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Parliament Gets 13th Billionaire

By The Moscow Times

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A billionaire who is among the 100 richest people in the country will become a State Duma deputy for United Russia, joining a dozen other rich tycoons in parliament.

Anatoly Lomakin, 60, a former co-owner of the Silvinit fertilizer producer in the Perm region, will take the seat vacated by former Natural Resources and Environment Minister Yury Trutnev, Interfax reported Wednesday citing the Central Elections Commission.

Trutnev, a former Perm official, was offered the seat after another United Russia deputy, Andrei Klimov, became a senator in the Federation Council. Trutnev had been entitled to the seat because he had been on the United Russia party list in December's parliamentary vote.

But after leaving his Cabinet post in May, Trutnev was appointed an aide to President Vladimir Putin in charge of state affairs.

Lomakin was on the United Russia party list from the Perm region along with Trutnev and Klimov and therefore was eligible to fill the vacated seat.

Lomakin, whose wealth was estimated at $1.2 billion by Russian Forbes earlier this year, sold his stake in potash producer Silvinit in 2010.

An entrepreneur with experience in diplomacy, Lomakin worked with the Soviet trade mission in Denmark but left his state career for one in business.

According to estimates by Russian Forbes, the State Duma and Federation Council have 12 billionaires whose total wealth is $41 billion. United Russia has the most billionaires of any party in parliament, according to Forbes.

Critics have accused billionaire deputies and senators of seeking seats in parliament for the immunity from prosecution they provide.

A group of Duma deputies said in early August that it wants to pass a bill that would ban government officials from owning properties and opening bank accounts abroad, in a measure to increase transparency among officials and prevent them from being recruited by foreign security services.

The bill targets officials in both federal and municipal government agencies, including those working in the Prosecutor General's Office, the Investigative Committee, the Federal Customs Service, as well as State Duma deputies and Federation Council senators.

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