

UPDATING VOTING ADDRESS: YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

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The recent [Malaysiakini article](#) on how the Sabah State Election seeded the third COVID wave highlighted the reason - "... interstate travel ... allowed returnees from Sabah to seed new outbreaks in other states." This ties to the problem of voter's addresses in our Electoral Roll not reflecting the reality of residence. In August 2020, Senator Datuk Donald Peter Mojuntin stated that 18% of Sabahan voters do not reside in Sabah. One of the major grumbles from Sabahans over the snap elections was the cost of exercising their voting right. Malaysians are failing to fulfill a simple responsibility – update their voting address.

According to the law, a Malaysian citizen qualifies to be an elector upon attaining the age 21 years and above and is resident in a constituency. This is explicit in Article 119 of the Federal Constitution, which defines the qualifying date as the date when one applies to be an elector or requests for a change of constituency. Before 1960, the Article required the elector to be resident in a constituency for at least six months before qualifying. In the current version, the residency term limit has been removed. Article 119 (1) must be read together with Elections (Registration of Electors) Regulations 2002 (ROE). ROE 12 (1) states that "... (an elector) who desires to transfer his registration to a different locality in which he is qualified to be registered to forward personally his application to the Registrar of the registration area or the Assistant Registrar of the registration unit in which he is qualified as an elector or to any Registrar of any registration area or any other Assistant Registrar of any registration unit." Herein lies the problem - the onus to update the voting address rests in the hands of the voters themselves. The new Election Commission (EC) appointed after GE14 introduced an [online facility](#) for Malaysians to update their voting address. It is for us to ensure that our electoral roll is updated.

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One of the fundamentals of free and fair elections is the integrity of the electoral roll. An electoral roll should reflect the current voter distribution. Our electoral roll is a hybrid of a current roll and the archival roll listing long lost buildings, addresses and settlements. Those of us who have been following election news leading up to GE14 are fully aware of "One Malaysia" houses hosting mixed ethnicities and overpopulated houses with enormous resident numbers. Following GE14, Tindak Malaysia has discovered similar issues in Rantau, Cameron Highlands and Chini. While EC promptly did a ground search on our Rantau findings, they could not remove doubtful electors or update their addresses due to restrictions in Regulation 12 (1). No doubt the laws must be amended to ensure legitimate voting addresses, but Malaysians should do their part to ensure that their registered MyKad address and their voting address reflect their current residence. We should permanently ditch the idea of associating our voting right with our original state if we no longer live in our hometown.

Here are the reasons for voting address needing updates:

1. You should vote for the leaders in your current constituency, who represent you geographically. If you are a Sabahan or Sarawakian residing more than 90 days in Kuala Lumpur, you should promptly update your MyKad address and relocate your voting rights to Kuala Lumpur. If you are a Kelantanese residing in Shah Alam, the state politics of Selangor has far greater impact on you than your once-in-five-years effort to vote in Kelantan.
2. You don't want suspicious voters to appear on our electoral roll, so please don't be a suspicious voter yourself by remaining an outstation voter. We have an EC that takes the issue of electoral roll seriously. They have made voting registration and address update accessible through an online platform. Become part of the solution, not the problem.
3. It is of great interest to the parties you support for them to spread their wings. As Warisan and UPKO from Sabah spread their wings to Peninsular Malaysia, it would make sense for Sabahans in Peninsular Malaysia to support them here, not in Sabah. Regional parties can go beyond their shores and compete in new areas. This will offer more options for voters to choose from. The burden of mobilising outstation voters to return for an election will be eased.
4. For effective polling logistics planning, it is important that the Election Commission knows the correct voter population in each locale. If the electoral roll is reflective of current resident distribution, polling resources allocation can be made appropriately.
5. If you want fair electoral boundaries that don't discriminate based on residence, your voting address must be current. The 13th Schedule of the Federal Constitution requires the current voter roll be used to determine the distribution of electors in the state.
6. It is more cost effective to vote in your locale rather than voting in your hometown. Instead

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of flying across the South China Sea or getting stuck in traffic jams across Peninsular Malaysia, it is wiser for you to vote according to your current residence.

7. You can become eligible for some state benefits or welfare programmes. For example, Penang State Government [iSejahtera](#) welfare programme requires the beneficiary to be a registered voter in Penang. Selangor's [Kasih](#)

[Ibu Smart Selangor](#)

(KISS) which helps poor single women or women with families is available to registered voters in Selangor.

While the responsibility may seem trivial or non essential, the consequences of updating the voting address are far reaching. Once you move to a new place, please update your MyKad address through the National Registration Department (JPN) and subsequently, update your voting address via the [mysprdaftar](#) website or the post office. Please update your voting address even if it involves a change of unit in the same building. Don't remain as a suspicious voter, or an outstation voter. Become a voter who determines your local representative and be part of the solution that we badly need.

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