of the Director-General in the Presidency and the Public Service Commission is clarified and strengthened.
- More emphasis is placed on ethics, performance, and discipline.

Appointments and contracts clarified

- The law provides clearer rules on appointing and managing HODs and senior managers.
- This is meant to reduce instability and political reshuffling.

Why this matters

Government states that the amendments are meant to reduce cadre deployment, improve service delivery, make departments more stable, and create a more skilled, ethical public service. Critics and analysts say it could improve accountability, but only if the rules are properly enforced and corruption networks are dealt with.

The PSA maintains that meaningful reform in the public service must be accompanied by fair labour practices, transparent governance, and investment in employee development. A professional public service can only be achieved where workers are empowered, supported, and treated with dignity.

Source
https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/minister-inkosi-mzamo-buthelazi-welcomes-signing-law-public-administration?utm_source=chatgpt.com
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