

Prokhorov's Platform Courts Protesters

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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Mikhail Prokhorov holding his portrait at a meeting with supporters on the campaign trail in Kazan on Saturday. **Nikolay Alexandrov**

Billionaire and presidential hopeful Mikhail Prokhorov — who has presented himself as the candidate for the urban middle class — has unveiled a 15-page presidential platform that closely reflects the demands made by protesters at two massive opposition rallies last month.

Friday's platform, which arrives a month after the greenhorn politician and former metals magnate announced his candidacy, could lure voters away from other liberal candidates, but it is unlikely to dispel suspicions about the independence of the Kremlin-linked businessman, whom the latest polls show lagging far behind the favorite, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Prokhorov's manifesto, titled "Present and Future," begins by saying, "The well-being of the individual has never been the Russian government's priority," and consists of a series of comparisons between Prokhorov's policies and those he attributes to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

As part of his platform, Prokhorov calls for new State Duma elections, a return to four-year presidential terms, a professional army by 2015, a visa-free regime for OSCE citizens, the privatization of state-owned companies and a 30 percent cut in the number of state employees by 2014.

Prokhorov also promises to free all economic "criminals" from prison, a nod to billionaire and former Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky and his business partner Platon Lebedev, who are considered political prisoners by opposition-minded voters.

Prokhorov and Yabloko founder Grigory Yavlinsky are the only presidential candidates to fully embrace the December protests, which arose amid allegations of widespread fraud during Dec. 4 State Duma elections. Prokhorov appeared at the most recent Dec. 25 rally in Moscow, which drew tens of thousands to Prospekt Akademika Sakharova.

Communist leader and presidential candidate Gennady Zyuganov has backed many of the protesters' demands, and his scores of his supporters rallied on Manezh Square on Saturday to protest the elections and commemorate the 88th anniversary of Vladimir Lenin's death.

A Jan. 14 to 15 survey released by the state-run VTsIOM pollster showed Prokhorov and other challengers lagging far behind Putin in the race for the Kremlin.

Forty-five percent of respondents said they would vote for Putin on March 4, compared to 11 percent for Zyuganov and 10 percent for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. Prokhorov and A Just Russia founder Sergei Mironov scored just 3 percent, and Yavlinsky won the support of only 1 percent of respondents.

Prokhorov could get 15 percent of the vote if he can successfully appeal to traditional voters disillusioned by Yavlinsky, as well as voters looking for a miracle, said Alexei Makarkin, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies, RBC reported Friday. (RBC is controlled by Prokhorov.)

The Central Elections Commission has refused to register three presidential hopefuls, including Svetlana Peunova, whom the committee [said](#) failed to submit the necessary paperwork, including the required 2 million signatures. Peunova, who leads the unregistered Will (Volya) party, is also the producer of a series of documentary [films](#) in which she claims that the Earth will be overrun by alien reptiles later this year.

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