

# United Russia Backs Putin for 2012 Election

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The ruling United Russia party wants Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to stand in the 2012 presidential election, a top party official said Thursday.

"As for the party's position on the 2012 elections, United Russia will orient itself on its leader Vladimir Putin," said Yury Shuvalov, deputy secretary of the presidium of the party's General Council, Interfax reported.

"Of course, we'd like to see Putin head the United Russia party list in December" for the State Duma vote, Shuvalov said. "And it's his candidacy that we're considering in the first place when deciding on a party candidate for the presidential elections."

Putin heads United Russia without being a member. Uncertainty over whether he will return to the presidency, which he held in 2000-08, or back incumbent Dmitry Medvedev has pushed factions of the political elite to weigh in on the issue.

Both Putin and Medvedev have hinted they may run in the election, but each has said they will

make the decision together.

*(Reuters, MT)*

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