

Report: Elections Official Warns of Use of Mobile Voting in Falsifications

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Deputy Mayor of Moscow Peter Biryukov assembled leaders of municipal social-rights centers to make arrangements for ensuring votes for presidential candidate Vladimir Putin, voter's rights defender Ilya Shablinsky said, Vedomosti reported.

Biryukov called the Feb. 13 meeting to discuss possibilities for securing a high voter turnout and votes for Putin, Shablinsky said at a meeting of the Advisory Council of the Central Election Committee, unnamed sources told Vedomosti.

If there are no results, people will be fired, officials were warned.

City Hall's press service said Biryukov has no authority over the social-rights centers and therefore cannot pressure its employees, the newspaper reported.

One tactic reportedly suggested for manipulating the vote was the active use of mobile ballot boxes — special containers brought to the homes of elderly and disabled voters — which remain far out of sight of Web cameras currently being installed in polling places.

Central Election Committee deputy chairman Leonid Ivlev said fears that mobile ballot boxes could be used for falsification are groundless. Ivlev cited figures from the 2011 elections that only 2.8 percent of Moscow voters used the special ballot boxes, with an average of 14 votes submitted for each of the boxes. Throughout the country, 163,779 mobile ballot boxes were used by 4.4 million voters.

Deputy director of elections watchdog Golos Grigory Melkonyants told Vedomosti that in practice, each ballot box can hold 400 votes. It is difficult to monitor mobile voting, because commission members are not required to take observers with them and the Web cameras stay at the polling stations, he said.

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