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Pro-Putin Weaver Lands State Duma Seat

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Lapshina

A weaver from the Ivanovo region who shot to fame in 2007 for demanding that the Constitution be amended to allow Vladimir Putin to serve a third term as president has been handed a United Russia seat in the State Duma.

The weaver, Yelena Lapshina, 39, will fill a seat vacated by Sergei Kapkov, who accepted a Moscow City Hall offer to run Gorky Park earlier this month.

Lapshina joined United Russia just a month ahead of the October 2007 party conference where she called for Putin to stay in the Kremlin. In March 2008, the same month Dmitry Medvedev was elected president, she was elected a United Russia lawmaker in the Ivanovo regional legislature.

With only a high school education, she enrolled in 2008 in the Ivanovo State Textile

Academy's department of economics and personnel management.

State Duma Speaker and senior United Russia official Boris Gryzlov said Monday that it is "important" for the party that "people with different backgrounds" who "know well the problems of their social groups" come to power, according to United Russia's web site.

The image of a "low-class Russian woman" who rises to fame was common in Soviet propaganda, Andrei Kolesnikov, a columnist for opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta, said in an article posted on Gazeta.ru on Tuesday.

Lapshina's picture on the Ivanovo regional legislature's web site depicts a broad-shouldered woman in a gray suit made of coarse fabric. She is wearing a delicate crucifix on a chain around her neck.

Lapshina also headed Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's public reception office in Ivanovo, where she has shown herself as a "sympathetic, hard-working" person who shows "initiative," United Russia said.

Lapshina said she would aim to "improve the lawmaking process, fulfill voters' instructions and work with the population," the web site reported Tuesday.

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