

Matviyenko Is New Federation Council Speaker

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Matviyenko speaking Wednesday. **Sergei Karpukhin**

Former St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko was elected speaker of the Federation Council on Wednesday in a nearly unanimous vote, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

One senator abstained, and 140 senators voted for Matviyenko. There were no votes against.

Matviyenko, 62, had served as St. Petersburg's governor since 2003, but steadily lost popularity with local residents in recent years.

In June, President Dmitry Medvedev offered to make her Federation Council speaker, the idea immediately backed by the ruling United Russia, which controls the upper house. The speaker's seat had been vacant since May, when Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov was ousted by United Russia.

Matviyenko resigned in August after sweeping the vote in two local district by-elections, which made her eligible for senatorship. She was replaced in St. Petersburg by former Central

Federal District envoy Georgy Poltavchenko.

Her reshuffle is seen by observers as a Kremlin attempt to strengthen its position in the city ahead of State Duma elections in December.

Speaking to reporters after her appointment Wednesday, Matviyenko said the country may revert to electing senators — a practice abolished in 1996 — as early as next year, Interfax reported. The idea was also voiced by Medvedev last month.

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