The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

United Russia Veteran Appointed Acting Vladimir Governor

By Yekaterina Kravtsova

March 24, 2013



President Vladimir Putin appointed Federation Council Senator Svetlana Orlova acting governor of the Vladimir region on Monday, replacing the country's only Communist governor with a long-time member of the ruling United Russia party.

The pick came as a surprise to local opposition politicians, who said they had been kept in the dark regarding the selection process.

"We were really astonished by all the secrecy," Dmitry Kushpita, head of the liberal Yabloko party in the region located some 80 kilometers east of Moscow, said by phone. "No one in the region knew who would be appointed acting governor to the very end."

Orlova, 58, has been a Federation Council member representing the Kemerovo region in western Siberia since 2001 and has no strong ties to the region she will now head.

A teacher of Russian language and literature by training, Orlova worked for more than a decade in the Communist Party committee in Vladivostok before the Soviet collapse. She joined the predecessor to United Russia in 2000 and has been a party member ever since.

Orlova's party affiliation likely helped her win the Vladimir governor post, said Dmitry Orlov, head of the Agency for Political and Economic Communications, adding that she was chosen by Putin as a "political battering ram" who could oppose left-wing ideas that are popular in the region.

Until Monday, the region had been led by Communist Nikolai Vinogradov, who had served as governor since 1996. His term expired Sunday, and a gubernatorial election is set for September.

Andrei Marinin, a member of the local chapter of the Just Russia party, said there has been a long-running political fight between Communists and United Russia members in the region.

He said that ahead of Orlova's appointment, no one in the regional administration seemed to know who would be picked as acting governor. But, Marinin said, the choice was in line with Kremlin strategy.

"We understand that all appointments are now being made by the Kremlin, which wants to see its own time-tested people in the regions," he said, adding that Orlova's contacts in the Federation Council would help attract much-needed investment to the region.

Orlova will be acting governor until the September vote and said Monday that she planned to run for a full term in office.

"For me this appointment is a high responsibility, and my aim is to gain the confidence of people in the region so that I can not only participate in the election but win it," Orlova said in comments carried by Interfax.

One of the best-known episodes in Orlova's career as a senator was her involvement in United Russia's heavily criticized "Clean Water" program that was supposed to become a state program with billions of rubles in government financing.

The party planned to install water filters created by Viktor Petrik, whom academics at the Russian Academy of Sciences called a pseudo-scientist and a swindler. Orlova once said she was not completely confident in the quality of the filters, which scientists said were faulty, but she continued to support the program nonetheless.

More recently, she was a vocal supporter of the so-called anti-Magnitsky bill, which included a ban on U.S. adoptions of Russia children and created a blacklist of U.S. officials implicated in human rights violations.

Contact the author at e.kravtsova@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/03/24/united-russia-veteran-appointed-acting-vladimir-govern

or-a22665