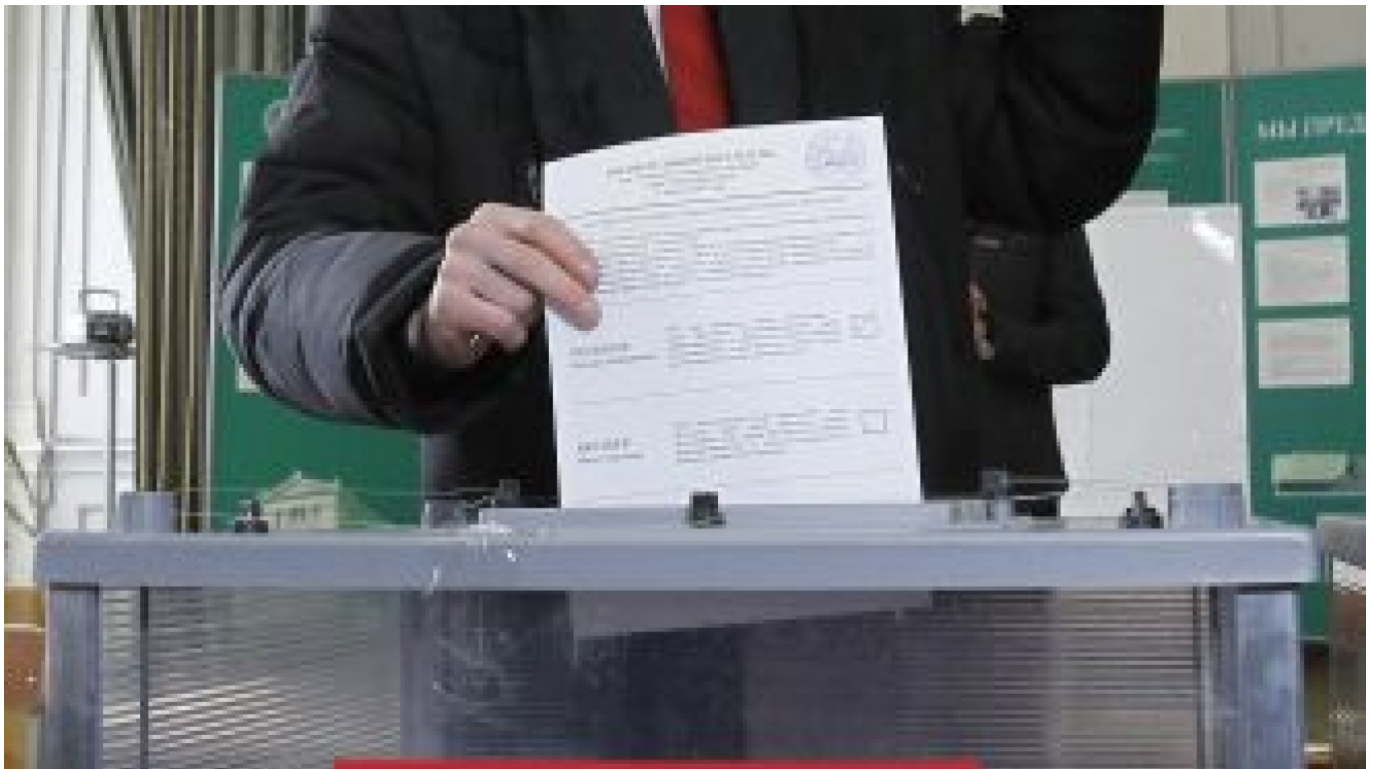


Underdog Elected Mayor of Yaroslavl

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Yevgeny Urlashov has even more reason to smile now that results are in. **Denis Sinyakov**

Yaroslavl has pumped new life into the opposition movement, as the establishment candidate for mayor was trounced in a runoff election this weekend.

Yevgeny Urlashov, a former municipal deputy in the historic city of 600,000, defeated tycoon Yakov Yakushev, owner of a paint company, in Sunday's voting.

As the candidate of the ruling United Russia party, Yakushev had received strong support from the local administration, yet Urlashov, 45, overcame a huge disparity in resources to pull the upset.

"It might be unexpected for those who are not living in Yaroslavl," Urlashov [told](#) Izvestia on Monday. "For those who know the city's problems, this was an expected victory."

Independent elections watchdog Golos sent 60 observers to Yaroslavl. It declared the runoff within the framework of the law and said only minor violations were reported.

According to unofficial results, Urlashov received 70 percent of the vote, three times more than Yakushev.

Election officials said turnout was 45 percent. That compares with 63 percent turnout in the first round held in March.

But the earlier turnout was aided by the fact that Russians were simultaneously voting in a presidential election.

Olga Nikolayevna, a teacher who voted for Urlashov, said she was "gladdened by the outcome."

"Not only was it a protest against United Russia, but it was also a protest against the authorities who are trying to impose their opinion on us," she said.

She was echoed by Mikhail Maleyev, a local official of the A Just Russia opposition party.

"People in Yaroslavl didn't want to be pawns in someone's game," he said.

Golos representatives said observers were able to work freely, and they noted the cooperation of police officers in preventing attempts to bribe voters.

Local elections commission head Andrei Buryanovaty told reporters Monday that his commission reported a serious violation at one of the polling stations: 19 ballots initially disappeared.

All but four of them were later found in one of the ballot boxes.

The results at that station were not declared invalid, since the irregularity didn't influence the outcome, Buryanovaty said.

United Russia officials reacted swiftly to news of Urlashov's victory. Senior party heavyweight Sergei Neverov said Monday that United Russia is planning to "analyze" the outcome.

Neverov compared the situation in Yaroslavl to the 2006 mayoral election in Samara won by A Just Russia's Viktor Tarkhov.

Tarkhov became unpopular because of his inability to solve the city's problems.

"After a while, people do understand what it means to vote for an unprepared candidate," Neverov said, RIA-Novosti reported Monday.

But supporters of Urlashov, a lawyer by profession, said his experience in construction and municipal governance would help him run the city, which is suffering from aging infrastructure.

Urlashov has already said that even if invited, he would not join United Russia.

Many elected city leaders in similar situations have learned that rejecting United Russia means loss of financial support from Moscow.

Urlashov left the party in September over a series of disagreements with the party line.

"I left the party voluntarily because I don't like its policies," Urlashov told Izvestia.

Asked whether he would invite members of opposition parties, he said he would look at their "business qualifications" before offering them a job.

Urlashov is expected to bring his own team to handle the city's administration. That would likely spell the end for Yakushev, who was appointed deputy mayor in March.

At a news conference Monday, Urlashov promised an audit of the mayor's office. And he invited Deputy Governor Oleg Vinogradov to join his administration.

Urlashov also needs to establish a constructive relationship with Governor Sergei Vakhrukov, who had thrown his support behind Yakushev.

Vakhrukov said Monday that he would be ready to cooperate with Urlashov.

"I think he would be smart enough not to destroy everything but to move forward," Maleyev said of Urlashov.

Sources close to the regional administration told The Moscow Times that Urlashov will try to find support on the federal level to secure his position.

Since 2009, the city has hosted the World Policy Forum, an annual event chaired by the Russian president.

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