

Trade Unions Back Incumbent Head

By [Irina Filatova](#)

January 12, 2011



Trade union members rallying outside the White House in 2005. Union members hope for a revival of its authority. **Igor Tabakov**

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions approved its incumbent leader Mikhail Shmakov as the sole candidate for re-election to a five-year term Wednesday.

The announcement came as Shmakov's only rival, Andrei Isayev, chairman of the State Duma's Labor and Social Policy Committee, removed his name from the list of candidates, casting his support for Shmakov in the election.

Isayev, who is a United Russia member, said he made the decision to withdraw his candidacy after discussing the future development of trade unions with Shmakov.

“He confirmed that he planned to take serious steps to renew and strengthen the structure of the trade unions movement,” Isayev said in an e-mailed statement.

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions is Russia's largest trade union umbrella

organization with 25 million members.

It was unclear late Wednesday whether Shmakov had been officially re-elected as the federation's leader.

The Kremlin is interested in replacing Shmakov and "adding more dynamism to the Federation of Independent Trade Unions," which didn't manage to control strikes and other labor conflicts in the regions, said Oleg Shein, a State Duma deputy with A Just Russia.

The federation "does not have sufficient political authority or the trust of the masses," he told The Moscow Times.

Among the recent conflicts was an April hunger strike of air traffic controllers in a number of Russian regions, who demanded the resignation of Valery Gorbenko, head of the state Air Traffic Control Corporation.

Another recent conflict was a strike in March at the Ford car assembly plant in Vsevolozhsk in the Leningrad region, when the company's trade union stopped the assembly line and demanded a 25 percent increase in workers' salaries.

Shein said Isayev was likely to replace Shmakov when his term ends in five years, if not earlier.

"Isayev would not be the worst candidate to replace Shmakov, since Isayev understands the particulars of the trade union movement," he said.

Shmakov, who has been chairman of the federation for 17 years and has been re-elected three times, said Wednesday that the government should enhance its role as arbiter between businesses and trade unions. He vowed to oppose "exploitation of employees."

He also told a meeting of the federation members attended by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin that trade unions should decide whom to support during the 2012 presidential election, Vedomosti reported.

Isayev said another reason that he stepped aside was because it would take a new leader several years to gain authority, while Shmakov already has it.

"We have been working with this man as a team for many years. Mikhail Shmakov ... can unite representatives of different industries," he said.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/12/trade-unions-back-incumbent-head-a4165>