

Karelia Moves to Clip Putin's Presidential Wings

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Lawmakers in the republic of Karelia moved to undermine the credibility of President-elect Vladimir Putin on Tuesday by asking the State Duma to reconsider a constitutional law on the maximum number of terms a person can serve as president.

Under the current law, a person can serve a maximum of two terms in a row, but can return to office for additional terms after sitting out a cycle — as happened with Putin, who will return for a third time round in May following four years with Dmitry Medvedev as president.

In order to prevent a repeat of such a practice in the future, Karelia's local parliament passed a resolution urging the State Duma to amend the Constitution, setting a maximum of two presidential terms for one person in a lifetime, the regional body said in a statement.

The idea was originally brought up before the March 4 election by Deputy Timur Zornyakov of the Liberal Democratic Party, but was postponed until last week.

Surprisingly, it was backed by a large majority of the lawmakers, despite Putin's United

Russia holding a majority in the Karelian parliament, Gazeta.ru reported.

The resolution was supported in an anonymous vote by 34 lawmakers.

That means that as many as seven United Russia lawmakers were among them.

Sixteen deputies voted against the bill.

“My version is that United Russia’s local branch is split into two clans: pro-governor and anti-governor,” local Communist Party lawmaker Alexander Stepanov told Business FM.

He was referring to the region’s head Andrei Nelidov who, he suggested, the “anti-governor clan,” led by local oligarchs, want to portray in a negative light in Moscow.

The initiative has little chance in the State Duma, where United Russia deputies hold a majority and are highly unlikely to follow in the footsteps of their Karelian colleagues.

“One can hardly imagine a less important legislature,” United Russia State Duma Deputy Andrei Isayev cracked in an interview with Kommersant FM.

In 2008, Medvedev initiated amendments to the Constitution that extended the presidential term from four to six years, which were subsequently approved by the State Duma.

Putin’s new term extends to 2018 when he can run for re-election.

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