

The Phenomenon of Winning Against an Empty Box in the Simultaneous Regional Head Elections of 2024

Felix Avian Reandrianta^{1*}, Edi Pranoto²

¹Master of Law, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang

²Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang

Article Info

Article history:

Received 19 Nov, 2024

Revised 10 Jan, 2025

Accepted 13 Jan, 2025

Keywords:

Empty Box, 2024 Pilkada,
Political Participation

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of the empty box winning in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Election (Pilkada) reflects public dissatisfaction with the existing political process, particularly concerning the dominance of single candidates. The presence of the empty box as an alternative option highlights structural problems within Indonesia's democratic system, which limits political participation and reduces public representation. Although regulated in the Regional Election Law, this phenomenon reveals a lack of trust in the nomination mechanism, which is neither inclusive nor transparent. This study analyzes how the empty box phenomenon serves as a protest symbol against the lack of diversity in election choices and its impact on political participation. The author argues that to improve the quality of Indonesia's democracy, reform in the nomination system and political participation is necessary to create a more representative and accountable government. This reform must also be accompanied by better political education for the public.

Corresponding Author:

Felix Avian Reandrianta

Master of Law, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang

reandrianta@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) are a crucial pillar in the democratic process in Indonesia. Through Pilkada, the populace is allowed to directly select their leaders, reflecting the principle of people's sovereignty as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Pilkada serves not only as a venue to choose regional heads but also represents the local political dynamics that reflect diversity, participation, and societal aspirations at the regional level. However, in recent years, a unique phenomenon that requires special attention has emerged—the presence of the "empty box" as the sole opponent in several Pilkada. This phenomenon is anticipated to resurface in the upcoming simultaneous Pilkada of 2024.

The occurrence of an empty box as the sole opponent happens when there is only one candidate pair that meets the administrative requirements to compete in the Pilkada. In this scenario, the Indonesian electoral system provides an option for the public to choose "disagree" by selecting the empty box on the ballot. Normatively, this arrangement is intended to ensure that the people still have a choice even if there is only one candidate pair. However, this phenomenon raises various questions and debates. Does the presence of the empty box reflect a crisis of political representation? Does it indicate weaknesses in the political cadre development and competition at the local level? Or does this phenomenon actually illustrate an increasing pragmatism in Indonesian politics?

In the previous simultaneous Pilkada, sole candidates and the empty box option introduced new dynamics into local democracy. In some instances, the empty box even managed to secure winning, as was

the case in Makassar during the 2018 Pilkada. The winning of the empty box set an intriguing precedent, demonstrating that the community can reject a sole candidate whom they believe does not represent public interests. This phenomenon also underscores the importance of political legitimacy in a democratic system, where elected leaders must truly earn a strong mandate from the people .

On the other hand, the phenomenon of sole candidates opposing an empty box also reflects various challenges in implementing democracy at the local level. One major issue is the scarcity of candidates for regional heads who are willing or able to compete in the Pilkada. This factor is often related to the high cost of politics, the strong dominance of certain political elites, and weak cadre development processes within political parties. In many cases, political parties prefer to endorse candidates who possess significant financial and political capital rather than create opportunities for alternative candidates to emerge. As a result, the candidate selection process becomes limited, and the likelihood of sole candidates appearing increases .

This phenomenon also highlights another aspect of local democracy: community involvement in the political process. The presence of the empty box signals that some members of the community may feel dissatisfied with the available choices. This dissatisfaction can stem from various factors, such as mistrust of the sole candidate, rejection of political oligarchic practices, or even protest against policies perceived as not favoring the public interest. In this context, the empty box becomes a symbol of political resistance that warrants further exploration.

The 2024 simultaneous Pilkada is expected to present more complex dynamics. With the backdrop of a pandemic that has affected various aspects of community life, including economic and social factors, the challenge for regional head candidates to build public trust becomes even greater. Additionally, increased political polarization at the national level could also impact the dynamics of the Pilkada at the regional level. Under such conditions, the phenomenon of sole candidates opposing an empty box may become more frequent, particularly in regions politically dominated by certain groups or parties .

On the other hand, the presence of the empty box also carries significant implications for Indonesia's electoral system. This phenomenon indicates that political parties, as primary pillars of democracy, need to undertake a deep evaluation of their roles in the democratization process at the local level. Political parties must fulfill their primary function as effective political recruitment institutions, creating opportunities for the emergence of competent and integrity-driven leadership candidates . Without this, the dominance of sole candidates and the presence of the empty box will continue to signal that democracy at the local level still faces serious challenges.

Furthermore, the existence of the empty box also poses challenges for election administrators. In situations where a sole candidate is the only option, election administrators must ensure that the voting process remains fair, and transparent, and adheres to democratic principles. Additionally, they must confront technical and social challenges, such as increasing voter participation in a context that tends towards monotony or even apathy.

In a broader context, the empty box represents a symbolic resistance against political practices considered less than ideal by parts of the community. This phenomenon also illustrates the importance of transparency, accountability, and openness in the electoral system. The higher the public's trust in the electoral system and the candidates presented, the less likely resistance in the form of an empty box will occur.

Given these various dynamics, the phenomenon of winning against an empty box in the 2024 simultaneous Pilkada becomes a highly relevant issue to study. This is not only to understand the challenges faced by local democracy but also to find solutions that can enhance the quality of Pilkada as one of the democratic instruments in Indonesia. This phenomenon also offers an opportunity to evaluate the extent to which Indonesia's political and electoral systems are capable of creating healthy, fair, and inclusive competition.

In this context, examining the empty box phenomenon is important not only academically but also practically. The findings of this study are expected to provide recommendations to various stakeholders, including governments, political parties, election organizers, and the community, to collectively strengthen the democratic process at the local level. Ultimately, the 2024 simultaneous Pilkada should not only serve as a venue for choosing leaders but also as a reflection of how well democracy in Indonesia can respond to the various challenges and dynamics it faces.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Based on the background provided, to prevent the research topic from becoming too broad and leading to a lack of clarity in problem discussion, the researcher will limit the scope of the study to the following issues:

Analysis of the factors influencing the winning of the empty box in the 2024 regional head elections.

Legal consequences for local government administration in the event of an empty box winning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a normative approach to analyze the phenomenon of winning against an empty box in the implementation of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada). The normative approach was chosen because the primary focus of this research lies in examining the laws and regulations governing the Pilkada mechanism, as well as providing a theoretical analysis of the implications of the empty box within Indonesia's local democratic system. This approach enables the study to explore the legal aspects, democratic principles, and normative foundations underlying the phenomenon. The primary data sources for this research comprised legal materials, such as Law Number 10 of 2016 on Regional Head Elections and relevant regulations from the General Elections Commission (PKPU) concerning the Pilkada administration. Additionally, the study utilized secondary legal materials, including literature, academic journals, and research reports addressing similar issues. These data were analyzed qualitatively to explore how existing regulations govern the presence of the empty box as a choice for voters and how this phenomenon can be interpreted within the context of democracy.

The analytical method used in this research was descriptive-analytical. The descriptive approach aimed to provide a detailed overview of the phenomenon of sole candidates versus the empty box, including the political dynamics underlying it. Meanwhile, the analytical approach was applied to evaluate the effectiveness of existing regulations and their implications for the quality of democracy at the local level. The study also considered a critical perspective on various emerging challenges, such as the crisis of political representation, public participation, and the sustainability of local democracy.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of winning against an empty box in the 2024 Simultaneous Pilkada reflects a deeper complexity within the Indonesian democratic system. Pilkada, as an integral part of the political mechanism that allows people to directly choose their leaders, should serve as a means to reflect the public's voice and aspirations. However, in situations where there is only one candidate pair running, with the empty box as an alternative, a fundamental question arises about the effectiveness of the political and electoral systems in Indonesia. Originally intended as an option for voters who disagree with the sole candidate, the empty box has now become a symbol of broader structural issues related to political representation, public participation, and the legitimacy of the elected government.

The winning of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada is not merely an election outcome that deviates from expectations; rather, it signifies an imbalance in the existing nomination system, which fails to create a fair competitive space. This phenomenon also leads us to question whether fundamental democratic principles, such as inclusive participation and representation, are being adequately implemented. In many respects, the presence of the empty box indicates a failure of the political system to accommodate the diversity of the community's political choices. The presence of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada, with all the dynamics it brings, opens a discourse on what happens when public political participation is constrained by a nomination system that does not consider the diversity of the people's voices.

Normatively, the presence of the empty box in the 2024 Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) is regulated under Law Number 10 of 2016 on Regional Head Elections. According to the article concerning this matter, the empty box is presented as a choice for voters who do not wish to select a particular candidate pair, especially when there is only one candidate pair remaining. In this context, the presence of the empty box should reflect the basic principles of democracy, emphasizing the freedom of voters to express their disagreement with the available candidates. However, the phenomenon of the empty box winning raises many questions about how this regulation should be interpreted. Some argue that the empty box represents more than just an option; it is a reflection of public dissatisfaction with the limited nomination process. When only one candidate is running, many voters feel that they do not have a choice that aligns with their hopes and aspirations.

From a democratic theory perspective, the empty box can be seen as a form of resistance against political dominance occurring in the nomination process. In a healthy democracy, voters should have the freedom to choose from a range of options that reflect the diversity of views and interests within the community. However, when there is only one candidate pair available, the diversity of voices within the community is marginalized. This situation makes the empty box a form of public expression of disagreement with political dominance that is perceived not to reflect the diversity of the people's voices. In this context, the empty box becomes a representation of the community's powerlessness, feeling that they do not have control over the available political choices. Thus, resistance against local political dominance that sidelines a diversity of political choices becomes one of the factors that trigger dissatisfaction with the existing political process.

This dissatisfaction does not arise spontaneously but is the result of structural factors that influence local politics. In many cases, the process of nominating regional head candidates is not entirely based on considerations of electability or the candidate's capacity to lead but rather is more influenced by the political

and financial power held by political parties or local political elites. This nomination system, dominated by political elites, often disregards the broader aspirations of the community, thus creating a disparity between the candidates presented and the expectations of the populace. Citizens feeling alienated by this process ultimately feel that they have no control over who will lead them, and as a form of protest, they choose the empty box as an alternative. The existence of the empty box then becomes a channel for voters to express their disapproval of the candidates, whom they consider do not meet their expectations and needs.

The phenomenon of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada can also be understood as a form of dissatisfaction with a political system perceived as neither transparent nor inclusive. When there is only one candidate pair competing, voters feel that they are forced to choose between two undesirable options: powerlessness or deadlock within the political system they face. This condition demonstrates how a closed political system that does not involve the community in the nomination process can lead to profound dissatisfaction. Voters, who should have the freedom to choose candidates that align with their aspirations, instead feel trapped in a limited and inadequate set of options. In this context, the empty box becomes the last resort for those who feel they have no better choice available.

The winning of the empty box in several regions during the 2024 Pilkada underscores the critical need for reform within Indonesia's political and electoral systems. The nomination process that fails to create space for the emergence of truly representative and competent candidates is a major issue that requires immediate attention. When only one candidate is running, even if this candidate has a good capacity or track record, the community might still feel that the candidate does not fully represent them, leading to a mistrust of the existing system. This distrust impacts the legitimacy of the elected government, as a government arising from a Pilkada with a single candidate and an empty box as an alternative is perceived not to fully represent the will of the people. Therefore, the phenomenon of the empty box should serve as an alarm for all political elements to urgently reform the system, enabling the nomination process to create healthy competition and produce leaders accepted by the majority of the populace.

It is important to note that while the empty box can be seen as a form of protest, it also signals a problem in the relationship between politics and society. When people feel that their voices have no significant impact, they tend to avoid participating in the political process. The phenomenon of the empty box, apart from reflecting dissatisfaction with the sole candidate, also mirrors the low level of political participation occurring in many areas. People who feel marginalized or not accommodated in the political process ultimately choose not to participate or only select the empty box as a form of expressing their dissatisfaction. In this regard, the empty box can be considered an indication of a crisis of trust in the existing political system.

The phenomenon of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada also highlights the importance of transparency in the nomination process. An open, fair, and inclusive nomination process for regional heads will ensure that the community can choose leaders they truly trust and believe can represent their aspirations. Therefore, political parties and election organizers must maintain transparency throughout all stages of the nomination, from candidate selection to the election process itself. Without transparency, the public will feel that the nomination process only benefits a select few and does not provide space for the emergence of credible and capable candidates.

One of the most prominent cases illustrating this phenomenon is the 2018 Makassar City Pilkada. In this election, the empty box won more votes than the sole candidate pair endorsed by local political forces. The winning of the empty box in this election indicated that the community was not only using their right to vote but also as a form of protest against the existing political monopoly. In such situations, the empty box does not merely function as a choice but as a symbol of resistance against injustice in the political process. This phenomenon demonstrates that even with only one candidate, the community still has the power to influence the outcome of the Pilkada through existing democratic mechanisms, although ultimately, the election had to be rerun with an acting official replacing the regional head position.

While the success of the empty box represents a form of resistance against the existing political system, it also raises other issues related to accountability and the legitimacy of government. Regional heads elected in situations where the empty box is the opponent often face problems with legitimacy. How can a regional head effectively perform their duties if the majority of the community does not fully support the candidate? Furthermore, areas won by an empty box must be led again by interim officials who do not possess the same legitimacy as a duly elected regional head. This situation, while reflecting the success of the democratic system, also exposes gaps in the mechanisms meant to ensure the continuity of stable and legitimate governance.

The phenomenon of the empty box winning in Pilkada in several regions of Indonesia is closely related to issues of public political participation. One of the primary causes of this phenomenon is the presence of a sole candidate, which reduces the space for the community to choose candidates that meet their needs and expectations. In many cases, if there is only one candidate pair in the election, voter participation tends to decrease. This occurs because the community feels that the choice provided does not reflect the

diversity of their voices and aspirations. When faced with a sole candidate who does not meet their expectations, people feel powerless to influence the political process and its outcomes. As a result, participation levels in such elections are at risk of declining, with most voters feeling that their vote will not bring about significant change. In this context, the theory of political participation proposed by Samuel P. Huntington regarding political apathy is highly relevant for explaining this phenomenon. Huntington argues that in societies where people feel they have no control over the political process, the level of political participation will tend to be low because people perceive no choices that can represent their desires. In this context, the empty box becomes a symbol of distrust towards the existing candidates and also indicates that voters do not feel involved in the political process which should be their right.

The application of Huntington's theory of political apathy underscores the importance of active participation in a democratic system. When people feel that the political process does not offer valid alternatives relevant to their needs, they tend to become apathetic towards it. In Pilkada with a sole candidate, political apathy intensifies as people perceive a lack of healthy competition or options that could bring about hopeful changes. This phenomenon indicates that it is not only the existing candidates who fail to meet community expectations but also the nomination system itself fails to create an inclusive political space. People feel that the political system does not allow them to choose candidates who truly represent their aspirations. Consequently, participation rates in elections decrease, further exacerbating the distrust in the existing political system.

More broadly, the phenomenon of the empty box also opens up debate on principles of good governance, particularly in terms of accountability, transparency, and participation. In this context, a regional head elected through Pilkada with the empty box as an alternative option often faces significant challenges in governing effectively. One of the main issues that arise is weak governmental accountability. Regional heads elected with a low vote count or losing to the empty box often lack strong legitimacy to lead. Even though they are technically elected through a democratic process, if the number of votes they receive is very low or less than that for the empty box, their position in executing governance is extremely precarious. This can lead to political instability, where the elected government cannot implement policies that represent the interests of the majority of the community. In such conditions, the elected government might struggle to build broad political support and face opposition from various parties who feel that the election results do not reflect their desires. Moreover, the mistrust towards the elected government also risks damaging the relationship between public officials and the community, which in turn hinders the implementation of effective and sustainable policies.

In addition to accountability issues, transparency in the nomination process is another critical issue that needs to be addressed in the context of the empty box phenomenon. The process of nominating regional head candidates that results in a sole candidate is often perceived as lacking transparency and not being inclusive. People who feel that the available candidates do not meet their expectations often believe that the nomination process is driven by pragmatic and elite political interests that sideline the voice of the people. In many cases, a sole candidacy can occur due to intervention from certain political forces that dominate the nomination process. When a sole candidate emerges from a process that is not transparent or only involves a few parties, the community tends to feel that the nomination system is unfair and does not provide opportunities for other candidates who might better represent their desires. In this regard, the empty box phenomenon indicates a weakness in the existing political and electoral system, which fails to create space for healthy and open political competition.

The phenomenon of the empty box that emerged in the 2024 Pilkada in Indonesia represents an interesting event for further analysis. The empty box, previously appearing as an alternative choice in several previous simultaneous Pilkada, reappeared as a phenomenon reflecting public political dissatisfaction with the candidates presented by political parties. The presence of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada not only indicates distrust towards the sole candidate but also points to structural weaknesses in the Indonesian political system that affect the quality of democracy, transparency, and public participation in the political process. This phenomenon becomes a symbol of the failure of the nomination system to create an inclusive and competitive political space, and it reflects a disconnect between the aspirations of the community and the politics conducted by the political elite.

In the 2024 Regional Head Elections across several regions in Indonesia, situations arose where the empty box became one of the choices selected by voters, even though it ultimately did not win. Although the empty box did not secure winning in the elections, its appearance reflects a crisis of confidence in the existing nomination system, leading to public dissatisfaction with the candidates presented by political parties. For instance, in several areas in Central Java and West Java, the empty box served as the only alternative for voters who felt that the candidates put forward by political parties did not meet their expectations. In many cases, the emergence of the empty box was underpinned by the political parties' inability to nominate candidates deemed representative and aligned with the community's needs. Discontent with the available candidates led to a decline in voter participation rates, as people felt there were no options

relevant to their needs.

This phenomenon of the empty box can be more deeply understood through the political participation theory developed by Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington argues that political apathy can arise when people feel that they have no control or influence over the political process. In the context of the 2024 Pilkada, dissatisfaction with the available candidates became a major factor causing political apathy among voters. When there is only a single candidate or candidates who are perceived not to represent the aspirations of the community, voters feel that their voices will not lead to significant change. In this scenario, the empty box becomes a representation of distrust in the available candidates and a sense of despair towards a political system perceived as not providing adequate choices.

The phenomenon of the empty box in the 2024 Pilkada, although not victorious in the elections, still provides a stark illustration of deep-seated issues within the political and electoral system in Indonesia. One of the main problems highlighted is the low level of political participation, reflecting voter apathy. The empty box phenomenon also shows that the community does not feel involved in the ongoing political process, as they do not see any candidates who can accommodate their desires and expectations. If left unaddressed, this phenomenon could potentially damage the quality of democracy in Indonesia, as low participation rates would reduce the legitimacy of election results and affect the effectiveness of the elected government.

In addressing the phenomenon of the empty box, it is essential to view it within the framework of good governance principles, particularly concerning accountability, transparency, and participation. For instance, when a regional head is elected with a very narrow winning or even fewer votes than the empty box, their position in governing becomes extremely weak. A regional head elected through a controversial election and with few votes will face challenges in running an effective government, as they lack sufficient political support. The political instability that might arise as a result of the empty box phenomenon can disrupt the policy-making process, which in turn affects the welfare of the community. Therefore, the empty box phenomenon underscores the need for reforms in the nomination and electoral systems, to ensure that the political process is more representative, inclusive, and can create a more accountable government.

Additionally, the empty box phenomenon in the 2024 Pilkada highlights the importance of transparency in the nomination process. One reason for the emergence of the empty box is the presence of a sole candidate produced through a nomination process perceived as opaque or even forced by political parties. In some cases, a sole candidate is generated through a process that does not involve the public extensively, leading to the impression that the nomination is driven more by the interests of the political elite than by community aspirations. When nominations involve only a few parties or lack active community participation, public trust in the political process diminishes. The empty box phenomenon serves as evidence of dissatisfaction with a nomination process considered insufficiently inclusive, thereby creating distrust in the existing political system.

Simultaneously, the empty box phenomenon in the 2024 Pilkada also reveals a discrepancy between community needs and the existing nomination system. As voters, the community requires candidates who can represent their hopes and aspirations, yet in many cases, the available candidates do not meet these expectations. As a result, they choose to mark the empty box as a form of protest against a nomination system they perceive as unfair. Dissatisfaction with the available candidates, often perceived as unrepresentative or lacking a clear vision, becomes a major factor leading to the emergence of the empty box as an alternative. In this regard, the empty box phenomenon can be seen as a warning to political parties and election organizers to improve the nomination system and better consider the diversity of voices within the community.

The recurring phenomenon of the empty box in the 2024 Regional Head Elections should serve as a reflection for all elements involved in the political process in Indonesia, including political parties, election organizers, and the community itself. All parties need to understand that in a healthy democratic system, voters must have fair and competitive choices that can represent the diverse aspirations and hopes of the community. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate and improve the nomination system, so that political parties can nominate candidates who truly represent the people's will. Moreover, maintaining transparency and inclusiveness in the nomination process is essential to ensure that the community feels they have a voice and choices that can lead to positive change.

Furthermore, political education is a vital factor in reducing the empty box phenomenon. Dissatisfaction with the available candidates is not only caused by the candidates' inability to meet community expectations but also by a lack of understanding among the public about the political process itself. Many voters feel that no change can be achieved through elections, leading to political apathy that ultimately reduces their participation in the electoral process. Therefore, enhancing political awareness among the community is essential, so they can fully understand how the political process works and why their participation is crucial. A better understanding of the electoral mechanisms and the vital role of their voice can encourage more people to engage in the political process, reducing the likelihood that the empty box remains a primary choice.

The phenomenon of the empty box in regional head elections (Pilkada) in Indonesia, as seen in the 2018 Makassar Pilkada, illustrates public dissatisfaction with the existing political system. In Blitar Regency in the same year, although the empty box did not defeat the sole candidate pair, this phenomenon still revealed deep issues related to the dominance of local political elites who control the nomination process for regional heads. In Blitar, even though the empty box did not win, its role in reflecting distrust towards the political elite was very clear. This raises questions about the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the nomination system within the context of Indonesian democracy. In many ways, the empty box phenomenon indicates that the public feels marginalized and not allowed to choose candidates who they truly believe can represent their aspirations.

The case of the Blitar Regency Pilkada reflects how deeply the community feels their choices are limited. People who feel they do not have suitable political options choose the empty box as a form of protest against the sole candidate proposed. Even though the candidate pair eventually won, this phenomenon serves as a warning sign to all parties involved in the political and electoral system, including political parties and election organizers. Why does the public not feel satisfied with the available candidates? Do they genuinely have no choice, or are there specific political forces preventing the emergence of more candidates who could represent the voice of the people? In many respects, the empty box phenomenon reflects a distrust of the existing nomination structures and mechanisms. The prevalence of sole candidates in Pilkada illustrates how the dominance of political elites hinders the emergence of new candidates who possess the quality and integrity to lead regions.

On a broader level, this phenomenon illustrates structural issues within the Indonesian political system. In the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Pilkada, the empty box phenomenon should prompt reflection across the entire existing political system. Pilkada featuring only one candidate pair creates the impression that the democracy being practiced does not truly reflect the voice of the people. The community, which should have a broader range of choices, is instead faced with the reality that their options are limited to candidates who are not perceived to represent their interests. This inevitably creates significant dissatisfaction and fosters the emergence of the empty box as an alternative. Although the empty box cannot replace the existing candidates, it remains a significant choice that reflects this dissatisfaction.

The most striking factor in the case of the Blitar Pilkada is the lack of diversity in nominations. The nomination process for regional heads, dominated by local political elites, often produces a sole candidate propelled by the established local political forces. Meanwhile, the community, feeling unrepresented by the available candidates, chooses the empty box as a protest against a nomination system that appears exclusive and does not allow for diversity. In Blitar, even though the empty box did not defeat the sole candidate, it still conveyed an important message about the need to open up space for broader community participation in the nomination process. This is a signal that healthy politics should provide opportunities for more candidates with various backgrounds and visions to compete in the elections.

Indeed, while the empty box phenomenon reflects a distrust towards the political elite, it also raises challenges concerning the legitimacy of the elected government. A regional head elected with a low vote count or dominated by empty box votes in the area will undoubtedly face weakened legitimacy. A government that emerges from a Pilkada with a sole candidate who does not receive full community support risks difficulties in managing a stable and accountable administration. Legitimacy is a crucial aspect in determining how effectively a leader can perform their duties. When a regional head is elected with scant support or even loses to the empty box, they must face significant challenges in building public trust in their government.

Furthermore, the empty box phenomenon underscores the importance of a transparent and inclusive electoral mechanism. When only one candidate is competing in a Pilkada, the community feels they are not allowed to choose freely and fairly. The dominance of local political power leading to a sole candidacy indicates an injustice in the nomination process. This non-transparent process diminishes public trust in the existing political system, ultimately harming the political and social stability of the region. If the nomination system is dominated by certain groups or individuals, the space for the emergence of new candidates that better represent the aspirations of the people becomes increasingly narrow. This situation necessitates electoral and nomination system reforms to ensure broader, more equitable participation in the political process, thereby enhancing the representativeness and legitimacy of elected officials.

The empty box phenomenon not only reflects dissatisfaction with the sole candidate but also illustrates weaknesses in Indonesia's overall political system. Although the empty box provides an alternative for voters dissatisfied with the available candidates, this phenomenon also highlights issues within the political structure and electoral system that lead to public mistrust of the existing nomination system. As we approach the 2024 Simultaneous Pilkada, it is crucial for all parties, from political parties and election organizers to the community, to improve the nomination mechanisms, enhance the transparency of the political process, and educate the public about the importance of participation in democracy.

The need to create an inclusive and fair political space is increasingly evident given that the empty box phenomenon is not an isolated incident. The existing dissatisfaction indicates that democracy in Indonesia requires further improvements to ensure that regional head elections truly reflect the people's will. When people feel that they are not given choices that align with their expectations, it degrades the quality of democracy and diminishes political participation. Therefore, to ensure that the Pilkada runs smoothly and produces leaders who are legitimate and accepted by the community, changes are needed in the nomination system and the conduct of elections to be more transparent, fair, and inclusive. The empty box phenomenon in the 2024 Pilkada should serve as a profound reflection for all involved parties, including political parties, election organizers, and the public. A non-transparent and non-inclusive nomination process will only increase distrust in the political system and trigger voter apathy. Thus, reforms in the nomination and electoral system are essential to create a more open, inclusive political space capable of producing leaders who truly represent the aspirations of the community. On the other hand, quality political education is also necessary so that the public can understand the importance of their participation in elections and its impact on the future of politics in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of winning against an empty box in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) illustrates an increasing imbalance within the Indonesian democratic system. When there is only one candidate paired with the empty box as an alternative option, it clearly shows the widespread dissatisfaction within the community regarding the limited nomination process and the existing political system. This situation indicates not only an imbalance in political competition but also reflects a crisis in political representation, where the community feels they lack choices that are relevant to their needs and expectations. The presence of the empty box as a protest option underscores an urgent need for reform in the Indonesian political system, both in terms of nominating regional head candidates and in improving the quality of community political participation.

The winning of the empty box not only indicates dissatisfaction with the available candidate but also highlights the inability of the political system to create an inclusive and transparent space for the nomination process. When political parties and local elites have significant influence in determining who will become the regional head candidate, often without involving community aspirations broadly, it creates conditions where the community feels alienated from a political process they should have full control over. They feel that the candidates presented do not represent their interests, whether in terms of vision, mission, or the ability to govern effectively. When there is only one candidate, and when that candidate is perceived as not meeting the community's expectations, the empty box becomes the last avenue to express dissatisfaction with this inadequate process. Thus, the empty box becomes a broader symbol of protest against a political dominance that fails to provide space for the diverse voices of the people.

This phenomenon also reveals a crisis in the quality of the existing democracy. A healthy and evolving democracy should provide space for the community to choose leaders they believe can bring positive changes to their social, economic, and political lives. However, when only one candidate is advancing and the nomination process itself is felt to be non-inclusive, the community feels compelled to choose between helplessness and deadlock. They feel that the political system does not offer them choices that truly reflect their will and aspirations. Thus, this dissatisfaction prompts people to choose the empty box as a more meaningful option, even though it means not selecting any candidate at all.

This phenomenon, although it may appear as a negative action, is a reflection of the distrust towards the existing political system and a critique of the lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the nomination of regional heads. It is important to note that while the empty box can be seen as a protest against the existing sole candidate, it also highlights profound issues in the relationship between the community and the government. When people feel that their voice has no significant impact in determining the direction of public policy, they are likely to reduce their political participation or even choose not to participate at all. This can create a wider gap between the government and the people, where the community feels increasingly alienated from a political process they should control.

REFERENCES

- A.A. Sahid Gatara, Fh, M.Si. *ILMU POLITIK MEMAHAMI DAN MENERAPKAN*. Edited by Tim Redaksi Pustaka Setia. Bandung: CV.PUSTAKA SETIA, 2008.
- Christmas, Sandy Kurnia, and Evi Purwanti. "Perkembangan Sistem Pemerintahan Dan Konsep Kedaulatan Pasca Revolusi Perancis Terhadap Hukum Internasional" 2 (2020): 222–35.
- Di, Pilkada, and Jawa Tengah. "' MELAWAN KOTAK KOSONG ': ANALISIS MARKETING POLITIK ENAM PASANGAN CALON TUNGGAL PADA" 13, no. 1 (2024): 115–34.
- Handoyo, Eko. *Pendidikan Politik*, 2017.
- Kosong, Kotak. "The Factors Affects Voter's Behavior in Empty Box Winning of Mayors Makassar 2018"

- 5, no. 2 (2020): 164–73.
- Luhukay, Roni Sulistyanto. “Netralitas Aparatur Sipil Negara Dalam Perspektif Hak Asasi Manusia.” *Juris Humanity: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Hukum Hak Asasi Manusia* 3, no. 1 (2024): 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.37631/jrkhm.v3i1.37>.
- Mahardika, Ahmad Gelora. “SISTEM KETATANEGARAAN INDONESIA” 1, no. 2 (2018): 69–84.
- Makassar, Kota, and Teori Powercube. “FAKTOR KEMENANGAN KOTAK KOSONG PADA PILKADA KOTA MAKASSAR 2018” 7 (2024): 9428–31.
- Medan, Jalan, Merdeka Barat, and Jakarta Pusat. “KOTAK KOSONG THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF SINGLE CANDIDATE IN THE ELECTION OF REGIONAL HEADS AGAINST EMPTY BOXES Wilma Silalahi Pendapat Komisi II DPR RI Bersama Kementerian Dalam Negeri , Komisi Pemilihan,” 2020, 978–79.
- Mulyadi, Dedi, Cindy Claudia, Nayla Ratu, and Pusfa Januwati. “Fenomena Kotak Kosong Dalam Pilkada Tahun 2024,” 2024. <https://doi.org/10.55551/jip.v5i2.185>.
- Panjaitan, Maringan, and Simson Berkat Hulu. “ANALISIS PROSES DAN FAKTOR PENYEBAB LAHIRNYA PASANGAN CALON TUNGGAL VERSUS KOTAK KOSONG PADA PILKADA SERENTAK TAHUN 2020” 1 (2021): 116–30.
- Penelitian, Artikel. “Calon Tunggal Dalam Politik Kotak Kosong Dan Kekuasaan Partai Pada Pilkada Single Candidates in Empty Box Politics and Party Power in Regional Elections” 7, no. 8 (2024): 2992–3005. <https://doi.org/10.56338/jks.v7i8.5945>.
- Pranoto, Edi. “KEBIJAKAN PENANGANAN KASUS KETERLIBATAN APARATUR SIPIL NEGARA (ASN)” II, no. September 2013 (2018).
- Pranoto, Edi, Fakultas Hukum, and Untag Semarang. “Jurnal Spektrum Hukum, Vol. 15/No. 1/April 2018” 15, no. 1 (2018): 89–111.
- Rahman, Rofi Aulia, Fakultas Hukum, Universitas Surabaya, Kali Rungkut, Kota Surabaya, Iwan Satriawan, Fakultas Hukum, et al. “Calon Tunggal Pilkada : Krisis Kepemimpinan Dan Ancaman Bagi Demokrasi Single Candidate in Local Election : Leadership Crises and Threats To” 19 (2022).
- RICHARD S. KATZ, DKK. *Handbook Partai Politik*. Bandung: Nusa Media, 2015.
- Sandino, Girindra. “Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Dalam Pemantauan Pemilu.” *nasional.kompas.com*, 2018. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/02/23/17152991/partisipasi-politik-masyarakat-dalam-pemantauan-pemilu?page=all>.
- Septiani, Nazwa Putri, Chika Rahma Aulia, Rakha Ahmad Ramadhan, Muhammad Haikal, Pia Khoirotun Nisa, Wakil Walikota, Dengan Satu, and Pasangan Calon. “PERSEPSI PEMILIH TENTANG KAMPANYE KOTAK KOSONG : KASUS BERITA TIRTO . ID PADA PEMILU 2024” 3, no. 1 (2025): 36–52.
- Wahjusaputri, Sintha. “PILKADA MENUMBUHKAN DEMOKRATISASI RASIONAL DI ERA OTONOMI,” n.d., 18.
- Yunus, Nur Rohim, Universitas Islam, Negeri Syarif, and Hidayatullah Jakarta. “Saat Kotak Kosong Memenangkan Pilkada,” no. December (2018): 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.15408/adalah.v2i7.8526>.