

St. Pete Governor in 2 Races

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The  **Moscow Times**

Opposition parties have missed a chance to field rivals to St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko in municipal elections intended to pave her way to the Federation Council, Interfax reported.

Matviyenko confirmed Sunday that she had registered for elections in two St. Petersburg local councils, in the Petrovskoye and Krasnenkaya Rechka districts, both set for Aug. 21. She needs to be a publicly elected legislator to take up the senator seat offered to her by the Kremlin last month.

Registration for both elections was closed before the development was reported by the media. Even the head of the St. Petersburg election committee said he only learned about Matviyenko's candidacy from media reports, Interfax reported.

The secrecy means opposition parties, which had wanted to nominate strong rivals to race against her, possibly denying her victory, will not be able to mount a challenge.

Matviyenko denied bending the rules, saying Sunday that she only picked those two constituencies because they were the ones with the earliest election dates. She added that

information about her participation was published in local newspapers, though she did not name them.

Earlier reports said Matviyenko might run for office in the Leningrad region town of Lomonosov or the city district of Alexandrovsky.

A State Duma deputy with A Just Russia, Olga Dmitriyeva, said Matviyenko's candidacy was illegal because the administrations of both the Petrovskoye and Krasnenkaya Rechka districts denied planning elections when asked in official inquiries. Neither municipal officials nor Matviyenko commented on the allegation.

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