

Prokhorov Promises 2nd Place in Duma

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Billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov promised on Saturday to turn Right Cause into Russia's second-largest party in the country with a pro-business platform that would change the country's landscape over the next decade.

Prokhorov, worth an estimated \$18 billion by Forbes in April, promised to push through measures to reduce bureaucracy and the social tax by capturing the second-largest majority after United Russia in State Duma elections in December.

"We have got to return to a 14 percent tax, leave small business alone, simplify paperwork and let small business work in peace," he said on Rossia-1 state television, Interfax reported. "I think we won't recognize the country in five to 10 years."

He backtracked from a deeply unpopular proposal that he raised in November to expand the legal workweek to 60 hours, from the current 40.

Prokhorov announced last Monday that he would lead Right Cause, the only party to endorse

President Dmitry Medvedev for a second term so far. Medvedev on Wednesday predicted that the party would do well in the elections by "consolidating the right."

The party was formed in 2009 with the Kremlin's blessing. It has 14 seats in regional legislatures nationwide and none in the Duma.

The revamp of the Right Cause party picked steam last week, as its ruling triumvirate said it was ready to clear out of the way for the charismatic billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov, recently tapped for new party head.

Party co-leader Leonid Gozman said Friday that he and fellow co-leader Georgy Bovt would support a vote for Prokhorov to take the helm at a party meeting in June.

The party's third co-leader, Boris Titov, also supports Prokhorov's bid but might leave Right Cause, Kommersant [reported](#).

Gozman said he would not seek re-election to Right Cause's ruling council but would remain a party member.

He said by telephone that the three-leader structure was always viewed as a temporary compromise needed to create a right-leaning liberal-democratic party capable of "challenging United Russia's monopoly on power."

"The fact that we have come to terms with a first-rate businessman and that he has taken the risk [to head the party] means that the serfdom of Russia's elite under United Russia will be destroyed," Gozman said.

Bovt, a journalist by profession, said by telephone that he would "be glad to stay in the party if I may be of use."

Prokhorov is unlikely to collect enough votes to replace the Communist Party as the second-largest faction in the Duma, said Olga Mefodyeva, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies.

"There is no time to consolidate ... the 20 to 30 percent of liberal voters," Mefodyeva said by telephone.

A recent poll by state-run VTsIOM put the party's public support at 2.9 percent, far below the 7 percent threshold for Duma elections.

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