



# Karnataka government drafting right to recall bill for rural voters

By Sowmya Aji, ET Bureau | 25 Nov, 2014, 12.24PM IST

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**BENGALURU:** State govt proposes to introduce a bill that will empower rural voters to recall their representatives from gram panchayats. The Congress government in Karnataka plans to introduce a bill that will empower rural voters to recall elected representatives to gram panchayat, including president, if they are perceived to have failed to meet expectations.

The bill seeking changes in the existing act for local body elections will be called the Karnataka Gram Swaraj Panchayat Raj Act and, if passed, would see Karnataka become the first state where voters would be bestowed with such a right.

A draft bill drawn up by a committee of panchayat raj experts under senior Congress MLA [KR Ramesh Kumar](#) proposes that the gram sabha to have the option to recall a member or the gram panchayat president. The conditions are that 50% of the full-strength of the gram sabha has to meet and two-thirds of them have to opt for recalling the member. "The right is basically there to ensure that the gram panchayat member visits his ward, conducts gram sabhas regularly and follow the decisions taken there," Ramesh Kumar told ET. "There will be clear evidence if any of this is not followed. The entire recall process will be monitored by the State Election Commission," he added.



*Rahul Chimanbhai Mehta, who made the right to recall his plank while contesting in Gandhinagar, said even the Karnataka draft bill was inadequate.*

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The state Cabinet has to clear this bill drafted by the committee at the behest of [Chief Minister Siddaramaiah](#), who has expressed keenness to strengthen the panchayat raj system in the state. The committee expects that this bill, which also proposes other far-reaching reforms, will be tabled in the assembly session beginning in Belagavi on December 9. Rural Development and [Panchayat Raj Minister HK Patil](#) said the bill would have to be vetted by the law and finance ministries, before it could be tabled. "The reforms are welcome, but will take a little time," he told ET. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and [Chhattisgarh](#) have the right to recall elected members to municipalities and gram panchayats but the power to initiate recall is vested with gram panchayat members corporators and not with voters.

[Rahul Chimanbhai Mehta](#), who made the right to recall his plank while contesting in [Gandhinagar](#), said even the Karnataka draft bill was inadequate. "The right has been given as a negative recall, not a positive one. My suggestion is that if a gram sabha finds a candidate who is better than the one elected, there should be a recall, rather than because someone didn't perform," he said.

Fears have also been expressed in the political circles that giving the villager the right to recall might cause instability and constant factionalism, especially in regions where there are deep political and caste divides. Committee member DR Patil, however, said the village-level logistics and sense of responsibility had their own dynamics and would ensure that the power is not misused. "It will work especially at the ward level, where there is only one member to represent all of them," he said.

Nandana Reddy, another committee member, said: "All these arguments that the gram sabhas can be led or monetarily influenced cannot be held as valid in a democracy. If they have the right to elect members, then they should also have the right to recall them."