

Gromov Intends to Become a Senator

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Outgoing Moscow region Governor Boris Gromov **Sergei Porter**

Outgoing Moscow region Governor Boris Gromov said Tuesday that he will join the Federation Council as a senator and that he expects Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu to replace him as governor.

Gromov, who announced last month that he would step aside after 12 years as governor, spoke to reporters in the Moscow region town of Maloyaroslavets.

“From the Moscow region, I will go to the Federation Council,” Gromov said, Interfax reported.

A former Soviet Afghan war commander, Gromov has grown increasingly unpopular in recent years. His term ends May 11.

The Kremlin is believed to have been trying to push him out, and those attempts have taken on new urgency in light of plans to return direct gubernatorial elections.

The Federation Council is a veritable graveyard of political has-beens.

For example, President Dmitry Medvedev persuaded unpopular former St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviyenko to step aside last year in exchange for the post of Federation Council speaker.

But legislation intended to reform the upper house of parliament is in the works, and that could throw a wrench into Gromov's plans.

Each of Russia's 83 regions has two senators. As it stands now, one is elected by the regional legislature, and the other is nominated by the governor and confirmed by the legislature.

Under the proposed legislation, senators can be nominated by the regional parliament. Governors would be instructed to offer three nominees for voter consideration, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

Candidates would also be expected to have a "blameless reputation." That would be a difficult threshold for Gromov, who was accused of corruption during his time in office.

As for his heir apparent, Gromov predicted that Medvedev would name Shoigu his replacement as early as this week and he offered to help Shoigu ease into his new job.

He said the main challenges facing the new governor are roads, housing and social issues.

On Shoigu's chances of succeeding him, he said, "I am 100 percent sure he will."

Last week, United Russia named Shoigu, who has served as emergency situations minister for more than 20 years, as one of the three candidates to govern the Moscow region.

Analysts believe Shoigu's appointment, which must be approved by Medvedev, is a sure thing.

Shoigu, a founding father of United Russia, said Friday that he looked forward to the opportunity to govern the Moscow region, where a number of foreign companies have significant investments.

Among the standouts in that crowd are IKEA, Auchan and John Deere.

"The region is big and interesting," Shoigu said. "I don't think I would get bored there."

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