

Failure of Political Parties Emits Troubled Legislative Candidates

When opening the website of General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum – KPU) at www.kpu.go.id, in the right panel we will be able to see the time indicator – a daily countdown toward the Legislative General Election that would be held on April 9, 2009. Time had passed so quickly, in mere six months Indonesia will once again hold its own democracy party. Facing the aforementioned democracy party, as the organizer KPU has been occupied with all kinds of preparation. One of the preparations is related to the formation of Permanent Candidate List (Daftar Calon Tetap – DCT) that was announced on Friday, October 31, 2008. Previously on October 7, 2008, KPU has also announced the Provisional Candidate List (Daftar Calon Sementara – DCS).

Within 10 days of the announcement of the DCT, KPU gave opportunities to the public to give feedbacks and comments regarding the candidates. As a result, KPU was overflowed with reports, as there were 253 troubled legislative candidates. The reports consisted of law cases (illegal logging and regular crimes) for 13 persons, corruption 45, forged education certificates 13, legislative candidates with government official status 9, candidates with moral infringement 8, candidates that have been dismissed by political party 2, dual candidacy 52, and other cases such as numbering protests and unknown candidates 80 persons.

Besides the reports received from public, KPU had also received reports from several organizations, including The Coalition for National Movement of Deselecting Putrid Politicians (Koalisi Gerakan Nasional Tidak Pilih Politikus Busuk - Ganti Polbus) which reported that there are 77 candidates who are involved in law infringement cases and 10 candidates who are involved in BLBI case, also 20 reports submitted by Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW).

Since the opening of candidate registration period, various political parties have been receiving critics regarding instantaneous candidacy from celebrities and close family members of the party's elites. At this moment, there are several infringement cases reported that involves several political party's elites such as Sukmawati Soekarnoputri. Chairwomen of PNI Marhaenisme who became a legislative candidate

from Bali I was affirmed to violate law by forging her education diploma. Besides the case of troubled legislative candidates, KPU has also received reports regarding the absence of transparency in political parties' recruitment process. Generally, these reports came from candidates who are not included in the permanent candidate list.

Scrapes of Legislation Candidate Process

At first, the existence of political parties was motivated by the necessity to drive a country's political machine toward a more moderate level. Political parties are expected to be able to accommodate the need of citizen for more effective government and peaceful political condition. This is the most fundamental function of political parties. In order to perform that function, political parties are required to carry out recruitment process to find potential candidates for governmental functions. This recruitment process is a stage for regeneration and succession. The success of recruitment process will determine the fate of the nation for the next five years.

By the aforementioned argumentation, it is an obligation for the political parties to carry out strict selection process for the candidates they propose. This is a task that needs to be done by political parties, as its function for a medium to connect the public with the government. When the argumentation is associated with the open (list) proportional system as stated in the General Election Law No. 10 / 1998, political parties should be more careful in their recruitment process. As in this system, voters are able to choose directly the candidates they desire. Thus, if the proposed candidates are troubled, this will directly affect the party's votes.

However, recent events show the failure of political parties in performing their basic function. The establishment of multi-party system in Indonesia that was first expected to bring positive changes now has brought negative impacts. One of those negative impacts is the political climate that is packed with competition among political parties and candidates. As a result, political parties are demanded to get as many public votes as possible, while ignoring the public's interests. The public is merely rows of numbers, that if assembled will materialize as number of votes needed by the political party to get seat in the parliament.

In order to fulfill that demand, political parties have neglected their basic function as a force of democracy. Succession does not occur, and the recruitment process has no transparency. Consequently, instant candidates and numerous old faces – members of the Parliament that has no respectable achievement, appear as legislative candidates. Instant candidates consist of celebrities and public figures that are utilized as the vote-getter. In order to fulfill the financial needs, political parties recruit people with strong financial sources. Old faces are recruited for their networking power that might be useful in the future. Public figures are recruited for their ability to gather votes from traditional society groups. While activists are recruited, to convince early voters and students that the parties will bring changes needed by this country.

On the other hand, the proposed candidates seemed not to care enough whether they are suitable enough to become legislative candidates, and whether their presence have impaired the party's succession system. The impression seems that they only care about their personal interest. They only perceive political parties as their own vehicle for personal mobilization, not as a vehicle to fight for the sake of public's interest. It can be assured that once they are not elected, they will go back to their old habits. It would not occur to them that fighting through political parties not necessarily means that they have to be Member of Parliament.

This reality shows that political parties do not seem to care about their candidates' quality and credibility. This fact causes plenty of problems in the recruitment process. The highly-flexible recruitment process will become a boomerang for the political parties in the near future. This has been proved by the revelation of numerous fraud practiced by the candidates for their education certificates and candidates involved in corruption case or any other law infringement cases.

Therefore it is important to reform the political parties' candidate recruitment process in the future, since it holds an important part in establishing a more democratic government and also a more conducive political situation. Political parties are expected to set up their candidates through open and participatory recruitment process. This will open the possibility of regeneration for qualified candidates that have high credibility and dedication to fight for public's interests. Besides, it is required to open the access for



public to control the recruitment process. This is intended for political parties to choose candidates who are suitable for public's need. ***