

Kerimov Invited to Join Forces With Right Cause, Prokhorov

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The pro-business Right Cause party, which billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov offered to lead this month, hopes to further strengthen its ranks with the addition of billionaire Suleiman Kerimov, Vedomosti reported Monday.

Prokhorov, who has no experience in politics, personally invited Kerimov, who served two terms in the State Duma and now is a Federation Council senator, to join the party, the daily said, citing an unidentified federal government official from Kerimov's circle.

The official said Kerimov was likely to accept the offer because he shares Right Cause's ideology.

The two businessmen did not comment on the report Monday.

The liberal pro-Kremlin Right Cause, led by a trio of low-profile politicians, spent months looking for a charismatic leader before the emergence of Prokhorov, who is to be installed as leader at a party congress in June.

Prokhorov, valued at \$18 billion by Forbes magazine, has pledged to give the flagging party the second-biggest faction in the State Duma after December elections. A Levada poll held days before his nomination indicated that Right Cause was on track to win 1 percent of the vote, far below the 7 percent threshold to get into the Duma.

The 45-year-old Kerimov, whose wealth is estimated at \$7.8 billion, served two terms in the Duma from 1999 to 2007 with the Liberal Democratic Party, but joined the United Russia faction in 2007 and moved to the Federation Council the next year.

Prokhorov does not plan a billionaire party but is looking for well-known names to boost the party list for Duma elections, the Vedomosti source said, adding that he also plans to invite Yandex co-founder Arkady Volozh and Yevgeny Kaspersky of Kaspersky Lab.

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