

## Fair, Transparent, and Good Governance for All Peoples

by Marco Cable  
Executive for Africa

Every election season, I am reminded of my great-grandmother, Mrs. Mattie Belle McClain McDowell, and her commitment to voting. My great-grandmother was born in 1900 to parents who were part of the first generation of freed blacks in the United States. When my great-grandmother was given the right to vote, she never missed an election. She voted whether it was to amend her state's constitution, elect city officials, decide national primaries, or the presidential election. She understood voting as a privilege that she was denied most of her life. Casting her vote was her opportunity to have her voice heard and honor the women and men who worked tirelessly for voting rights.

With this deep conviction, she worked to ensure that all the members of her family were voters. For my 18th birthday, she sent me a card with a voter's registration form included. Recently as a family gathered, I learned that all of my cousins also received a voter's registration form in their 18th birthday card.

As we are bombarded with stories of elections around the world and reports of candidates gearing up for the 2016 presidential election in our country, I am remembering my great-grandmother. I am also remembering people in the United States and around the world who are denied the right to vote, either by laws that have marginalized their communities or through intimidation and/or violence. In some instances, elected officials refuse to hold elections for fear of losing power and control. I am also holding in my thoughts and prayers communities who have been torn apart by violence since they held their national elections.

October 18 – 25 was Congo Week, an international advocacy campaign commemorating the millions of lives lost in the Congo conflict while celebrating the enormous potential that exists in the country. The primary focus of Congo Week this year was the Democratic Republic of Congo's 2016 presidential election. DR Congo's current president is Joseph Kabila and his term in office is set to expire at the end of 2016. Per Congo's constitution, he is not permitted

to run for a third term. Recent reports have indicated that President Kabila and his supporters are looking for ways to bypass the constitution and run again. Congolese civil society, youth, faith leaders (including our denominational global ministries partners), and opposition forces have called for President Kabila and his political party to respect the country's constitution. In addition, Secretary of State John Kerry has called on President Kabila to step down at the conclusion of his second term and organize elections to usher in a new government and peaceful transition. A key component of the Peace Framework established by the United Nations and 11 African countries to advance peace in the Congo calls for the Kinshasa government to subscribe to the principles of good governance, which entail respecting Congo's constitution. The World Council of Churches has encouraged coordination of an all church-based effort in the Congo and around the world to promote reflection, formation and capacity building in Congolese society, to ensure a peaceful election process that will produce empowered, committed, and accountable leadership for peace and stability in the DR Congo.

The Congolese community has a lot to do between now and next year's election in addition to registering thousands of eligible young adults to vote and ensuring that voting registration rosters are up-to-date. The world is watching and hoping for elections without incident and a peaceful transition into new leadership.

As people of faith, let us raise our voices through prayer and advocacy with and on behalf of our sisters and brothers in the DR Congo. Let us pray for good governance, and a fair and transparent election in DR Congo and around the world, and that everyone who has the right to vote is able to have their voices heard.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Marco Cable is Executive for Africa.*

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