

Churov Announces Steps to Shore Up Honest Elections

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Vladimir Churov **Maxim Stulov**

Federal elections boss Vladimir Churov has announced steps to boost confidence in the nation's electoral system and strengthen federal oversight over municipal elections, as political tensions remain high over a disputed mayoral vote in the southern city of Astrakhan.

The steps included installing electronic vote counters at all polling stations by 2015, introducing a testing regime for poll workers, and simplifying the vote counting procedure.

Churov announced that his deputy, Leonid Ivlev, would lead a new initiative to improve the professionalism and preparedness of local poll workers throughout the country.

"These are municipal elections, paid for by municipal governments, conducted by municipal officials, but now we think it makes sense to tighten control over this group of elections," he said, RIA-Novosti reported.

Churov also said he had requested that web cameras be switched on in polling places for the

upcoming mayoral elections in Omsk and Krasnoyarsk, following controversy over alleged vote fraud in the Astrakhan mayoral election. Losing candidate in that race Oleg Shein has been on a hunger strike since March 16 in a sign of protest against the vote results.

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