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## [Minister of Energy to license oil companies](#)

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Parliament has finally

approved the controversial Clause 9 of the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) Bill, 2012, giving powers of granting and revoking licenses to oil companies by the Minister of Energy.

The Committee of the Whole House had earlier on amended this provision in the original Bill – which gave the powers to the Minister and granted the powers to the Petroleum Authority, also created by the Bill.

In the Clause, the Minister is also responsible for initiating, developing and implementing oil and gas policy; submitting draft legislation to Parliament; issuing petroleum regulations; negotiating and endorsing petroleum agreements; approving field development plans; promoting and sustaining transparency in the petroleum sector and approving data management systems.

A sharply divided Parliament had on different occasions ended in stalemate over the Clause, which led to some rowdy scenes in the House. The Parliament Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline is investigating one such incident, which occurred on November 27, 2012.

After days of haggling, the Clause was put to a vote on Friday, December 7, 2012; 149 members voted in favour, while 39 voted against giving the Minister powers of licensing.

Following the vote, Parliament also passed the Petroleum (Exploration, Development and Production) Bill, 2012.

The object of the Bill is to give effect to article 244 of the Constitution; to regulate petroleum exploration, development and production; to establish the Petroleum Authority of Uganda; to provide for the National Oil Company; and to regulate the licensing and participation of commercial entities in petroleum activities.

The Bill also seeks to provide for an open, transparent and competitive process of licensing; to create a conducive environment for the promotion and exploration of Uganda's petroleum potential; to provide for efficient and safe petroleum activities; to provide for the cessation of petroleum activities and decommissioning of infrastructure; to

provide for the payment arising from petroleum activities; to provide for the condition for the restoration of derelict lands; and to repeal the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, Cap. 150.

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