

Restoring Integrity: Re-Voting of the 2025 Serang Regent Election and Its Transformative Power for Local Democracy

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ABSTRACT - *Re-Voting in the Regional Head Election is one of the corrective instruments in the Indonesian electoral democracy system which aims to ensure fairness and integrity in the implementation of elections. This study specifically examines the implementation of Re-Voting in the context of the 2025 Serang Regency Regent Election, which was decided by the Constitutional Court as a result of proven violations of the principle of neutrality by a number of village heads who actively provided support to one of the candidate pairs. This study aims to analyze the juridical aspects underlying Re-Voting decisions, identify administrative challenges in their implementation, and evaluate their impact on the quality of local democracy in Serang Regency. The research approach used is qualitative with a juridical-normative method, supported by secondary data analysis in the form of Constitutional Court decisions, related laws and regulations, and reliable news sources from mainstream media. The results of the study show that the implementation of Re-Voting in Serang Regency not only indicates weak supervision of village officials in local political contests, but also highlights the urgency of regulatory reform related to the neutrality of village apparatus in the Regional Elections. In addition, administrative challenges such as budget limitations and coordination between election organizing agencies are important highlights that can affect the effectiveness of Re-Voting. This study recommends strengthening mechanisms to prevent violations of neutrality, as well as increasing the institutional capacity of election organizers in dealing with complex local political dynamics.*

Keywords: *Re-Voting; Local Elections; Constitutional Court; Local Democracy.*

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Introduction

The Regional Election is a concrete manifestation of the decentralized democratic system adopted by Indonesia after the 1998 reform. This mechanism is not only intended as a means of peaceful and legal transfer of power, but also as an effort to encourage public participation in local governance that is more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the community (Asanbekova et al., 2021). The regional elections are a strategic forum to realize democratization at the local level and strengthen the principles of people's sovereignty.

Since the enactment of regional autonomy, the Regional Elections have become the main medium for the community to determine local leaders through the mechanism of direct elections (Nurfaisal, 2024). Political legitimacy obtained from the free and fair election process is the main foundation in the implementation of democratic local government. The dynamics of the implementation of the Regional Elections are often colored by various challenges and structural problems that can disrupt electoral integrity (Muiruri, 2023). One of the problems that continues to recur is the violation of election principles, such as the practice of money politics, abuse of authority by public officials, and the non-neutrality of state apparatus. In this problem, the Constitutional Court as the guardian of the constitution plays a central role in upholding electoral justice through legal instruments in the form of annulment of election results and Re-Voting orders as a form of juridical correction for serious violations that have been proven to significantly affect the election results (Sun & Chen, 2022).

One of the corrective instruments provided by the Indonesian legal system to maintain the integrity of elections is the Re-Voting which can be ordered by the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court has the constitutional authority to resolve disputes over the results of the regional head elections and give final and binding decisions, including in the case of structural, systematic, and massive election violations (Ilyas, 2024). In recent years, the practice of Re-Voting ordered by the Constitutional Court has shown an increasing trend, especially in areas with a high level of political contestation and weak supervision of the neutrality of state apparatus (Rashid & Islam, 2023).

The case of the 2024 Serang Regent Election is an important highlight in contemporary discourse on electoral justice and the challenges of local democracy in Indonesia. In its decision, the Constitutional Court ordered the implementation of Re-Voting at all Polling Stations because it was proven that there were structural, systematic, and massive violations, especially the non-neutrality of the village head in supporting one of the candidate pairs, which was considered to have injured the basic principles of holding honest and fair elections (Constitutional Court Decision No. 70/PHPU. BUP-XXIII/2025). This decision not only has an impact on the administrative and logistical process of elections, but also invites critical questions about the capacity of local institutions to maintain the integrity of democracy and the functioning of the legal system in ensuring the neutrality of village government apparatus which is often in an ambiguous position between public services and political interests (Nurfaisal & Sari, 2025).

This case is interesting to study further considering the total scope of Re-Voting (all polling stations), the involvement of political actors at the national level, and its implications for the implementation of local government and public trust in the democratic process. The issue of Re-Voting has been widely discussed in the context of procedural technicalities and their impact on election organizers (Gu, 2025). However, an in-depth study that highlights the juridical-political aspects of the Re-Voting in the context of the 2025 Serang Regional Election is still very

limited. Therefore, this study offers a scientific novelty by focusing on the relationship between local power interventions (particularly by village heads) and their impact on the legitimacy of local democracy that should be maintained independently of elite political interests (Kpohoue et al., 2025). With this approach, this study seeks to fill the void of academic discourse that has tended to dichotomously separate legal and political aspects in the study of regional elections (Holtkamp & Dressman, 2022).

The main problem raised in this study is how are the juridical and administrative dynamics of the implementation of the 2025 Serang Regency Regional Election, and to what extent does the implementation of the Re-Voting reflect the challenges and opportunities in strengthening local democracy in Indonesia? This research aims to critically and comprehensively examine the implementation of the 2025 Serang Regency Regional Election Re-Voting by highlighting the legal basis, implementation challenges, and political implications as a reflection material for improving election governance in the future.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a juridical-normative study method, which is an approach that examines law as written norms and principles that apply in the Indonesian legal system. This approach was chosen because the issue being studied, namely the 2025 Serang Regency Regional Election Re-Voting, is a product of the legal mechanism and enforcement of general election norms regulated in laws and regulations. The juridical-normative study method relies on the study of literature and official legal documents as primary data sources, including, among others: (1) Constitutional Court Decision Number 70/PHPU.BUP-XXIII/2025, which is the legal basis for the implementation of Re-Voting, (2) Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 1 of 2015 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulations in Lieu of Law Number 1 of 2014 concerning the Election of Governors, Regents, and Mayors into Law, and (3) General Election Commission Regulation which regulates the technical implementation of elections in the regions.

In addition to legal documents, this study also uses secondary data in the form of news from credible online mass media, such as ANTARA News, Suara Banten, and Banten Raya, which provide contextual information related to the implementation of Re-Voting and administrative challenges faced by election organizers. The data collection technique is carried out through library research, with content analysis of the substance of legal documents and media narratives to assess the relationship between legal norms and practice in the field.

The data analysis technique is carried out in a descriptive-analytical manner, namely by describing the data systematically, then analyzing it to find patterns, relationships, and implications for the quality of local democracy. In this case, the analysis is focused on three main aspects: (1) the legal legitimacy of the Re-Voting order, (2) the administrative implementation by the General Election Commission and the Serang Regency Election Supervisory Agency, and (3) its impact on public participation and trust in the democratic process in the region. The choice of this approach is also based on the view that law cannot be separated from the socio-political reality in which it applies. Therefore, this method is relevant to examine the interaction between legal norms and political actors in the context of the Serang Regional Elections, as stated by Soekanto (2007) that the effectiveness of the law is greatly influenced by the social structure and legal culture of the community.

Result and Discussion

Legal Basis for Re-Voting of the Serang Regency Regional Election

Re-Voting in the election of regional heads is a legal instrument regulated in the Indonesian electoral legal framework as a form of correction to the procedurally or substantially flawed democratic process. In the context of the 2024 Serang Regent Election, the Constitutional Court decided to order the Re-Voting in response to violations of the principles of fair and free elections, especially in the form of structural, systematic, and massive violations.

This Constitutional Court decision is contained in the Constitutional Court Decision Number 70/PHPU.BUP-XXIII/2025, which states that it has been proven that there have been election violations by village officials, namely the non-neutrality of a number of village heads in providing support to the number 2 candidate pair, Ratu Rachmatuzakiyah and M. Najib Hamas. One form of active support is documented through video evidence and testimonials that show the direct involvement of village heads, as well as the influence of the Minister of Villages and Development of Disadvantaged Regions, Yandri Susanto, who is the husband of the regent candidate. This action is considered to have harmed the principle of neutrality of ASN and village apparatus as stipulated in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and Law Number 10 of 2016 concerning Regional Elections.

The Constitutional Court's decision also canceled the Decree of the Serang Regency General Election Commission Number 2028 of 2024 concerning the Determination of the Recapitulation of Vote Counting Results. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court ordered the implementation of Re-Voting at all Polling Stations in Serang Regency using the same voter data, namely the Permanent Voter List, the Additional Voter List, and the Special Voter List as in the initial voting. This aims to maintain data continuity and ensure that citizens voting rights are still fulfilled.

Violations that are structured, systematic, and massive are a category of serious violations in Indonesian election law, because they have the potential to significantly affect the election results (Nurfaisal, 2024). The provisions regarding structured, systematic, and massive violations are regulated in the Regulation of the Election Supervisory Agency Number 8 of 2018, which states that structural, systematic, and massive violations involve power structures, are carried out systematically by organized institutions or individuals, and occur on a wide scale. The involvement of village officials, which are part of the village government structure and have a strategic position in the village community, clearly fulfills the element of "structured and systematic". The scope of violations that occurred in all areas of Serang Regency shows a "massive" element.

This Constitutional Court decision not only shows the firmness of the judiciary in maintaining the integrity of local democracy, but also provides an important precedent regarding the limits of the behavior of public officials in the electoral process. The neutrality of village heads and government apparatus is a crucial aspect in the implementation of democratic elections. Violations of this principle have a direct impact on the legitimacy of election results and damage public trust in democratic institutions (Muiruri, 2023).

The decision to implement the Re-Voting comprehensively in all polling stations shows that the Constitutional Court considers that the violation has polluted the entire electoral process, not only in some regions. This indicates the importance of reform of supervision of the role of village officials in local political contests as well as the need to strengthen the capacity of election

organizers at the regional level. Thus, the legal basis of the Serang Regency Regional Election Re-Voting is not only procedurally valid through the Constitutional Court's decision, but also reflects the application of the principle of substantive justice to restore the sovereignty of the people who had been injured by the abuse of power in the local democratic process.

RE-VOTING Implementation and Administrative Challenges

The implementation of the Re-Vote in the Serang Regent Election is scheduled for April 19, 2025, coinciding with a long weekend. This scheduling is strategically aimed to encourage higher voter participation, considering that the trend of participation in local elections in Indonesia is often influenced by holiday conditions and logistical accessibility (Surbakti, 2020). However, these efforts are faced with structural constraints, especially in terms of funding and institutional readiness.

The total budget needed for the implementation of Re-Voting at all Polling Stations reaches IDR 50.677 billion. The allocation is detailed as follows IDR 38 billion for the implementation by the General Election Commission, IDR 9.9 billion for supervision by the Election Supervisory Agency, and IDR 1.83 billion for security involving the Military and the National Police. The main challenge arises because the Serang Regency General Election Commission admits that it does not have sufficient funds in their annual budget to execute the Re-Voting as ordered by the Constitutional Court. This shows the weak anticipation mechanism for electoral disputes that lead to Re-voting, as well as the need for reformulation in budget planning based on election contingencies.

The Serang Regency Government anticipates a budget shortfall by allocating an emergency fund of IDR 11.5 billion through the Unexpected Expenditure post in the 2025 fiscal year APBD. Then, the Banten Provincial Government also provided financial assistance of IDR 27.74 billion. The remaining budget shortfall is expected to be closed by optimizing the remaining funds from the Regency General Election and the Serang Regency General Election Supervisory Agency. This kind of funding model, while responsive, raises questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of fiscal governance in ensuring a smooth post-dispute electoral process.

This phenomenon does not occur in isolation. It has been noted that the success of conducting the re-voting process is heavily dependent on the administrative preparedness of the election management bodies, as well as the availability of sufficient and timely budgetary support (Pereira & Renno, 2003; Post, 2010; Ramsah & Marpaung, 2024; Wilson et al., 2016). In Serang Regency, financial limitations have contributed to delays in the preparation of election logistics and the training of election officials. These setbacks have the potential to undermine the overall quality of the Re-Voting process and increase the risk of compromising the accountability and integrity of the electoral implementation (Yao, 2023).

The implementation of Re-Voting as a whole in all polling stations is a challenge in terms of technical aspects and election management. Re-Voting not only repeats the voting process, but also requires logistics redistribution, the re-establishment of the Voting Organizing Group, and the rearrangement of the list of field supervisory officers, all in a limited time. According to Nurhasim (2020), the implementation of a good Re-Voting requires a flexible electoral bureaucratic system but still subject to the principles of legality and accountability.

Implications for Local Democracy

The 2025 Serang Local Election reflects a significant challenge in safeguarding the quality of democracy at the local level, particularly in ensuring that the electoral process remains fair, transparent, and free from manipulation by those in positions of authority. The decision to conduct a re-voting process was prompted by clear evidence indicating the involvement and non-neutral behavior of several village heads, who were found to be openly supporting one of the candidate pairs. This incident not only exposes the weak supervision mechanisms over village government apparatuses but also raises serious concerns regarding the abuse of power by local officials. Such practices directly undermine the core principles of substantive democracy, where elections should not merely be procedural but must genuinely reflect the free will of the people, free from intimidation, coercion, or structural advantages enjoyed by certain political actors through their control over government resources or influence over lower-level bureaucracies. The interference by village heads in the electoral process represents a broader pattern of democratic vulnerability in regions where institutional checks and balances are weak, and political competition is often overshadowed by the dominance of bureaucratic networks. In this situation, although the re-voting process is essential to restoring the integrity of the election, it also highlights the pressing need to enhance accountability within governance structures, reinforce supervision of village-level authorities, and cultivate a more robust democratic culture capable of withstanding the abuse of power for political interests.

The 2024 Regional Election process in Serang Regency was marked by significant irregularities that raised serious concerns regarding the integrity of the electoral process. Based on the Constitutional Court's ruling as outlined in Decision No. 70/PHPU.BUP-XXIII/2025, it was officially declared that violations of a structured, systematic, and massive nature had occurred, implicating the involvement of village government officials. These violations were not isolated or incidental but reflected a coordinated pattern of misconduct that fundamentally undermined the principles of fair competition in a democratic election. One of the most glaring examples of this was the explicit and active involvement of several village heads who provided direct support to one of the candidate pairs contesting the election. Such actions represent a clear breach of the fundamental principle of neutrality that is expected from village government apparatuses, especially during electoral processes. Village officials, as part of the local state administration, are obligated to maintain impartiality and ensure that all competing candidates are treated fairly and without bias.

However, the facts and findings presented during the trial and officially recognized by the Constitutional Court clearly show that the obligation of neutrality, especially among village officials, was not fulfilled as mandated. This negligence created an electoral environment in which state resources, public offices, and government authority were deliberately misused to provide political advantages to certain candidate pairs. Such manipulation not only constitutes a direct violation of democratic principles, which require fairness, equality, and impartiality in electoral competition, but also reveals serious deficiencies in the existing regulatory and oversight system that should prevent abuse of power by state actors. The inability to enforce these mechanisms effectively reflects institutional weaknesses that, if not addressed, will continue to erode public confidence in the integrity of the democratic process.

Based on data from the Serang Regency Election Supervisory Agency, the number of reports of violations handled during the 2024 Regional Elections is as follows:

Table 1. Recapitulation of Reports of Violations of the 2024 Serang Regency Regional Election

No	Types of Violations	Number of Reports	Percentage (%)
1	Village Head's Non-Neutrality	12	40%
2	Money Politics	8	26.7%
3	Off-Schedule Campaigns	6	20%
4	Use of State Facilities	4	13.3%
Total		30	100%

Source: Election Supervisory Agency Serang Regency, 2024

The data presented above clearly illustrates that the most prevalent form of electoral violation in the 2024 Serang Regency Election was the lack of neutrality among village heads, who were actively involved in supporting certain candidate pairs. This condition highlights the critical importance of revising the roles and functions of village officials to guarantee their neutrality and prevent their involvement in practical political activities that could jeopardize the integrity and ethical principles of democratic governance. Village heads, as part of the state apparatus at the grassroots level, hold a strategic position in influencing public perception and political dynamics within their communities. When they misuse their authority for political interests, it not only distorts the principles of fair competition but also erodes public trust in democratic institutions (Philp, 2001; Warren, 2006).

Furthermore, the consequence of these violations, which culminated in the Constitutional Court's decision to hold a Re-Voting, has placed a significant financial burden on the regional government. The total budget required for organizing the Re-Voting process reached an estimated IDR 50.677 billion. This substantial amount covers the operational costs of several key institutions involved in safeguarding the electoral process, including the General Election Commission, the Election Supervisory Agency, and security forces. The allocation of such a large budget for a repeat election reflects not only the financial strain on local government resources but also highlights the broader institutional and social costs resulting from political misconduct at the village level. This situation illustrates how violations of neutrality among village officials can have far-reaching implications, both in terms of undermining democratic norms and creating an economic burden that could have been avoided through stronger enforcement of regulations and institutional oversight.

Table 2. Details of Re-Voting Budget Needs for the 2025 Serang Regency Regional Election

No	Financing Components	Amount of Funds (Rp)	Percentage (%)	Source of Funds
1	General Election Commission Serang Regency	38.000.000.000	74.9%	APBD + remaining general election commission budget
2	Election Supervisory Agency Serang Regency	9.900.000.000	19.5%	APBD + provincial assistance
3	Security (Military/ National Police)	1.830.000.000	3.6%	Serang Regency Budget
4	Serang Regency Government	947.000.000	2.0%	Unexpected Spending (APBD)
Total		50.677.000.000	100%	

Source: General Election Commission and Serang Regency Government, 2025

The allocation of a large amount of funds for the implementation of the Re-Voting has created a significant fiscal dilemma for the regional government, as the financing is sourced from the Unexpected Expenditure component of the Serang Regency Budget, supplemented by financial assistance from the Banten Provincial Government. The use of this emergency budget inevitably diverts resources that were originally allocated for essential development sectors, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, which are critical to improving the quality of life and welfare of the local community. The redirection of funds from these priority areas to cover electoral costs has the potential to reduce the overall quality of public services, disrupt development programs, and further strain limited regional resources.

Moreover, this fiscal burden weakens the effectiveness of regional budget allocations that should ideally be focused on long-term social and economic improvements (Marcel, 2014; Purbadarmaja et al., 2019; Wenjuan & Zhao, 2023). Consequently, the situation reflects a broader governance challenge where the objective of maintaining democratic integrity through elections must be balanced with the need to ensure budget efficiency and the optimal provision of public services. Without strategic planning and effective safeguards, the recurring need for high-cost electoral processes may jeopardize the sustainability of both democratic practices and essential public service delivery in Serang Regency. This is an additional challenge in ensuring democratic but budget-efficient elections (Nurfaisal, 2024).

The involvement of state actors, particularly village officials, in electoral violations, coupled with the significant financial burden of organizing local elections, has contributed to a noticeable decline in public confidence regarding the integrity of the electoral process (Amao & Ambali, 2023; Fundisi & Atanga, 2023; Su & Yang, 2007). This trend is reflected in the results of a post-Re-Voting survey conducted by the Local Democracy Survey Institute, which revealed that only 57% of respondents expressed confidence that the results of the Re-Voting would accurately and fairly reflect the people's true choices. This figure represents a substantial decline compared to the pre-Re-Voting public trust survey, which showed that 72% of respondents believed in the integrity of the electoral outcome. The decrease in public trust illustrates how electoral violations and political interference, especially when involving state officials, have a direct impact on weakening citizens' perceptions of democratic legitimacy.

The implications of the Re-Voting process in the 2025 Serang Regency Regional Election extend beyond the technical administration of the election itself and expose deeper structural weaknesses within the practice of local democracy. The recurrence of abuse of power by public officials, the considerable fiscal strain placed on regional budgets to finance repeat elections, and the erosion of public trust in democratic institutions all point to the need for comprehensive reforms (Asmuni, 2024; Corrales, 2015; James, 2014; Laebens & Lührmann, 2021). Ensuring the neutrality of village officials requires not only stricter regulatory frameworks but also the strengthening of participatory oversight mechanisms that involve active community engagement in monitoring elections.

The consistent implementation of political education is a vital component in building a democratic culture that upholds the principles of ethical governance, transparency, and accountability. Political education serves not only as an informative tool but also as a means to raise public awareness about the importance of civic engagement, institutional integrity, and responsible political participation. Through continuous political education efforts, society can be equipped with the knowledge and critical understanding necessary to identify and resist practices

that undermine democracy, such as abuse of authority, corruption, and electoral fraud. Strengthening public awareness in this way helps cultivate a vigilant and politically literate citizenry capable of actively participating in democratic processes and holding public officials accountable.

Conclusion

The 2025 Serang Regional Head Election (Re-Voting) is a reflection of systemic weaknesses in the practice of electoral democracy at the local level, especially in the aspect of the neutrality of the village government apparatus. The Constitutional Court's ruling ordering Re-Votings at all Polling Stations shows that the violations that occur are structured, systematic, and massive, so they cannot be ignored as mere procedural errors. This phenomenon indicates that political intervention by public officials in the process of electing regional heads is still a fundamental problem in the governance of local democracy in Indonesia.

These findings strengthen the argument that the strengthening of electoral institutions, including the General Election Commission and Election Supervisory Agency, has not been fully accompanied by effective internal and external supervision of the neutrality of bureaucratic actors at the lower levels. The non-neutrality of village heads, which is empirically documented in the Constitutional Court's ruling, is proof that electoral violations do not only occur due to weak rules, but also due to weak enforcement and supervision of election laws. The Constitutional Court's decision, which was accompanied by the Re-Voting order with the same DPT, emphasized the need to evaluate the design of the electoral system that allows local actors to abuse power without direct consequences.

From the administrative side, the implementation of Re-Voting faces significant challenges, especially in terms of funding and institutional readiness. The budget reallocation from the APBD and provincial assistance indicates that there is no responsive emergency financing mechanism in the election finance system in Indonesia. This condition can cause delays or a decrease in the quality of the implementation of the Re-Voting, thus threatening the legitimacy of the election results themselves.

Based on these findings and analysis, the author recommends three things. First, there is a need to strengthen regulations regarding the neutrality of village officials in the Regional Elections, including stricter administrative sanctions and a technology-based reporting system. Second, an integrated emergency financing scheme between the central and regional governments is needed to anticipate future Re-Voting. Third, for the sake of developing local democracy science and practice, it is suggested that further research places more emphasis on field research approaches to public perception after Re-Voting as well as comparative studies with other regions that have experienced similar cases.

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