

KPPS, Soldiers of Democracy



Teuku Kemal Fasya. Photo : Bustami Ibrahim

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Since late January 2024, social media, particularly Tiktok, has been flooded with posts related to the excitement of being selected as a member of the Election Organizing Group or KPPS. Similarly, there are Tiktokers who are sad because they were not chosen to be KPPS members. Ultimately, plans for marriage, buying a new house, graduation receptions, and overseas vacations have been dashed.

Of course it's just a meme or a caricatural statement. KPPS is the smallest instrument of election organizers which carries out the main task of collecting and counting on the D-day (14 February 2024). They are only paid once for a month's work. Apart from honorarium, there is only per diem technical guidance and induction. The honorarium is likely to be distributed as early as February 25 2024.

Members of the Election Commission were simultaneously inaugurated on January 25, 2024. The number of elected Election Commission members was 5,741,127 people and they were spread across 820,161 polling stations throughout Indonesia, serving as the people's voice fortress.

Soldiers of democracy

What is the actual salary of Election Supervisory Committee (KPPS) members? Judging by their salaries, one would not expect so many people to aspire to this job, especially those aged between 17-54 years. As explained on the General Elections Commission (KPU) website and disseminated through multiple media outlets, the honorarium for KPPS Chairperson is Rp 1.2 million and Rp 1.1 million for KPPS members. It's a small amount, not even enough to buy an engagement ring. Compare this to the salary of the District Election Committee (PPK) Chairperson of Rp 2.5 million and Polling Station Committee (PPS) Chairperson of Rp 1.5 million for a 15-month tenure.

Fortunately, the honorarium for KPPS has increased by over 100 percent compared to the previous election. In the 2019 election, the head of KPPS received an honorarium of Rp 550,000 and members received Rp 500,000. The author became the head of KPPS Overseas (KPPS-LN) in Kuala Lumpur during the 2019 election with an honorarium of almost Rp 7 million which was transferred two months after the election.

Of course, that's all in, with plane tickets and lodging that must be borne by KPPS-LN participants coming from Indonesia. The work process is not completed in one day. Voting was carried out on April 14 2019 and counting on April 17 (D+3). This year, the chairman of KPPS-LN received an honorarium of IDR 8.4 million and members IDR 8 million.

However, never underestimate the role of KPPS. They can be called the soldiers of electoral democracy. They are the ones most responsible for the purity of the election vote. Their workload is even multiplied as they have to work tirelessly for up to 36 hours nonstop!

The 2019 election was a lesson for limiting the age of KPPS officers. Reflecting on the last election that Jokowi won at that time, there were 894 KPPS officers who died and 5,175 were sick (*Kompas.com*, 22/1/2020).

The collapse of KPPS officials at that time was caused by the heavy workload that drained their energy, mind, and emotions. On average, officials who suffer from degenerative diseases (hypertension, heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes) become dominant victims. Therefore, in this election there is an age restriction, where those beyond middle age to retirement age are no longer involved as KPPS officials.

The government is trying to rationalize KPPS salaries with workload, although this is also inadequate. The main problem with counting activities is the endless time interval. Efforts to facilitate electronic collection and counting mechanisms as is done in developed countries have not yet been agreed upon. There are suspicions that the server could be tampered with by hackers or the ruling regime, such as in the elections in the United States (2016), Russia (2018), and Turkey (2023), and this is the reason why this traditional model is still chosen in this era of digitalization.

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