

Some in Right Cause Oppose Prokhorov

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Billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov is expected to be elected leader of the pro-business Right Cause party during a congress at the Moscow Planetarium next week, but he could face some strong opposition first.

Old hands from the Union of Right Forces, the main predecessor of Right Cause, might stand up against Prokhorov at the party congress on June 25, Right Cause co-founder Leonid Gozman said Wednesday.

"We have serious people who have a reputation, and they might have different views," Gozman, himself a former member of the Union of Right Forces, said by telephone. He plans to support Prokhorov.

Gozman did not elaborate on the possible reasons for the opposition.

But party sources [told](#) Kommersant that the discontent was linked with Prokhorov's policies. "We've always supported raising the pension age, and he's against it," an unidentified party

member was quoted as saying.

Prokhorov has not commented on the reports. Boris Nadezhdin, a former Union of Right Forces member who heads Right Cause's Moscow branch, played them down, saying disagreements "are normal for a democratic party," the daily reported.

Gozman said Prokhorov's election would be "smooth" at the Moscow Planetarium, which reopened to public on Sunday after years of reconstruction.

Right Cause, which combines a liberal slant with loyalty to the Kremlin, has won only a handful of seats in regional legislatures since its inception in 2009. Its support prior to Prokhorov's nomination lagged at a dismal 1 percent, far below the 7 percent threshold to enter the State Duma.

Prokhorov promised last month to revamp the party and make it the second-biggest faction in the Duma after December's elections.

Former leaders from the Union of Right Forces say they don't expect much from the party under Prokhorov.

A co-founder of the Union of Right Forces, Boris Nemtsov, said in May that he had turned down an invitation from Prokhorov to join Right Cause, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* [reported](#). "I told him that they wouldn't allow him to do anything," he said, referring to the Kremlin.

Another former party leader, Irina Khakamada, said Right Cause under Prokhorov would remain a "mild oppositional project."

"But it is better to have something like this than nothing at all," Khakamada said by telephone Wednesday.

She said Right Cause appeals to "liberal voices" within the ruling elite.

She also praised Prokhorov. "He is one of the few among the rich who is not a snob, and he has a lot of ambition," she said.

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