

Press Release from BERSIH 2.0 *16 November 2020* *EC, When Can Absentee Voting Be Widely Available?*

The Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (BERSIH 2.0) would like to reiterate our call that the Election Commission (EC) should be willing and prepared to extend postal voting to other categories other than the seven categories set by the EC as for now. The other seven categories are the military, police, media personnel, election officials, Malaysian citizens abroad as well as students and civil servants who are abroad (1).

BERSIH 2.0 believes that the EC already has gathered enough time to implement this matter as proposals and studies to expand the postal voting category have been made by the Public Select Committee chaired by Datuk Seri Maximus Ongkili in improving the electoral system since 2012. If the EC is unable to provide postal voting facilities to all Malaysians, at least the EC should provide the postal voting option for Malaysians not within their voting constituency such as in Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsulas who are either working or studying, for them to enable to vote in the election. The EC should be held accountable and responsible by the public if it continues to give out reasons on insufficient time to implement such option despite even the automatic voter registration can be successful within two years.

This appeal has been made by BERSIH 2.0 (2) and Bersih Sabah (3) several times before and most recently, Bersih Sarawak (4) has also urged similar demands in their petition (5) to enable Sarawak voters in the Peninsula and Sabah to vote by post in the next Sarawak State Election. Apart from that, BERSIH 2.0 also urged the postal and early voting categories to be open to voters residing in neighbouring countries such as Singapore, Southern Thailand, Brunei and Kalimantan.

If such initiative to improve the accessibility of the voting system by the EC cannot be fulfilled, then when is the right time for the EC to expand this postal voting category to Malaysians so that it is easier for them to vote if elections are held later within these few years? As the Covid-19 pandemic begins to take another toll on the nation's well-being, the EC should think of more proactive measures to ensure that the voting right of all Malaysians is guaranteed without risking their safety and health. For example, the EC can extend the voting period by more than a day as it is done in some countries such as New Zealand where the voting period is 12 days.

BERSIH 2.0 is aware of the concerns raised by the EC, especially regarding the issue of public confidence in the transparency of postal votes. Once again, BERSIH 2.0 would like to suggest that the EC immediately conduct a session to engage with stakeholders including agencies such as Pos Malaysia, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (KPKT), political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other think-tanks. An all-inclusive governing session can be a platform for the EC to find the best solution to implement a much more transparent and inclusive postal voting system. BERSIH 2.0 is ready to discuss and give suggestions to the EC to ensure that this postal voting can be carried out effectively.

Released by:

BERSIH 2.0 Steering Committee

- (1)
<https://www.spr.gov.my/ms/kategori-pengundi-pos-dalam-negara-dan-luar-negara>
- (2)
<http://www.bersih.org/kenyataan-media-bersih-2-0-bila-pengundi-luar-kawasan-boleh-undi-pos/>
- (3)
bit.ly/UndiPos4Sabah
- (4)
<https://dayakdaily.com/extend-absentee-voting-facilities-to-guarantee-sarawakians-voting-rights-in-state-election/>
- (5)
<http://chng.it/pCwMLczqPL>