

# United Russia Boss Tapped as Kaliningrad Governor

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Outgoing Kaliningrad Governor Georgy Boos, left, speaking at an earlier meeting. President Medvedev filled Boos' spot with Nikolai Tsukanov on Monday. **Y. Stetsko**

President Dmitry Medvedev appointed the head of United Russia's Kaliningrad branch, Nikolai Tsukanov, as the Baltic enclave's next governor on Monday, and Tsukanov immediately promised to tackle sensitive local issues like unemployment and high transportation costs.

But a local lawmaker said he would not back the appointment during a largely rubber-stamp confirmation vote in the regional legislature Thursday, saying Tsukanov's leadership capabilities were unknown.

The Kremlin said in a statement that Tsukanov, who also serves as a district prefect in the city of Kaliningrad, would replace Georgy Boos, an unpopular one-term appointee whose policies sparked large street protests earlier this year.

"There are a lot of problems in the Kaliningrad region," Tsukanov said in a statement published on United Russia's web site, adding that he would focus on five of them: unemployment, transportation costs, a shortage of kindergartens, health care and social services.

Tsukanov, 45, a native of the local village of Lipovo, was among three gubernatorial candidates put forward by United Russia to Medvedev last week. Boos was not included on the list, marking the first time that a governor has been ousted because of a lack of public support since direct gubernatorial elections were scrapped by then-President Vladimir Putin in 2004.

The other two candidates on the list were Kaliningrad Mayor Alexander Yaroshuk and State Duma Deputy and former Kaliningrad Mayor Yuri Savenko.

Boos, 47, a native Muscovite whose term expires next month, was appointed by Putin in 2005.

Mikhail Chesalin, a local lawmaker who heads the regional branch of the Patriots of Russia opposition party, said he would vote against Tsukanov on Thursday.

"I know nothing about the positive qualities of the candidate," Chesalin said by telephone from Kaliningrad. "He is not very well-known here. Few Kaliningrad residents know him."

Tsukanov has headed United Russia's branch in Kaliningrad since July, succeeding Sergei Bulychyov, who resigned amid the street protests.

Tsukanov graduated with a degree in welding from a Kaliningrad vocational school before studying law at Moscow's Higher School of Privatization and Entrepreneurship and receiving a third degree from Kazan Tupolev State Technical University, according to a biography on United Russia's web site.

Kaliningrad, an exclave wedged between Poland, Lithuania and the Baltic Sea, was rocked earlier this year by rallies where protesters demanded both the resignation of Boos and Prime Minister Putin, who heads United Russia.

About 3,000 people demanded Putin's resignation and a return of direct gubernatorial elections at a rally in central Kaliningrad on Saturday. The rally was organized to seek Boos' ouster, but after it became clear that the governor would not be appointed to a second term, the focus shifted to Putin.

Medvedev on Monday appointed Kabardino-Balkaria President Arsen Kanokov to a second, five-year term, the Kremlin said.

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