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## Bill prohibiting independent candidates from joining parties tabled in NA

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The National Assembly has introduced the Second Amendment Bill to the Elections Act 2024, prohibiting independent candidates from joining another political party after a specified period. The session, chaired by Speaker Ayaz Sadiq, saw PML-N member Bilal Kayani present the bill. The proposed amendment aims to alter Sections 66 and 104 of the Elections Act 2017, restricting independent candidates from joining political parties after a constitutionally and legally defined period. The bill suggests that independent candidates should not be allowed to join any political party within the stipulated timeframe. It also states that parties failing to submit a list of reserved seats within the specified period will not be eligible for those seats. The bill further states that candidates who do not submit an affidavit of party affiliation to the returning officer will be considered independent. Candidates declaring party affiliation post-election will not be

recognised as candidates of that party, and the second amendment to the Elections Act 2017 will be enforced retroactively. The law minister recommended the bill be referred to the standing committee, which Speaker Sadiq subsequently did, instructing the committee chairman to convene a meeting the following day. Additionally, the Pakistan National Excellence Institute Bill 2024 was passed during the session. Amjad Ali Khan of the Sunni Ittehad Council presented a bill to criminalise enforced disappearances, which was also referred to the standing committee. Further, the West Pakistan Maintenance of Public Order Amendment Bill was presented by Sahibzada Sibghatullah and referred to the relevant committee by the speaker. Agha Rafiullah introduced the Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance Amendment Bill 2024, which was sent to the standing committee. Amjad Ali Khan also introduced a constitutional amendment bill to add Article 9A, which was referred to the relevant standing committee.