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**STRENGTHENING ELECTION REGULATIONS: SAVING DEMOCRACY FROM THE THREAT OF  
POLITICAL MONEY IN INDONESIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

General elections are the cornerstone of a democratic system. However, in Indonesia, the practice of money politics poses a serious threat to the integrity of elections and political justice. This article aims to analyze the importance of strengthening electoral regulations to combat money politics and provide steps that can be taken to safeguard democracy from such practices. The research methodology employed in this study focuses on analyzing existing legislation, government regulations, electoral institution decisions, and court rulings related to elections and money politics. The results and discussion of this article include concrete measures that can be taken to strengthen electoral regulations and combat money politics in Indonesia. These measures encompass increasing transparency and financial reporting, limiting campaign expenditures, enforcing strict legal measures, educating and raising awareness among the public, monitoring media and campaigns, fostering active public participation, and improving the political financing system. By strengthening electoral regulations, democracy in Indonesia can be protected from the threat of money politics. These steps will create a fair, transparent, and just political environment where the public interest is prioritized. Active participation of the public in elections and strict law enforcement against violations related to money politics are also crucial in preventing such practices. In conclusion, this article highlights the importance of strengthening electoral regulations in safeguarding democracy from the threat of money politics in Indonesia. By enhancing transparency, imposing limits on campaign expenditures, enforcing strict legal measures, educating the public, monitoring the media, encouraging public participation, and reforming the political financing system, Indonesia can build a more fair, transparent, and democratic electoral system.

**Keywords:** Regulation, General Election, Democracy, Money Politics.

**INTRODUCTION**

Democracy is a system of government based on the active participation of the people in general elections. Elections are one of the important pillars in maintaining the sustainability of democracy in a country (Wisnubroto, 1999). However, in Indonesia, democracy is currently facing serious threats caused by the practice of money politics which undermines integrity and fairness in elections. Political money is the practice of political corruption that involves the use of money or other financial resources to influence the electoral process, including influence over political parties, potential candidates, and voters. The threat of money politics has caused democracy in Indonesia to be threatened by the power of money and personal interests which ignore the aspirations of the people (Mahfud, et al. 2013).

One of the negative impacts caused by money politics is systemic corruption. The money used to win elections often comes from shady sources and is linked to other corrupt practices. Prospective candidates who have abundant funds tend to have an unfair advantage compared to other candidates who are less financially capable. This can damage the integrity and credibility of elections and influence voter decisions. Apart from that, money politics can also result in political dependence on external funding. Prospective candidates often rely on financial support from certain groups or individuals who then influence the policies they take after being elected. This kind of dependence can threaten the country's political independence and reduce the ability of leaders to act based on the public interest (Mahfud, et al. 2013).

The threat of political money also gives more advantages to candidates from major parties and incumbent candidates. Political parties with abundant financial resources can spend huge amounts on campaigns and vote buying. This gives major parties and incumbent candidates an unfair advantage, hampering the possibility of independent or minor party candidates from competing fairly. The practice of money politics also sacrifices quality political participation. In a healthy democratic system, civil society participation and diversity of political views must be encouraged and respected. However, with the existence of money politics, financial interests can dominate political discussions and limit the access and role of community groups that do not have the same financial resources (Sugiharto, 2016).

In order to save democracy from the threat of money politics, it is necessary to strengthen stricter election regulations. The government and related institutions need to commit to addressing this problem seriously. Some steps that can be taken include:

1. Transparency and accountability: Increase transparency in campaign financing and tighten oversight of the origins and use of campaign funds. Financial reports of political parties and prospective candidates must be disclosed openly and accessible to the public.
2. Donation restrictions: Set maximum limits on donations that political parties and prospective candidates can accept. This can avoid dependence on funding from certain groups or individuals who may have hidden interests.
3. Strict sanctions: Establish firm and effective sanctions for violations related to money politics, including candidate disqualification, revocation of political rights, and adequate criminal sanctions.
4. Political education: Increasing public understanding of the importance of political participation with integrity and running educational campaigns to fight the practice of money politics.
5. Strengthening supervisory institutions: Strengthening the role of election supervisory institutions such as the General Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) to monitor and take action against violations related to money politics.

By strengthening stronger election regulations, it is hoped that democracy in Indonesia can be free from the influence of money politics. Quality political participation, justice and integrity in elections can be restored, so that democracy can function as an effective means of realizing public interests and the welfare of society as a whole (Rahardjo, 2000). In an effort to strengthen election regulations to save democracy from the threat of money politics in Indonesia, it is also important to involve the active role of civil society, mass media and educational institutions.

First of all, civil society must be at the forefront in monitoring and reporting violations related to money politics. Civil society organizations can monitor political campaigns and funding, as well as conduct education and advocacy programs to increase public awareness about the dangers of money politics. The active participation of civil society in maintaining election integrity will strengthen social control and provide moral pressure on political parties and prospective candidates to behave honestly and transparently.

The involvement of the mass media is also important in exposing the practice of money politics and building public awareness. The mass media has a strategic role in providing accurate and balanced information about campaign funding, sources of political funds, and cases of money politics that occur. By involving professional and independent journalists, the mass media can become guardians of truth and monitors justice in elections. In this case, legal protection and press freedom need to be strengthened to ensure that mass media can carry out their duties without pressure from interested parties.

Educational institutions also have an important role in overcoming money politics. Inclusive and quality political education can form a young generation who is aware of the values of democracy, integrity and ethical political participation. Formal and non-formal educational institutions must encourage learning that involves a deep understanding of the political system, political ethics, and the importance of clean participation in elections. In this way, society can develop a critical understanding and critical attitude towards the practice of money politics. In addition to efforts from civil society, mass media, and educational institutions, cooperation between the government, political parties, and related institutions

is also needed. The government needs to take the initiative to develop stronger regulations and implement effective law enforcement measures against money politics. Political parties must also be committed to prioritizing integrity and running campaigns based on healthy democratic principles (Rifai, 2003).

Thus, strengthening election regulations to save democracy from the threat of money politics in Indonesia is a very important step. Through transparency, accountability, strict sanctions, political education, involvement of civil society, mass media, educational institutions, and cross-sector cooperation, it is hoped that democracy in Indonesia can recover from the negative influence of money politics. With clean and fair elections, the public can have high trust in the political process and elected leaders, as well as strengthen the strong foundations of democracy to achieve shared prosperity.

### RESEARCH METHODS

Normative legal research methods can be used to analyze strengthening election regulations in order to save democracy from the threat of money politics in Indonesia. This method will focus on analysis of existing laws and regulations, including laws, government regulations, electoral body decisions, and court decisions related to elections and money politics. This research identifies and analyzes laws and regulations related to elections and money politics in Indonesia. This involves collecting and reviewing legal documents relating to elections, campaign financing, political parties, and sanctions against money politics. This analysis aims to understand the existing legal framework and identify gaps or weaknesses in the currently implemented regulations (Soekamto, 2009).

Then, normative legal research will involve analysis of relevant legal principles, doctrines and court decisions. Researchers will analyze how election regulations and money politics can be constructed and enforced in accordance with the principles of democracy, justice and transparency. Apart from that, this research will also look at how the courts have decided cases related to money politics in order to strengthen existing election regulations. Through this normative legal research method, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the electoral legal framework and regulations related to money politics in Indonesia can be obtained. This research will provide views on the advantages and disadvantages of existing regulations, as well as provide recommendations for strengthening regulations and maintaining election integrity from the practice of money politics (Soekamto, 2009).

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Weaknesses in Election Regulations Create a Loophole for Political Money Practices in Indonesia**

General elections are one of the important pillars of democracy in a country. In Indonesia, the electoral system has experienced significant development since reform in 1998. As a democratic country, Indonesia adopted a general election system as a mechanism to elect its leaders and influence the policies that will be taken. After the New Order era which was characterized by authoritarian rule and restrictions on political participation, political reform in Indonesia paved the way for changes to a more inclusive and democratic electoral system (Kleden, 2004). In 1999, elections were held directly for the first time in more than four decades. Community participation in electing their representatives in parliament and president has become more open and diverse.

Since then, elections in Indonesia have become an integral part of the political process and democratic transformation. At the national level, elections are held periodically to elect members of parliament and the president. Meanwhile, elections are also held at the regional level to elect governors, regents/mayors and other regional representatives. Through elections, the Indonesian people have the opportunity to participate directly in determining the direction of the country and electing leaders who they consider appropriate to their aspirations and needs (Miles, et al. 2005).

As the country with the fourth largest population in the world, elections in Indonesia are a complex process and involve millions of voters and candidates. The electoral system in Indonesia is based on the principle of proportional representation, which means that the number of seats obtained by political parties in parliament is proportional to the percentage of votes they receive. This principle is expected to reflect political diversity and community interests more fairly (Barda NA, 2002).

However, even though elections in Indonesia have experienced significant developments, there are still weaknesses in election regulations which create loopholes for the practice of money politics. This weakness has an impact on the quality of democracy and the integrity of general elections. One of the main problems is an imbalance in campaign financing that often gives an unfair advantage to candidates who have greater access to financial resources. This can create candidate dependence on money political practices that damage the democratic process. In this article, we will discuss several weaknesses in election regulations that contribute to the practice of money politics in Indonesia (Amirudin, et al. 2006).

One of the main weaknesses in Indonesia's election regulations is related to campaign financing. Currently, campaign funding sources are still dominated by donations from certain individuals or groups. This creates an imbalance that can affect the democratic process. Candidates with access to greater financial resources have an advantage in their campaigns, while financially constrained candidates struggle to compete fairly. This imbalance creates an opening for the practice of money politics, where rich candidates can use their money to gain unfair advantages in political competition (Mahfud, et al. 2013).

Weak election regulations related to campaign financing also provide opportunities for corrupt practices. Openness and transparency regarding the origin and use of campaign funds is still a problem in Indonesia. Some candidates or political parties may receive donations from unknown or illegal sources. Without strict regulations and effective supervision, corrupt practices can easily infiltrate the electoral system, threatening the integrity of the democratic process (Agustino, 2012).

Furthermore, current election regulations also do not provide strict enough sanctions for violations related to money politics. Even though there are several regulations that prohibit the practice of money politics, the penalties imposed on violators are still relatively light and do not provide a strong deterrent effect. As a result, candidates or political parties involved in the practice of money politics may feel that the risks they face are not commensurate with the benefits they obtain. This weakness strengthens the gap for the practice of money politics in Indonesia.

Election regulations that are complex and difficult to understand are also a weakness in preventing money politics. Complex and confusing rules can create room for different interpretations and provide loopholes for unethical practices. Candidates or political parties with sufficient knowledge and resources may be able to exploit this loophole to their advantage. Therefore, simplifying and reformulating election regulations to make them clearer and easier to understand is very necessary to reduce the loopholes for the practice of money politics (Mahfud, et al. 2013).

Apart from that, weak supervision and law enforcement are also factors that strengthen the practice of money politics in Indonesia. Even though there are institutions tasked with monitoring and taking action against election violations, limited resources and weaknesses in the law enforcement system often become obstacles. Without effective supervision and strict law enforcement, money politics perpetrators can operate freely and rarely face serious consequences. This creates a situation where the practice of money politics can continue to occur without hindrance (Hariyanto, 2018).

In overcoming the weaknesses in election regulations which create loopholes for the practice of money politics in Indonesia, several steps need to be taken. First, reforms are needed in the campaign financing system that is fairer and more transparent. Currently, imbalances in campaign funding have become one of the main sources of political money practices. To overcome this, arrangements that limit the influence of money in politics need to be strengthened. A more transparent campaign funding reporting mechanism also needs to be implemented, so that the public can know where and how political parties get funds for their campaigns (Hariyanto, 2018).

Furthermore, public funding for political parties that meet the requirements could be an alternative that needs to be considered. By providing public funds to eligible political parties, the government can reduce political parties' dependence on donations from private parties that have the potential to influence political decisions. Public funding must be accompanied by strict oversight mechanisms to ensure its appropriate and transparent use.

Second, stricter and more effective sanctions must be applied to violations related to money politics. Adequate punishment and a strong deterrent effect will be an important buffer to reduce the practice. Increased cooperation between law enforcement agencies, such as the Corruption Eradication Commission and the police, also needs to be carried out to ensure effective law enforcement against election violators. By showing a strong commitment to overcoming money politics through strict sanctions, it is hoped that this practice can be prevented (Hariyanto, 2018).

Third, simplifying election regulations and increasing public understanding of the applicable rules can help reduce opportunities for the practice of money politics. Complicated election regulations are often difficult for the general public and potential voters to understand. Therefore, simplifying and clarifying the applicable rules can increase public understanding and awareness of the election process, as well as reduce the space for hidden money political practices.

Finally, increased monitoring and effective law enforcement are needed to ensure that election violators cannot act without consequences. Election monitoring mechanisms need to be strengthened, including through active participation from the community and NGOs. Increased cooperation between election monitoring institutions, law enforcement and civil society can create a tighter and more effective environment for monitoring the election process.

Thus, to build a fairer, more transparent and democratic election system, steps need to be taken to overcome weaknesses in election regulations that create loopholes for the practice of money politics (Marzuki, 2010). Reforming campaign finance, implementing strict sanctions, simplifying election regulations, and increasing supervision and effective law enforcement are important steps in achieving this goal. With these steps, it is hoped that Indonesia can build a stronger electoral system and protect the integrity of democracy.

### **Strengthening Election Regulations to Protect Democracy from the Threat of Political Money in Indonesia**

Strengthening election regulations is an important step in protecting democracy from the threat of money politics in Indonesia. Political money refers to practices involving the use of money in the political process, which can threaten the integrity of elections and affect fairness and political representation. The practice of money politics often creates inequality in political competition, ignores public interests, and damages public trust in the political system (Mahfud, et al. 2013).

In Indonesia, even though there are election regulations that have been established, there are still weaknesses that allow the practice of money politics to develop. Imbalance in campaign funding is one of the main problems that creates opportunities for the practice of money politics. Parties with greater financial resources have a greater advantage in influencing election outcomes through expensive campaigns. This results in unfairness in political competition and reduces the opportunity for political parties that have limited resources to compete fairly.

Apart from that, the lack of transparency in campaign financing is also an important factor that allows the practice of money politics to occur. Without clear rules and transparent reporting mechanisms, it is difficult for the public to know the source and use of funds in political campaigns. This provides room for manipulation and corruption in the political process, as well as reducing the accountability of candidates and political parties to society. Sanctions imposed for violations related to money politics are also still inadequate. Weak and inadequate punishments do not provide a sufficient deterrent effect for perpetrators of money politics. The lack of effective law enforcement against this practice also causes public distrust of the fairness of the political system. As a result, money politics continues to develop and undermines the integrity of elections.

Complicated election regulations are also an obstacle in minimizing the practice of money politics. The ambiguity of complex rules and procedures is often difficult for the general public and potential voters to understand. This creates an opening for manipulation and violations that are difficult to detect. Simplifying and clarifying election rules that are easier for all parties to understand will help reduce the space for hidden money political practices.

Low public understanding of election regulations is also a factor that widens the gap for the practice of money politics. Many people do not have adequate knowledge about the rules that apply in elections, so they are vulnerable to manipulation and abuse. Education and increasing public awareness about the importance of election rules and the dangers of money politics needs to be carried out continuously so that the public can participate in maintaining election integrity.

In the Indonesian context, there are several steps that can be implemented to strengthen election regulations to protect democracy from the threat of money politics. The following are several steps that can be taken (Mahfud, et al. 2013):

1) Financial Transparency and Reporting:

Financial transparency and reporting is an important aspect in fighting money politics. Necessary steps include encouraging political parties, candidates and campaigns to transparently report their funding sources. This openness will allow the public to clearly see the sources of funds used by candidates and political parties, thereby minimizing corrupt practices and the influence of money in politics.

2) Campaign Spending Restrictions:

Limiting campaign spending can help prevent money political practices that are detrimental to democracy. By setting maximum limits on campaign expenditure that can be made by political parties and candidates, there will be fairness in political competition. These restrictions also ensure that campaigns do not become dominated by those with greater financial resources, thereby giving financially weaker candidates a fairer chance.

3) Firm Law Enforcement:

Strict supervision and law enforcement against the practice of money politics is very important. Cooperation is needed between law enforcement agencies and election supervisory bodies to detect and investigate suspected violations in elections related to the illegal use of money. Those involved in money politics must be given strict sanctions, including fines and disqualification.

4) Public Education and Awareness:

Education and public awareness also have an important role in fighting money politics. Increasing public understanding regarding the negative consequences of money politics can change people's thinking patterns. Educational programs and public campaigns can help increase public awareness of the importance of maintaining election integrity and rejecting the practice of money politics.

5) Media and Campaign Oversight:

Mass media has an important role in providing objective and balanced information during the election process. Strict regulations need to be implemented to ensure that the media does not take sides or is involved in the practice of money politics. Effective supervision of political advertising must also be carried out to prevent misuse of campaign funds.

6) Active Public Participation:

Encouraging active public participation in elections can be an important step in protecting democracy from money politics. By involving the community at large, both as voters and as election observers, a strong social control mechanism will be created. Public discussion forums, candidate debates, and participatory campaigns can increase people's active participation in elections, thereby reducing opportunities for the practice of money politics.

7) Improvement of the Political Financing System:

A transparent and fair political financing system is very important to reduce the influence of money in politics. Better political financing mechanisms, such as public financing or limited financing



from the government, can reduce political parties' dependence on funds from private parties that have the potential to influence their political decisions.

Political money is a serious threat to democracy in Indonesia. To protect democracy from the negative influence of money politics, steps to strengthen election regulations need to be implemented. Financial transparency and reporting, limiting campaign spending, strict law enforcement, public education and awareness, media and campaign monitoring, active public participation, and improving the political financing system are steps that can help fight money politics (Sugiharto, 2016).

It is important for governments, law enforcement agencies, and society as a whole to collaborate in protecting democracy. By creating a political environment that is fair, transparent and just, where public interests come first, clean and representative elections will be created. Apart from that, active community participation in elections and monitoring the election process are also very important in preventing money politics.

Efforts to strengthen election regulations must be supported by firm law enforcement against violations related to money politics. Strict and effective sanctions must be given to parties involved in the practice of money politics. In this case, cooperation between law enforcement agencies, election monitoring bodies, and society at large is very important to create an environment free from money politics.

In the long term, changes to the political financing system also need to be considered. Transparent and fair political financing will reduce political parties' dependence on sources of funds whose origins are unclear. A public financing system or limited financing from the government can be an alternative to ensure that political parties receive sufficient funds for their campaigns without having to rely on donations from private parties that have the potential to influence political decisions.

By implementing these steps, it is hoped that democracy in Indonesia can be protected from money politics. People's representatives will focus more on representing people's interests effectively without being influenced by the detrimental influence of money. Protecting the integrity of elections is a crucial step in maintaining a healthy and strong democracy in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion from this discussion is that election regulations in Indonesia have several weaknesses which create loopholes for the practice of money politics. Some of the main weaknesses that have been identified include unbalanced campaign financing, lack of transparency and oversight of campaign finance, weak sanctions for violations, regulatory complexity, and weak law enforcement. In order to overcome these weaknesses, several steps need to be taken. First, reforms are needed in the campaign financing system that is fairer and more transparent, including setting campaign spending limits. Second, stricter and more effective sanctions must be applied to violations related to money politics to prevent this practice. Third, simplifying election regulations and increasing public understanding of the applicable rules will help reduce opportunities for the practice of money politics. Finally, increased monitoring and effective law enforcement are needed to ensure that election violators cannot act without consequences.

Apart from that, steps to strengthen election regulations also need to be implemented to protect democracy from the threat of money politics. This includes financial transparency and reporting, strict law enforcement, public education and awareness, media and campaign monitoring, active public participation, as well as improving the political financing system. In the long term, changes to the political financing system also need to be considered, such as public financing or limited financing from the government, to reduce political parties' dependence on sources of funds whose origins are unclear. By implementing these steps, it is hoped that democracy in Indonesia can be protected from the practice of money politics, the people's representatives can represent the interests of the community effectively, and the integrity of elections can be maintained, thereby building a healthy and strong democracy in Indonesia.

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