

United Russia Seizes Victory in Krasnoyarsk

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June 12, 2012



Akbulatov

Despite speculation that the ruling party is losing favor, a United Russia candidate was re-elected mayor of Siberia's third-largest city in a landslide victory untainted by accusations of voter fraud.

Edkham Akbulatov, 52, a career politician, got nearly 70 percent of the vote Sunday in Krasnoyarsk, an East Siberian industrial hub with a population of nearly 1 million.

It was United Russia's first mayoral victory since opposition protests began sweeping the nation in December.

Higher name-recognition and an investment-friendly reputation sealed Akbulatov's victory, analysts said.

"Akbulatov was campaigning as a boring administrator, not a politician," Vitaly Ivanov,

a right-leaning political analyst, told the Actual Comments news site Monday. "While the opposition was trying to politicize the situation, he looked more trustworthy and serious."

Alexei Podkorytov, a city deputy running as an independent, garnered 12 percent of the vote. Opposition candidate Alexander Koropachinsky, representing A Just Russia, placed third with 11 percent.

Akbulatov's election is a letdown for the local opposition, which tried to rally behind Koropachinsky. He had won the primary election in June.

The idea to organize regional primaries was proposed by former presidential candidate Mikhail Prokhorov, who is registered as a taxpayer in Krasnoyarsk and has business interests there.

Prokhorov last week announced the formation of his new Civil Platform Party, which aims to bring grassroots activists to power.

Primaries are an important tool for the opposition to challenge the ruling elite in regions where United Russia has the majority.

On his LiveJournal blog Monday, Koropachinsky accused Akbulatov of using "administrative resources" to sway the vote.

But Olga Suvorova, a representative of the Golos election watchdog in Krasnoyarsk, told Izvestia that no violations that could have influenced the election were reported.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party, a tactical Kremlin ally, had withdrawn its candidate, Natalya Podolyak, for backing A Just Russia in the primaries.

The candidate representing the Communist Party, which has traditionally had a strong position in the region, received only 4 percent of the vote.

Akbulatov was appointed acting mayor in 2011 after longtime Mayor Pyotr Pimashkov resigned in March.

Akbulatov recently told The Moscow Times that he sees Krasnoyarsk's future as a transportation and oil-production hub.

In March and April, opposition candidates for mayor in Tolyatti and Yaroslavl beat out United Russia-backed rivals.

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