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## Parliamentary committee approves Election Act Amendment bill

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The parliamentary committee has approved the Election Act Amendment Bill by a majority vote, despite opposition from PTI and abstention from JUI-F. PPP members were also not present at the meeting. During the session chaired by Rana Iradat Sharif, the committee reviewed amendments to the Election Act 2017. Bilal Azhar Kayani provided a briefing on the bill. The meeting saw heated exchanges between opposition member Ali Muhammad Khan and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarar. Azam Nazir Tarar supported the bill, citing that the proposed amendments are in line with the constitution and law. However, PTI members opposed the amendments. JUI-F member Shahida Akhtar Ali expressed concerns about the election commission's role and called for a detailed review of the amendments. Ali Muhammad Khan criticized the election commission, accusing it of creating political crises and bias. The election

commission's secretary stated that they could not comment on the retrospective effects of the bill, leaving it to the Ministry of Law and Parliament. Ultimately, the committee approved the bill with six votes in favor and four against. Shahida Akhtar Ali abstained from voting, citing concerns about the bill's retrospective impact. No PPP members attended the meeting. The Election Act Amendment Bill will be presented to the National Assembly for approval on Friday. Furthermore, the National Assembly introduced the Second Amendment Bill to the Elections Act 2024, prohibits 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.