

## The Police's Strategy for Monitoring Money Politics in Political Parties in the 2024 Legislative Elections (Pileg) In Maros Regency

Sukarman<sup>1</sup>, Gustiana A. Kambo<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Saad<sup>3</sup>, Zulkifli Aspan<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

Money politics remains a persistent challenge to electoral democracy in Indonesia, particularly at the local level where political competition, socio-economic vulnerability, and weak law enforcement often intersect. This study aims to analyze the role of the police in supervising vote-buying practices by political parties in the 2024 legislative election in Maros Regency, with specific attention to inter-agency coordination within the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu). Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis involving the police, the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the prosecutor's office, political parties, and community representatives. The findings reveal that police involvement in vote-buying supervision is embedded within a collaborative institutional framework characterized by collective decision-making, formal and informal coordination, and preventive-oriented strategies. Preventive efforts, including legal socialization, political education, vulnerability mapping, joint patrols during the quiet period, and participatory supervision, play a central role in mitigating money politics. However, the study also identifies significant constraints, particularly difficulties in evidence collection, limited witness cooperation, and strict procedural time limits that hinder effective prosecution. This research concludes that while the Gakkumdu-based oversight model strengthens electoral supervision institutionally, enhancing legal certainty, witness protection, and investigative timeframes is essential to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement against money politics and safeguard democratic integrity at the local level.

**Keywords:** *Money Politics, Electoral Integrity, Police Involvement, Integrated Law Enforcement Center, Legislative Elections.*

### Introduction

Money politics is a key issue in the study of elections and democracy, a practice that continues to evolve over time. This practice refers to any form of giving money, goods, or other facilities with the aim of influencing the behavior of voters or related parties in the electoral process. The phenomenon of money politics has become a serious problem in many countries, including Indonesia, as it can undermine democratic integrity, create inequality in political competition, and lead to ongoing corruption after the election (Arum, 2023; Ramadhan & Azhari, 2023; Hosnah et al., 2024).

Hicken (2011) said that, in academic studies, money politics is often associated with various theories, including patronage and clientelism, which explain how the reciprocal relationship between candidates and voters is often transactional. Money politics can also be viewed from a political economy perspective, highlighting how the high costs of running for office encourage candidates to seek quick ways to gain votes, including through the practice of money politics.

The history of money politics in Indonesian elections shows that this phenomenon has persisted since the New Order era, albeit in a more covert form because elections at that time were not fully democratic. After the 1998 Reformation, more competitive elections opened up a wider space for the practice of money politics. The implementation of direct elections since the 2004 Presidential Election and the 2005 Regional Head Elections has further intensified the use of money politics, whether in the

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<sup>1</sup> Doctoral Program in Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar

<sup>2</sup> Doctoral Program in Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar.

<sup>3</sup> Doctoral Program in Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar

<sup>4</sup> Doctoral Program in Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Hasanuddin University, Makassar

form of direct distribution of money to voters, the provision of goods or services, or vote buying within the political elite.

Developments in the study of money politics indicate that this phenomenon occurs not only in the context of national elections, but also in legislative and regional elections at the local level (Khairi, 2020; Abdiellah et al., 2022; Noor et al., 2021; Achmad, 2025). In recent decades, numerous studies have begun to highlight how political actors, including political parties, use money politics as a primary strategy to win elections. Furthermore, recent studies have examined the effectiveness of regulations and law enforcement in suppressing the practice of money politics, as well as the role of election supervisory institutions and law enforcement officials, including the police, in monitoring and prosecuting money politics violations.

Regulations regarding money politics in Indonesia have evolved through various revisions to the election law. Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections categorizes money politics as an election crime subject to criminal and administrative sanctions. However, the greatest challenges in eradicating money politics are weak law enforcement and the difficulty of proving it. In many cases, vote buying violations occur covertly and are difficult for election supervisors and law enforcement officials to detect.

Globally, research on vote buying has also experienced rapid development, with numerous studies comparing vote buying practices across countries (Nwagwu et al., 2022; Norris, 2013). Countries with more established democracies tend to have stricter mechanisms for overseeing campaign funding and curbing vote buying practices. Conversely, in countries with high levels of corruption and less than fully democratic political systems, vote buying remains a major challenge in every election (Onuoha & Okafor, 2020; Amaechi & Stockemer, 2022).

Recent developments have suggested various approaches to curbing vote buying practices, including transparency in campaign funding, strengthening election oversight, and imposing harsher sanctions on those involved. Furthermore, the involvement of civil society and the media in monitoring elections is also a crucial factor in efforts to curb the influence of vote buying on the democratic process (El, 2012; Onuh & Ike, 2021; Arthur, 2010).

With the continued development of vote buying studies, future research will increasingly focus on the effectiveness of regulations, the role of election supervisory institutions, and innovations in strategies to eradicate vote buying. These studies are expected to provide concrete recommendations for policymakers on improving election systems and safeguarding democratic integrity from the threat of vote buying.

The study of police partnerships in monitoring vote buying is part of a broader study of the role of law enforcement officials in maintaining election integrity. Money politics has become one of the greatest challenges in electoral democracy, particularly in countries with political systems that still face transparency and accountability issues (Sule, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the role of the police in election oversight has received increasing academic attention as the complexity of election violations, including vote buying practices involving political parties, increases.

The study of money politics has advanced significantly, particularly in understanding its distribution mechanisms and impact on election outcomes. Various studies have shown that money politics in legislative elections is often more difficult to control than in executive elections due to its more widespread nature and the involvement of numerous candidates at various levels. In legislative elections, political parties are often the primary actors in the practice of money politics, both directly and through their established political networks. This makes oversight efforts more complex, especially for law enforcement agencies such as the police, which play a role as part of the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu).

## **Methods**

### **Research Approach and Type**

This research is a qualitative study using a case study approach. According to Neuman (2014), qualitative methods focus on exploring social phenomena through interpretive and inductive reasoning, seeking a deep, contextual understanding of human behavior, attitudes, and experiences. These methods emphasize detailed and diverse data collection. Data sources are obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and content analysis. This series of procedures allows researchers to uncover the meanings and interpretations participants give to their own experiences. Qualitative research is particularly effective in exploring complex, sensitive, or previously unexplored topics

because it allows for flexible and emergent research designs guided by participants' perspectives and contexts.

Researchers using qualitative methods act as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, consciously reflecting on their interactions, biases, and positionality throughout the research process. Qualitative methods generate themes and insights directly from the data, embracing complexity, contextual dependencies, and nuances. Ultimately, qualitative methods prioritize understanding the social world from the perspective of participants, fostering rich interpretive insights into phenomena that quantitative approaches may not capture (Neuman, 2014). The use of qualitative methods is suitable for understanding processes, interactions, and decision-making within a specific context, which in this case focuses on the legislative elections in Maros Regency. This research can also delve deeper into the perceptions and views of the actors involved, such as the police, political parties, and the community.

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research can provide a rich picture of the context and social interactions occurring on the ground, which is essential in studying the involvement of formal institutions such as the police in the election process. This research focuses on an in-depth description of the actions and role of the police in overseeing money politics, as well as how oversight rules and mechanisms are implemented.

This research uses a case study approach, which, according to Creswell (2014), is an in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon or system that is limited by space and time. This approach involves intensive data collection from various sources of information rich in context, whether related to a program, event, activity, or individual. Furthermore, Yin (2014) explains that case studies are particularly appropriate when researchers want to understand in detail how a phenomenon occurs in a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear.

A case study approach was chosen in this research to understand how actors, particularly the police, interpret and respond to their role in overseeing money politics. This approach allows researchers to explore subjective interpretations of the experiences of relevant actors, while simultaneously understanding the interactions between the police, political parties, and the public in maintaining election integrity. As emphasized by Stake (1995), case studies provide researchers with the flexibility to identify complex factors influencing the phenomenon under study, such as structural barriers, regulations, and the dynamics of inter-institutional interactions. Through this approach, the research is able to provide comprehensive insights into the specific local political dynamics in Maros Regency, which may differ from other regions in Indonesia.

### **Research Objects and Locations**

This research focuses on the role of police involvement in monitoring vote buying by political parties in the legislative elections in Maros Regency. The research focuses on the role, function, and responsibilities of the police in preventing and prosecuting vote buying practices, which often pose a significant challenge to maintaining election integrity. In this context, the police have a crucial role to play in collaboration with other institutions, such as the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), in overseeing the legislative elections.

This study examines several key aspects of police involvement, including the oversight mechanisms implemented, cooperation and coordination between the police, Bawaslu, and other institutions, and the challenges faced by the police in carrying out this role. One key aspect to be uncovered is the structural barriers that may impact police oversight effectiveness, such as limited resources, local political pressure, and the relationship between the police and political actors in Maros Regency.

This research will also examine public and political party perceptions regarding police involvement in election oversight, including how police presence in the election process affects election transparency and accountability. From the perspective of political parties, this research explores how they respond to police oversight and whether there is resistance or support for the police's role in preventing vote buying practices. The research location is Maros Regency. The research will cover various sub-districts in Maros Regency, particularly areas considered vulnerable to vote buying practices. Through field data collection, including in-depth interviews with the police, Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency), political parties, and the public, this study is expected to reveal in detail the role of the police in the context of vote buying oversight. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the

understanding of the role of security institutions in elections, while also providing relevant policy recommendations to strengthen vote buying oversight in the future.

### **Research Instruments**

The research instruments used in this study of the political process involving police involvement in monitoring money politics by political parties in the legislative elections in Maros Regency included several primary tools adapted to a qualitative approach. An in-depth interview guide was used to gather information from key actors involved in monitoring money politics by political parties in the legislative elections in Maros Regency, enabling researchers to gain in-depth insight into the political interactions and dynamics that occurred. A participant observation guide helped researchers document the actual activities that occurred in monitoring money politics by political parties in the legislative elections in Maros Regency, while a document analysis guide was used to assess and understand important documents, such as regulations and reports on money politics in the legislative elections in Maros Regency. Field notes were also an important instrument for recording reflections and observations throughout the research. All of these instruments aimed to collect rich and relevant data within the context of the political process being studied.

### **Data Collection Method**

The data collection method in this study employed a qualitative approach, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of police involvement in monitoring money politics by political parties in the legislative elections in Maros Regency. To achieve these objectives, a variety of data collection techniques were used, including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. The following explains the methods used: (1) In-depth interviews are the primary data collection method in this study. This technique is used to obtain detailed information from informants directly involved or knowledgeable about police involvement in money politics supervision. Interviews are conducted face-to-face using a semi-structured interview guide, which allows researchers the flexibility to explore informants' answers in greater depth; (2) The observation method is used to capture the field situation that occurs during the police's money politics supervision process. Researchers will conduct non-participant observation, where researchers are not directly involved in the activities being observed but instead observe and record various phenomena occurring in the field. This observation covers interactions between the police, political parties, the community, and the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) during the election supervision process. Through observation, researchers can directly observe how supervision is carried out, any obstacles that arise in the field, and the socio-political dynamics that influence the effectiveness of supervision. Field notes from the observations will be used to complement the interview data and provide a more comprehensive contextual picture; (3) In addition to interviews and observation, this study also uses documentation study as a data collection method. The documents reviewed included official police and Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) reports regarding election supervision, regulations governing the police's role in monitoring money politics, and other documents relevant to the research topic. Analysis of these documents provided additional information that could strengthen the primary data obtained from interviews and observations. These documents were also crucial for understanding the context of the policies and operational procedures implemented in monitoring money politics in Maros Regency.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

In this study, data were analyzed using qualitative analysis methods, which aim to interpret the data in depth based on the perspectives of informants and the phenomena occurring in the field. The analysis techniques used included collecting, filtering, organizing, and interpreting data collected from interviews, observations, and documents. The main steps in this data analysis follow the qualitative data analysis stages according to Creswell (2014) and Miles & Huberman (1994).

### **Data Reduction**

The first step in data analysis is data reduction, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing the data obtained during the research. Data collected from interviews, observations, and documents tends to be very rich and diverse, so it needs to be reduced to identify the information most relevant to the research focus, namely police involvement in monitoring money politics in the legislative elections in Maros Regency. Irrelevant or repetitive data will be filtered out, while important data directly related to the research questions will be retained and organized for the next stage of analysis.

## **Data Display**

After data reduction, the next step is data presentation. Data presentation in qualitative research is generally conducted in the form of structured narrative text, which presents information systematically and clearly. The data presented includes the results of interviews, observations, and document reviews, organized into thematic categories. These categories are created based on the research focus, such as the role of the police, challenges in monitoring money politics, and collaboration with the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). Good data presentation helps researchers and readers understand the patterns in the data and the relationships between the variables studied. By presenting data in a structured narrative format, researchers can demonstrate the relationship between theory, field findings, and their interpretations.

## **Conclusion Drawing and Verification**

The final stage of data analysis is conclusion drawing and verification. At this stage, researchers interpret the presented data to find deeper meaning related to police involvement in monitoring money politics. Researchers will identify key themes emerging from the data, such as the monitoring strategies used by the police, the obstacles encountered, and their impact on the quality of elections in Maros Regency. Conclusions are drawn continuously throughout the analysis process, but the final research results are verified by comparing findings from various data sources (triangulation) and through critical reflection on the findings. This verification is essential to ensure that the conclusions drawn are valid and reliable.

## **Data Triangulation**

As part of the verification process, data triangulation is also implemented. Triangulation is performed by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents to examine consistencies and discrepancies emerging from various sources. With triangulation, researchers can increase the validity of research results, as findings supported by multiple data sources are more reliable than findings derived from a single source (Patton, 2002).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism in Supervising Money Politics**

The 2014 legislative elections have become a democratic momentum in the context of the consolidation of local democracy in post-reform Indonesia, including in Maros Regency. In the 2024 legislative elections, 35 seats in the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) are up for grabs. These seats are spread across six electoral districts. The 2024 legislative elections in Maros Regency involved the active participation of 277,265 voters registered on the Permanent Voter List.

Political contestation at the local level is inextricably linked to a structural phenomenon deeply rooted in Indonesia's electoral democracy: the persistence of money politics as a tool for mobilizing support, operating through patronage networks and clientelistic relationships between candidates, political parties, brokers, and voters. From the perspective of procedural democracy theory, as proposed by Robert Dahl, the quality of democracy depends crucially on the integrity of election procedures free from manipulation and distortion. Therefore, oversight of money politics is a fundamental prerequisite for the realization of legitimate and substantively meaningful elections.

The establishment of the Integrated Law Enforcement Center, commonly known as the Gakkumdu Center, as an institutional coordination forum between the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), and the State Attorney General's Office (AGO), marks an effort to institutionalize election oversight, integrating prevention, investigation, and prosecution functions into a single, coordinated mechanism. The establishment of the Gakkumdu Center is based on the recognition that handling election crimes, including money politics, requires synergy between institutions with different but complementary authorities in enforcing election law. Within the framework of an institutionalist approach, this inter-institutional coordination reflects how the formal institutional structure stipulated in regulations is translated into the practice of interaction and negotiation between actors in the context of election oversight at the local level.

### **Institutional Architecture of the Gakkumdu Center and Its Normative Foundation**

The Integrated Law Enforcement Center is a coordinating institution mandated by Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, specifically Article 486, which regulates the establishment of an integrated law enforcement center to handle election crimes in a coordinated manner between the

General Elections Supervisory Body (BOS), the Indonesian National Police (Polri), and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and its regional offices.

The operationalization of the Integrated Law Enforcement Center is further regulated through a Joint Regulation of the Chairperson of the BOS, the Chief of the Indonesian National Police, and the Attorney General. It is also technically outlined in BOS Regulation Number 9 of 2018 concerning the Integrated Law Enforcement Center, which was later updated by BOS Regulation Number 3 of 2023 to accommodate the evolving needs for handling election violations. This institutional architecture reflects the state's efforts to create an election law enforcement mechanism that is not fragmented and sectoral, but rather integrated within a single system that allows for swift, simple, and impartial handling, as is the principle adopted in the election criminal justice system.

In addition to the inter-agency coordination meetings outlined in the table above, the Maros Regency Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) also actively coordinates, both directly and indirectly (via telecommunications), with local government elements, particularly the Maros Regent and the Maros Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), regarding follow-up actions regarding violations of the Civil Servant Neutrality (Bawaslu, 2024).

This was also conveyed by the Chairperson of the Maros Regency Elections Supervisory Agency, who explained that coordination within the Gakkumdu Center is intensive and even occurs daily because police investigators and public prosecutors affiliated with the center are officially assigned to the Elections Supervisory Agency's office during the general election and regional head elections. This fosters institutional closeness, allowing for fluid communication and consultation, unhindered by the bureaucratic barriers common in inter-agency relationships. This working arrangement is a manifestation of an institutionalist approach that emphasizes the importance of proximity and regular interaction in building trust and effective inter-agency coordination.

*"Routine coordination occurs daily because police investigators and prosecutors are assigned by decree to stand by at Bawaslu. This ensures intensive coordination. Investigators from the Gakkumdu Center are based at Bawaslu during the general and regional elections. This process involves intense, even daily, coordination, not only when reports of money politics or other crimes are received," (SF, Head of Bawaslu Maros).*

This statement indicates that the institutional architecture of the Gakkumdu Center in Maros Regency has successfully transformed inter-agency coordination from episodic and reactive to continuous and anticipatory, where daily interactions allow for discussion not only of reported cases but also anticipation of potential violations based on field analysis. This situation is relevant to Durkheim's theory of social control, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of social control depends heavily on the intensity of interaction and solidarity among actors involved in the control system. The more intense and structured these interactions, the stronger the collective capacity to detect and respond to deviations. In the context of money politics oversight, this institutional closeness allows for a faster and more comprehensive exchange of information, allowing potential violations to be identified and addressed within the very limited timeframe stipulated in the procedural provisions for handling election crimes.

### **Distribution of Authority and the Principle of Collectivity in Decision-Making**

The division of authority within the Gakkumdu Center is designed to consider the specialized functions of each institution while still prioritizing the principle of collectivity in strategic decision-making related to handling alleged election crimes. The General Elections Supervisory Agency (BPU) serves as the point of entry for any reports or findings of alleged violations, while also serving as a coordinator, facilitating joint discussions and providing administrative infrastructure, including the operational budget for the Gakkumdu Center. The Police hold investigative authority, which includes gathering evidence, examining witnesses, and determining suspects if sufficient preliminary evidence has been obtained. Meanwhile, the Prosecutor's Office plays a role in providing legal considerations regarding the sufficiency of criminal elements and evidence, and conducting prosecutions when the investigation is deemed complete. This distribution of authority reflects the principle of checks and balances in the election law enforcement system, where no single institution has absolute authority to decide the fate of a case without the consent of the others.

**Table 1. Institutional Structure of the Gakkumdu Center of Maros Regency**

No	Institutional Elements	Roles in Gakkumdu	Legal basis
1	Maros Regency Election Supervisory Agency	Coordinator, recipient of reports/findings, initial reviewer, operational budget provider	- Law No. 7/2017 Article 486 - Bawaslu Regulation No. 9/2018 - Bawaslu Regulation No. 3/2023
2	Maros Police Resort (Criminal Investigation Unit)	Investigation of election crimes, evidence collection, suspect determination	
3	Maros District Prosecutor's Office	Prosecution, legal assistance, legal review, consideration of criminal elements	

Source: Data compiled from various sources and regulatory documents, 2024

The principle of collective decision-making is a fundamental characteristic that distinguishes the Gakkumdu Center from conventional law enforcement mechanisms. The decision to proceed with or discontinue a case must be made jointly through consensus by the three institutions within the center. This mechanism is intended to prevent arbitrary action or abuse of authority by any one institution, while also ensuring that each decision takes into account a comprehensive legal perspective, including election supervision, criminal investigation, and prosecution. The Chairperson of the Maros Regency General Elections Supervisory Agency emphasized that the decision to proceed with or discontinue a case is always a joint decision made in a discussion forum involving the three institutions. A case will only proceed to the investigation stage if all parties agree that the formal and material requirements have been met and the elements of the alleged violations can be proven.

*"There are obstacles that delay reports, but the decision to proceed is a joint decision. Not a single case of alleged election crimes has not been discussed jointly in one forum, including the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the police, and the prosecutors. If the joint agreement deems it appropriate, it is agreed to proceed. However, if the meeting fails to meet the elements of the article, the material and formal requirements, it is declared discontinued. Therefore, whether or not the case proceeds is not up to Bawaslu, but a joint decision," (SF).*

This statement indicates that the principle of deliberation and consensus has been internalized in the practice of handling alleged election crimes in Maros Regency, where inter-agency egos have been successfully managed through deliberative mechanisms that respect the perspectives and considerations of each institution. However, this principle of collectivism also carries the risk of deadlock if there are difficult-to-bridge differences of opinion between institutions. This is reflected in the admission of a member of the Maros District Attorney's Office, who stated that a frequent obstacle is differences in understanding among colleagues regarding whether or not a case constitutes a crime.

**Dynamics of Formal and Informal Communication in Cross-Agency Coordination**

In addition to conducting coordination meetings and discussions on handling alleged election crimes, the Gakkumdu Center staff from the three agencies also intensively provide assistance and coordination with the District Election Supervisory Board. This coordination is carried out to enhance developments in potential suspected election crimes. In terms of assistance, the Gakkumdu Center intensively assists and provides guidance to the District Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) from the initial report receipt process to the Panwascam's involvement in the clarification/investigation process for alleged election crimes.

The effectiveness of coordination within the Gakkumdu Center is determined not only by the formal mechanisms stipulated in regulations but also by the quality of informal communication established between individuals from the various institutions involved. Formal communication occurs through regular coordination meetings, official correspondence, and case discussions within the Gakkumdu Center forum, which are documented administratively. Meanwhile, informal communication thrives through daily interactions, personal discussions, and even conversations in social forums, allowing for a more fluid exchange of information and perspectives unencumbered by bureaucratic formalities. The combination of these two communication patterns creates what can be called hybrid governance, where formal structures and informal practices complement each other, supporting effective inter-institutional coordination.

The Chairperson of the Maros Regency General Elections Commission (KPU) revealed that communication between election organizers and supervisors in Maros is very intense and not limited to official forums. Communication groups involving all stakeholders, including the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), the KPU, the Resort Police, and even the Regent, are established to facilitate rapid and responsive coordination on various issues that arise during the election process. This informal communication pattern allows for faster identification and resolution of problems because information can flow without having to wait for formal meetings or go through time-consuming bureaucratic procedures. The Commissioner for Legal Affairs and Supervision of the Maros Regency General Elections Commission also emphasized that coordination between institutions occurs not only in official forums but also through informal channels, which are sometimes more effective in resolving technical issues requiring a rapid response.

*"Actually, I've said from the start that we're not focused on that, as it's more within our job description. If there are any issues related to that, they're probably more about our internal instructions, how we reiterate that we must work professionally and not get involved in, or fall within, political interests or money politics within our ranks. So, there's legal outreach conducted by our colleagues in the police. The three institutions—the General Elections Commission (KPU), the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and the Police—are working together to create a conducive election," (JM, Head of the Maros KPU).*

This admission indicates that although the General Elections Commission (KPU) doesn't have direct authority to handle money politics crimes because its primary focus is the technical implementation of elections, this institution remains involved in the election oversight ecosystem through participation in joint outreach activities and cross-institutional coordination. The KPU's integration into this coordination network is crucial, given that it has access to administrative data on election participants and campaign finance reports, which can provide initial information for detecting potential money politics violations. From the perspective of social control theory, multi-institutional participation in election supervision broadens the reach and depth of surveillance of money politics practices because each institution brings different but complementary perspectives and sources of information to form a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of violations in the field.

### **Police's Strategy for Preventing Money Politics within the Gakkumdu Center Framework**

#### **Legal Socialization and Public Political Education as Primary Prevention Instruments**

The strategy for preventing money politics implemented within the framework of the Maros Regency Gakkumdu Center places legal outreach and public political education as the first line of defense against the rise of transactional practices in elections, with the assumption that increasing public awareness and understanding of the negative impacts of money politics and its legal consequences can be a more effective and sustainable internal deterrent than a purely repressive approach. Prevention through education is an effort to internalize social norms into the individual's consciousness so that compliance with the rules arises not from fear of external sanctions but from an understanding and acceptance of the values underlying the prohibition. The Chairperson of the Maros Regency Election Supervisory Agency emphasized that preventive measures that need to be strengthened in handling money politics cases are legal education and outreach to the public. The police can conduct legal outreach in collaboration with the Election Supervisory Agency or directly through legal outreach or political education.

Police involvement in political outreach and education activities is a manifestation of the expansion of the police's function from solely repressive to also preventive and educational within the context of election supervision. The police no longer act solely as investigators who act after violations occur, but also as agents of socialization, helping to build public legal awareness before violations occur. Throughout 2023 and 2024, the Maros Police Department was actively involved in outreach activities to prevent criminal acts in the elections. These activities involved not only police officers but also the wider community. One such outreach activity took place at SMAN 4 Maros on August 5, 2023. Members of the Maros Regency Police and District Attorney's Office, who are members of the Sentra Gakkumdu team, along with students from Hasanuddin University (Unhas), held outreach activities to prevent election fraud among first-time voters (Eksepsionline.com, 2023). In addition to conducting outreach on the prevention of money politics with the Maros Gakkumdu Center, the Maros Police also carried out independent outreach activities, such as outreach activities for the Heads of the Neighborhood Security Units (Kasatkamling) of Maros Regency in June 2023. Another activity was in November 2023. The

Maros Police held internal outreach activities on the neutrality of officers to ensure that the police force could maintain neutrality in the 2024 Election.

Members of the Maros District Attorney's Office, who are members of the Gakkumdu Center, explained that one of the prosecutor's preventive contributions within the center is monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, and outreach to voters and event organizers at the village, sub-district, and regency levels. Similar activities are also carried out in a coordinated manner by the police and the General Elections Supervisory Agency. This collaborative prevention model allows for a more comprehensive message delivery, as the public not only receives information about the prohibition of money politics from an election monitoring perspective but also understands the criminal consequences from the perspective of police investigations and prosecutorial prosecutions.

*"The Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) has direct authority over the implementation of elections and regional elections, due to its *lex specialis* nature. However, because elections and regional elections also require the existence of an Integrated Law Enforcement Center to take action, the principle is that prevention is better. The involvement of the police in prevention is more about fostering political and democratic awareness among the public regarding prohibited activities during the election and regional election stages. Therefore, the police, as an institution, have been participating with Bawaslu in the field to provide political outreach and education." (SF).*

This statement underscores the philosophy underlying the prevention strategy within the Gakkumdu Center: prevention is prioritized over enforcement, as successful prevention not only prevents violations but also maintains the integrity of the electoral process as a whole. From the perspective of Robert Dahl's theory of procedural democracy, legitimate elections require voter participation based on autonomous and rational political preferences, not the result of manipulation or material transactions with candidates. Money politics undermines voter autonomy by transforming the relationship between candidates and constituents from one based on the representation of interests and ideas into a short-term, transactional relationship that does not reflect substantive political choices. Therefore, political education that builds critical public awareness of the negative impacts of money politics on the quality of democracy is an essential long-term investment for democratic consolidation at the local level.

### **Mapping Vulnerable Areas and Intelligence-Based Monitoring Strategies**

The effectiveness of preventing money politics depends heavily on the ability of supervisory officials to accurately identify locations and situations that are highly vulnerable to money politics practices, allowing limited monitoring resources to be allocated more strategically and effectively. Mapping vulnerable areas is an analytical tool that integrates historical data on election violations in previous periods, the socio-economic characteristics of the region, patterns of political competition between candidates, and intelligence information on the *modus operandi* commonly used in money politics practices in the region. In the context of Maros Regency, the General Elections Commission (KPU) Commissioner for Legal Affairs and Supervision acknowledged that mapping areas vulnerable to money politics is primarily the responsibility of the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). While the KPU focuses on administrative compliance with election participants, it is ready to support other institutions and provide administrative data mapping.

The mapping of vulnerable areas is conducted by considering various factors that contribute to a region's vulnerability to money politics, including levels of poverty and economic inequality, the intensity of competition between candidates, a history of violations in previous elections, and the presence of organized broker networks. Areas with vulnerable socio-economic characteristics tend to be targets for the distribution of money politics because voters in these areas are more easily influenced by material incentives offered by candidates, as explained in Przeworski's theory of the political economy of power, which states that in conditions of high economic inequality, political actors with greater financial resources have a competitive advantage in mobilizing support through transactional mechanisms.

Based on the Bawaslu 2024 Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) report, South Sulawesi Province is one of the safest provinces from potential election violations with a vulnerability score of only 10.2 points. This achievement makes South Sulawesi Province the second safest region in the 2024 Election. However, this achievement differs from Maros Regency, based on Bawaslu 2023 IKP data at the district/city level, Maros has a moderate potential for vulnerability in the 2024 Election. This shows that Maros Regency is more at risk of money politics violations. The assessment indicators in the Bawaslu IKP are, Socio-Political Context (SARA riots, intimidation of election organizers, neutrality of ASN/TNI/Polri, security conditions); Election Implementation (voting rights, logistics, voting & vote

counting); and Contestation (campaign violations, money politics, hate speech, supporter conflicts). The following table compares the results of election vulnerability mapping at the Maros Regency and South Sulawesi levels.

**Table 2. Election Vulnerability Mapping Results at the Maros Regency and South Sulawesi Levels**

N o.	Region	IKP Score	IKP Category	Socio-Political Dimension Score	Category	Electoral Violation Dimension Score (D1)	Category	Contestation Dimension Score (D2)	Category (D3)
1.	Maros Regency	40.42	Moderate	69.78	High	37.22	Moderate	29.75	Moderate
2.	South Sulawesi Province	10.20	Low	37.78	Moderate	0.00	Low	0.00	Low

The Head of the Maros Regency General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) emphasized that the Gakkumdu Center, under the coordination of the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), has been working to prevent violations, including vote buying. He explained that prevention measures have many forms, including public awareness campaigns and direct supervision, as well as outreach. Mapping vulnerable areas serves as the basis for determining priorities and the intensity of monitoring in each region.

*"Since its inception, the Gakkumdu Center has been conducting mapping using intelligence mechanisms. This serves as a reference for the Gakkumdu Center to map and monitor vulnerable areas to avoid any potential breaches," (SF).*

However, according to the Head of the Maros Bawaslu, the Gakkumdu Center has struggled to prosecute vote buying cases. "Usually, we receive information. By the time the team goes to the field, residents are no longer willing to be honest," SF explained.

**Monitoring Patrols and Anticipating Money Politics Distribution During the Quiet Period**

The quiet period, which begins three days before election day, is a critical period requiring intensified monitoring. Various studies on money politics practices in Indonesia indicate that the most intensive distribution of money or goods to voters occurs during the quiet period until the early morning hours leading up to the election, commonly referred to as "dawn raids." This distribution timeframe is chosen by money politics actors, considering that the temporal proximity between the receipt of the money and the time of voting maximizes the likelihood that voters will comply with the donor's expectations, as memories of the transaction are still fresh and feelings of indebtedness remain strong. In response to this temporal characteristic of money politics practices, the monitoring strategy in Maros Regency involves intensifying joint patrols involving District Election Supervisors and Sector Police in all fourteen districts, focusing on the nighttime to early morning periods when money politics distribution activities are most vulnerable. For the 2024 Election, the quiet period took place on February 12-13, 2024. The Gakkumdu Center, comprised of the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the Prosecutor's Office, and the Police, collaborated on patrols through several mechanisms, including 24-hour direct patrols at several locations. These patrols involved not only the Gakkumdu Center team but also Bawaslu, the Sub-district Election Supervisory Committee (Panwascam), and security forces, who had a larger patrol role. According to the Bawaslu Maros 2024 report, several monitoring mechanisms were implemented during the quiet period of the 2024 election, including:

**Table 3. Implementation of Supervision During the 2024 Election Quiet Period**

No	Components	Description
1	Alert Duty	The Sub-district Election Supervisory Committee (Panwaslu) is on standby 24 hours a day.
2.	Field Patrol	Supervisors (police and Panwas) are patrolling their respective areas.
3.	Digital Cyber Patrol	Police are monitoring digital campaigns that violate the quiet period.
4.	Complaint Hotline	The public can report via the Gakkumdu (Election Supervisory Agency) center.

The Head of the Maros Regency Election Supervisory Agency explained that the joint strategy typically involves joint patrols, both day and night, because money distribution often occurs close to election day. This involves both patrols and police, allowing for both preventive and repressive measures to run concurrently.

*"Our joint strategy is to conduct joint patrols, both day and night, because money distribution often occurs close to election day. In addition to patrols, we also conduct direct legal outreach within the community, involving the police. We are also active in monitoring on social media. With this model, preventive and repressive measures can run parallel. The division of duties is clear: the initial prevention phase and the point of entry for reports are with the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), while once the investigation has progressed to the police, the authority is vested." (SF).*

These joint patrols not only serve as a direct detection mechanism for money politics distribution activities but also have a deterrent effect because the presence of supervisory and security personnel on the ground sends a signal to potential perpetrators that the risk of being caught is high. From a social control theory perspective, the visible presence of agents of social control in public spaces increases the perceived risk of detection, which can prevent potential violators from carrying out their intentions. However, the effectiveness of patrols also depends heavily on adequate personnel and coverage, given the vastness of Maros Regency, which comprises fourteen sub-districts and one hundred and three villages spread across diverse geographic regions.

### **Participatory Oversight and Civil Society Empowerment**

A sustainable strategy to prevent vote-buying cannot rely solely on the capacity of formal election supervisory institutions. Therefore, the involvement of civil society as oversight partners is necessary, able to expand the reach and depth of surveillance of vote-buying practices at the grassroots level. The concept of participatory oversight recognizes the inherent limitations of formal institutions in covering all political activities at the sub-district and village levels, given that interactions between candidates, campaign teams, brokers, and voters often take place in private spaces that are difficult for supervisory officials to access. Communities in these environments are in a more strategic position to observe and report suspicious practices because they are part of the social ecosystem in which vote-buying transactions occur. The Head of the Maros Regency Election Supervisory Agency (BOS) explained that the BOS has two preventive measures: prevention through the BOS and prevention through public participation, also known as participatory oversight. The public is encouraged to actively participate in preventing potential violations.

The implementation of participatory oversight in Maros Regency involves the formation of volunteer election supervisors in every sub-district and village, as well as the involvement of community leaders, village heads, civil society organizations, and community-based groups in oversight activities. These participants in participatory oversight do not have investigative powers like formal officials, but they can serve as the eyes and ears of the supervisory agency, conveying initial information about indications of violations to the BOS for follow-up according to established mechanisms. From the perspective of procedural democracy theory, public involvement in election oversight is a manifestation of the principle of public participation, which applies not only to voting but also to overseeing the election process to ensure it proceeds in accordance with legal and ethical norms of democracy. The Head of the Maros Regency General Elections Supervisory Agency emphasized that the General Elections Supervisory Agency consistently involves non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and the media in its outreach and participatory monitoring activities. This support is crucial for disseminating information and providing moral pressure to prevent perpetrators of vote buying from the public from feeling free.

**Table 4. Strategy for Preventing Money Politics in the 2024 Legislative Election in Maros Regency**

No	Prevention Strategies	Implementers	Implementation Time
1	Election Socialization Law	Bawaslu, Police, District Attorney, General Elections Commission (KPU)	Pre-campaign period to campaign period
2	Mapping of Vulnerable Areas	Bawaslu, Police Intelligence Unit	Before the election begins
3	Joint Supervision Patrols	Panwascam, Police, Bhabinkamtibmas	Quiet period to election day
4	Participatory Supervision	Community, religious leaders, NGOs, media	All election stages
5	Stakeholder Coordination	Regional Government, KPU, Bawaslu, Police, District Attorney	Periodically throughout the election stages

Source: Data compiled from various sources, 2025

The above data demonstrates various collaborations undertaken by organizations to strengthen participatory oversight. Several community organization representatives actively involved in the memorandum of understanding (MoU) and outreach activities with the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the Police are the Maros Branch of the Islamic Students Association (HMI) and the Maros Muhammadiyah Youth. Their involvement focuses on the role of youth in election oversight and disseminates education about criminal sanctions related to money politics, which directly supports Gakkumdu's preventative efforts on the ground. In addition to youth organizations, collaborations also extend to the village level. The Gakkumdu Center, in collaboration with Bawaslu Maros, launched the Anti-Money Politics Village program in several villages as an effective strategy to encourage oversight by local communities. Ahead of the 2024 Elections, Maros Regency launched five anti-money politics villages across five sub-districts: Bontoa, Tanralili, Maros Baru, and Tompobulu.

### **Mechanism for Handling Alleged Money Politics**

#### **Flow for Handling Reports and Findings within the Gakkumdu Center Framework**

Handling of alleged money politics within the Gakkumdu Center system follows a structured procedural flow with a clear division of stages and authority between each participating institution. The entire process must be completed within the strict timeframes stipulated in the General Election Law and its implementing regulations. The process begins with the receipt of public reports or supervisory findings submitted through the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) as the coordinator of the Gakkumdu Center. This is followed by an initial assessment to verify the formal and material requirements of the report or finding. Reports or findings that meet the initial requirements are then discussed in the Gakkumdu Center forum, involving all three institutions to determine whether the alleged violation meets the elements of an election crime and can proceed to the investigation stage. The decision to proceed with or discontinue handling a case is made collectively based on consensus, with each institution having an equal say in the case's fate.

This mechanism aligns with the mandate of Bawaslu Regulation Number 3 of 2023. The Gakkumdu Center's handling mechanism is implemented through a three-point discussion system involving synergy between the Maros Bawaslu, the Maros Police (Polres Maros), and the Maros District Attorney's Office. The process begins with a First Discussion within 24 hours of the report or finding being registered to determine whether the formal and material requirements for an election crime are met. A Second Discussion is then conducted after the clarification process is completed to determine whether the case is worthy of being moved to the police investigation stage. The Third Discussion concludes with a review of the case file's readiness before being handed over to the Public Prosecutor. The entire handling process is limited by a very short timeframe, a maximum of 14 working days for investigation and 5 working days for prosecution, to ensure swift legal certainty amidst the busy election process. This was also confirmed by members of the Maros District Attorney's Office, who are members of the Gakkumdu Center, who explained that the standard operating procedures for handling cases refer to the General Elections Supervisory Agency (BPU) Regulation, which regulates matters ranging from who is assigned to the appropriate authorities and how they are handled. The substance of this regulation is how each agency exercises its authority and does not negate or interfere with each other. The essence of decision-making is through deliberation and consensus to determine whether a case

meets the elements and sufficient evidence to proceed to the investigation, inquiry, and prosecution stages. This mechanism reflects the application of the principle of checks and balances in the election law enforcement system, where no single agency has unilateral authority to determine the fate of a case. Thus, the potential for abuse of authority or politicization of law enforcement can be minimized through cross-institutional oversight mechanisms.

*"As for the SOP, we adhere to the Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency) regulations, specifically the Bawaslu Regulations. These regulations regulate issues ranging from who is assigned to the agency and how they are handled. The substance is how each agency has its own authority and does not overrule or interfere with each other. The essence is deliberation and consensus, meaning whether this case meets the elements and so on. We discuss this in a meeting, and if we reach an agreement that the elements are met and the evidence is sufficient, we escalate the case to the investigation, inquiry, and prosecution stages." (MR)*

### **Evidence Collection and Proof Challenges in Money Politics Cases**

Collecting evidence is a crucial stage in handling alleged money politics crimes, the success of which largely determines the continuation of the investigation and prosecution process. However, this stage also faces inherent challenges stemming from the nature of money politics practices, which tend to occur in secret and covert ways, involving parties with vested interests who prefer not to disclose their involvement. The evidence required in money politics cases includes testimony from witnesses who witnessed or directly witnessed the transactions, physical evidence in the form of money or goods distributed, visual documentation such as photos or videos recording the distribution activity, and electronic evidence such as recordings of conversations or messages discussing the arrangement of money politics. Among these various types of evidence, witness testimony is the most critical and difficult to obtain because witnesses involved in or familiar with the practice of money politics are often reluctant to provide information that could incriminate the perpetrator.

Witnesses' reluctance to provide testimony in money politics cases is driven by a variety of intertwined factors, ranging from fear of possible criminalization as recipients of the money, concerns about intimidation or retaliation from perpetrators who typically possess political or economic power, to feelings of indebtedness or social connections that make witnesses feel it is inappropriate to report those who have provided them with material benefits. The Head of the Maros Regency General Elections Supervisory Agency acknowledged that the challenges faced in the handling process were the numerous cases where witnesses were lacking or absent, suggesting that the incidents may have occurred but people were afraid to testify. This situation creates a significant gap between the reality of the generally acknowledged practice of vote buying and the ability of law enforcement officials to prove and formally prosecute these violations through the election criminal justice system.

*"The challenges faced in this process include the numerous cases where witnesses were lacking or absent. The incidents may have occurred but people were afraid to testify. The timeframe for handling the cases is relatively short. While the general election lasts 14 days, the regional election only takes seven days. The biggest obstacle faced by the police in investigating vote buying lies in obtaining evidence, particularly the availability of witnesses. Many incidents do occur, but people are afraid to testify." (SF)*

This statement indicates that the challenge of providing evidence in vote buying cases is not solely a technical investigative issue, but also relates to socio-cultural factors that influence the public's willingness to participate in the law enforcement process. From the perspective of Max Weber's theory of political legitimacy, public trust in the legal system and its enforcement officers is a prerequisite for citizens' willingness to cooperate in the law enforcement process. The low level of witness participation in vote buying cases can be interpreted as a reflection of public doubts about the effectiveness and fairness of the election law enforcement system. Furthermore, a member of the Maros Regency Regional Representative Council from the Gerindra Party also revealed that many people are still hesitant or afraid to report cases due to concerns about the repercussions, including fear of intimidation or ostracization if they are identified as the informant, especially if the perpetrator is an influential political figure in their region.

### **Limited Handling Time and Its Implications for Investigation Quality**

The limited timeframe for handling election crimes is a structural obstacle that significantly impacts the effectiveness of law enforcement against money politics, given that regulations stipulate very short investigation deadlines of fourteen days for general elections and seven days for regional head

elections. If these deadlines are exceeded, the case is deemed to have lapsed and cannot be processed further. This time limit was designed with the consideration that election law enforcement must provide legal certainty quickly to avoid jeopardizing the legitimacy of election results. However, in practice, this time limit often compromises the quality of investigations because authorities do not have sufficient time to collect and verify all the evidence necessary to build a strong case. The Head of the Maros Regency Election Supervisory Agency emphasized that the applicable sanctions are still relatively light and that higher criminal penalties are necessary because sanctions should not only be moral but also provide a deterrent effect as much as possible. Furthermore, the time limit needs to be extended because, for example, the seven-day period for regional elections is limited, and any time beyond that period is considered to have lapsed and cannot be processed. The implication of this time constraint is a trade-off between speed and thoroughness in the investigation process. Pressure to complete investigations within tight deadlines can push investigators to take shortcuts or accept lower standards of proof to meet procedural deadlines. This situation can lead to two equally problematic scenarios: prematurely naming suspects without sufficient evidence, which risks violating the alleged perpetrator's human rights, or terminating investigations due to the statute of limitations, even though there are strong substantive indications of violations that could have been prosecuted with a longer processing time. Members of the Maros District Attorney's Office, who are members of the Gakkumdu Center, acknowledged that in the 2024 election, their office did not find any cases that progressed to the prosecution stage. This indicates that even though allegations of violations were handled at the initial level, the process could not proceed to a more advanced stage due to various obstacles, including time constraints and the difficulty of proving evidence

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that money politics remains a systemic challenge in the legislative elections of Maros Regency, deeply rooted in socio-economic vulnerability, intense political competition, and entrenched patronage networks. Within this context, the involvement of the police through the Integrated Law Enforcement Center (Gakkumdu) plays a crucial role in safeguarding electoral integrity by strengthening inter-agency coordination between the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), the police, and the prosecutor's office. The findings demonstrate that the Gakkumdu framework enables collective decision-making, continuous formal and informal communication, and integrated preventive and repressive strategies in supervising vote-buying practices. Preventive approaches such as legal socialization, political education, mapping of vulnerable areas, joint patrols during the quiet period, and participatory supervision emerge as the most effective instruments in mitigating money politics at the local level. However, the effectiveness of law enforcement remains constrained by structural and procedural limitations, particularly difficulties in evidence collection, low witness participation due to fear and social pressures, limited investigative resources, and strict statutory time limits for handling election crimes. These constraints often result in the inability of cases to progress to the prosecution stage despite substantive indications of violations. While the institutional design of Gakkumdu enhances coordination and oversight capacity, strengthening witness protection mechanisms, extending procedural timeframes, and reinforcing the deterrent effect of sanctions are essential to improve the effectiveness of police-led election law enforcement and ensure the realization of free, fair, and democratic elections.

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