

SIMULTANEOUS ELECTION OF REGIONAL HEADS: BENEFITS AND DEMOCRATIC MANIFESTATION IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT: *The mechanism of democracy and state governance in determining regional government leadership is through the election of regional heads (in Indonesia called Pilkada) as a manifestation of popular sovereignty carried out every five years. The process and results of Pilkada will reflect the political and legal legitimacy of the regional head as its output, which leads to its governance and development policies. The policy of holding simultaneous Pilkada that began in 2015 and will be held nationally in 2024 is a way to overcome the high cost of Pilkada. This writing will discuss the benefits of holding simultaneous Pilkada in terms of budget efficiency and technical implementation of Pilkada, while also not ignoring procedural democracy as an effort to maintain local democracy. A sociological juridical method is used to provide answers to these problems by explaining the issues being studied in relation to legal aspects and trying to explore empirical reality in society. This writing concludes that holding simultaneous Pilkada is more efficient in terms of budget and technical implementation of Pilkada, while still fulfilling procedural democracy for local communities to exercise their right to vote and produce legitimate legal and political leaders to lead and advance the region for the welfare of the community.*

Keywords: Simultaneous Pilkada, Budget Efficiency, Procedural Democracy

I. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a concrete form of people's sovereignty (Rousseau), which is a system of state governance to realize that sovereignty. A state that realizes people's sovereignty in its system of state governance is called a democracy [1]. Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as a set of systems to make political decisions where individuals have the right to decide through a struggle to compete for the people's votes [2]. According to Article 18 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution, "The Governor, Regent, and Mayor respectively as the heads of the provincial, district, and city regional governments are democratically elected," the mechanism of democracy and governance regulated by the law is through the Regional Head Election (*Pilkada*).

The implementation of *Pilkada* is a means for the people to participate and determine the figure and direction of regional leadership in a certain period and is a reflection of democracy itself. [3] Strengthening local democracy is also expected to build greater political awareness among the community to express all forms of aspirations and to produce regional leaders who have strong legitimacy because they are directly elected by their people, capable of advancing their respective regions through direct *Pilkada*.

In Indonesia, there are 416 regencies, 98 cities, and 34 provinces [4], each with its own local government that elects a Head of Region through *Pilkada* for a certain term. Almost every day in Indonesia, regional elections occur, resulting in inefficiency in organizing and financing the elections and causing public fatigue due to constant witnessing of the dynamics and political consequences of the election contests. This includes negative effects arising from public dissatisfaction with the process and results of the regional elections, which can lead to society's polarization and sometimes even damage and anarchic actions against public facilities. In addition, there are many legal challenges filed by candidates or their supporters who are dissatisfied with the results of the regional elections in court.

With the enactment of Law Number 1 of 2014 and all its amendments until Law Number 10 of 2016, the phenomenon of "no day without *Pilkada*" in Indonesia has been changed

with the simultaneous holding of *Pilkada*. Starting in 2015, simultaneous *Pilkada* was held by grouping the term of office of regional heads, and in 2024 there will be a national simultaneous *Pilkada* to elect all regional heads in Indonesia. This means that the term of office for 171 regional heads elected in the 2018 *Pilkada* will be shortened.

This article will discuss the benefits of simultaneous *Pilkada*, including budget efficiency and technical aspects of organizing *Pilkada*. In addition, the improvement of local democracy is also an important aspect to consider as it can help to improve the welfare of the community."

II. METHOD

This writing is the result of socio-legal research that employs a juridical-sociological method, which aims to explain the researched problem by considering legal aspects and attempting to understand the existing social reality in society. In this approach, law is not only seen as a normative or theoretical entity that stands alone, but also as a part that is integrated into the social system that relates to other social variables.

This research uses a descriptive-analytical approach by conducting field surveys. The analytical approach is done by analyzing the identified problems using legal regulations, expert opinions, and relevant legal theories to this research.

III. DISCUSSION

Pilkada is a way for people in regions to demonstrate their sovereignty and ensure that they have a voice in choosing their regional leaders. The main purpose of *Pilkada* is to elect regional leaders who can understand and implement the wishes of the people in the region, as well as have missions, visions, programs, qualities, and integrity that can determine the success of regional governance. In addition, *Pilkada* also functions as a tool for public accountability, evaluation, and control over regional leaders and the political forces that support them [5].

However, the implementation of *Pilkada* has been costly, with significant amounts of funding being used for conducting elections. For instance, from 2005 to 2014, the direct *Pilkada* elections in 266 regions required Rp1.3 trillion, and in 244

regions for the 2010 elections, it was Rp3.54 trillion. According to the General Directorate of Regional Administration and Finance, the cost of *Pilkada* for the 2010-2014 period amounted to Rp15 trillion, including the expenses of the General Election Commission, Elections Supervisory Body, police, candidates, and campaign teams [6]. The fact that *Pilkada* requires significant funding raises a paradox, given that its purpose is to produce leaders who can increase the welfare of the people through democratic means and improve local participation in politics. The table below provides an overview of the costs of *Pilkada*.

Table 1. Data on the Cost of Conducting Regional Elections

Year	Province	Regency	City	Cost
2015	8	170	26	7,09 T
2017	7	76	18	5,96 T
2018	17	39	115	15,16 T
2020	9	224	37	20,49 T
Total	41	509	196	48,7 T

Source 1: Ministry of Home Affairs of Indonesia

Source 2: Directorate General of Regional Financial Intelligence, General Election Commission

Source 3: Processed data.

The issue of budget is closely related to the political interests of the rulers and other elites who compete for their own interests. Therefore, it is necessary for the state to protect its people by providing effective and efficient public services without reducing their public rights [7]. The state, represented by the executive and legislative branches, can formulate a budget determination called budget politics, which places the allocation of public funds in a position to accurately meet the public's needs.

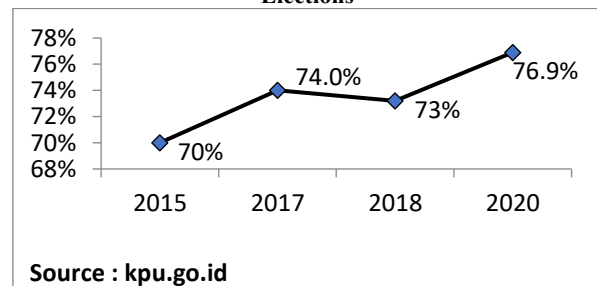
Simultaneous regional elections are an alternative that can minimize the relatively high cost of regional elections aimed at creating cost efficiency without reducing the value of the democratic implementation of regional elections. Siti Zuhro stated that the main purpose of direct elections is to bring in democratic and representative leaders in accordance with the people's wishes and to increase public participation in politics [8].

Initially, simultaneous regional elections were planned for 2015 (204 regions: 8 governors, 170 regents, 26 mayors) as the first stage for regional heads whose terms would end in 2014 and 2015. The 2018 simultaneous regional elections (285 regions) were the second stage for regional heads whose terms ended in 2016-2018. The 2020 national simultaneous regional elections were held for 541 autonomous regions (Directorate General of Regional Financial Development - Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015). However, the implementation of the national simultaneous regional elections changed into four waves; the first wave was held in December 2015 for regional heads whose terms ended in 2015 and the first semester of 2016, the second wave was held in February 2017 for regional heads whose terms ended in 2017, the third wave was held in June 2018 for regional heads whose terms ended in 2018 and 2019, and the fourth wave was held in 2020 for regional heads elected in the 2015 regional elections.

To address the problem of the high cost of direct regional elections that have been inefficient, especially to save the budget, simultaneous regional elections were implemented as one of the proposed innovations to strengthen local democracy and implemented based on the local social, political, cultural, and geographical conditions [9]. Simultaneous regional elections are a reform of the regional head election system because they leave the problem of the high cost of democracy, and their presence saves the budget and makes the process more efficient [10]. It is necessary to make breakthroughs so that the financing of simultaneous regional elections is funded only by the national state budget, without burdening the regions through regional budgets. This is to address at least two things: first, not burdening the financial capacity of regions that are not equally capable, so that the financing of regional elections does not affect the use of financing for basic infrastructure such as education and health; second, to avoid politicization of the budget by regional power elites who have interests in the regional election contest, so that the financing of regional elections is not used as a political instrument that can be misused for the interests of certain groups (fairness).

According to Siti Zuhro, the way to overcome the weaknesses of democracy is not to reduce it, but rather to increase it to make it more democratic. The deepening of democracy is directed towards building democratic institutions that are more in line with ethical demands and more responsive to the aspirations and interests of the people. Meanwhile, the expansion of democracy and political policies have an impact on improving the welfare of the people and reducing social inequalities that can hinder the process of democratization [11]. The public participation rate in the simultaneous regional elections is presented in the following table.

Table 2. Voter Participation Rates in Simultaneous Regional Elections



The implementation of the simultaneous regional elections in four waves between 2015 and 2020 ran smoothly, with relatively high voter participation of above 70 percent. All stages of the *Pilkada* were carried out in accordance with the laws and regulations and resulted in legally and politically legitimate elected officials. There were no significant horizontal conflicts or violence during the *Pilkada* stages, except for a few specific cases. The *Pilkada* also served as a means for local political education. In this context, the implementation of the Simultaneous Regional Elections is considered to reflect a well-functioning procedural democracy, in line with Joseph Schumpeter's view of democracy as a process or procedure of general elections [12].

IV. CONCLUSION

Simultaneous Regional Elections are held to elect regional leaders in Indonesia. However, due to the financial burden and a large number of regions, since 2015-2020, *Pilkada Serentak* (simultaneous regional elections) with a cluster division following the term of office has been conducted. In 2024, a national simultaneous regional election will be held. Nevertheless, *Pilkada Serentak* is more efficient in terms of financing and technical aspects, and its voter participation is relatively high, above 70 percent. *Pilkada Serentak* still upholds procedural democracy, which is a mechanism of democracy and statehood in Indonesia to elect regional leaders and build progress and welfare of the regional community as part of the Indonesian nation. The result of the implementation of *Pilkada Serentak* is the improvement of development and the welfare of the community, which is an important aspect of a substantive democracy.

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