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Pro-Kremlin Candidate Wins Key Mayoral Race

By The Moscow Times

April 01, 2013



A local official who ran with the governor's blessing has been elected mayor of the Moscow region town of Zhukovsky. The vote was seen as a litmus test of anti-government sentiment ahead of gubernatorial elections in the region this fall.

Andrei Voityuk, 51, an Emergency Situations Ministry official, won 36.8 percent of the vote in Sunday's election, beating his nearest rival by nearly 10 percent amid turnout of 38.5 percent, according to official results announced on Monday and carried by Interfax.

Independent vote monitors alleged numerous violations. Watchdog Golos posted videos online that appeared to show voters being paid to back Voityuk. But exit polls conducted by Golos and state-run pollster VTsIOM appeared to confirm Voityuk's victory.

The result was also seen as a triumph for the government and Moscow region acting Governor Andrei Vorobyov, who actively supported Voityuk and will stand for gubernatorial elections

in September. He was appointed to his current post by President Vladimir Putin in November.

The vote was the latest setback for the opposition, which has so far failed to convert last year's unprecedented street protests into victory at the ballot box.

A candidate from billionaire-turned-politician Mikhail Prokhorov's Civil Platform party finished second in Sunday's vote with 27.7 percent, followed by the Communist Party's pick, who took 25.4 percent. Eleven candidates in all appeared on the ballot.

Zhukovsky, a town of 100,000 people located 25 kilometers southeast of Moscow, is best known as the birthplace of Russian aviation. It is currently home to two major aircraft facilities, the Gromov Flight Research Institute and the Central Aerohydrodynamics Institute.

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