

Putin Signs Law Allowing Him to Pick Governors

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President Vladimir Putin signed a law on Tuesday letting him pick candidates to lead the country's regions if local lawmakers scrap popular polls, in what critics called a setback for democracy in the Putin's new term.

The law allows each of the country's 83 regions to repeal direct elections of governors, introduced just last year in a concession during a wave of protests by Russians fed up with Putin's dominance and demanding a stronger political voice.

Putin has said the law is needed to protect the rights of minorities in ethnically mixed regions such as the mostly Muslim provinces of the insurgency-plagued North Caucasus.

The Kremlin is concerned that direct elections in the volatile regions could spark unrest or involve candidates whose loyalty is in question.

(Reuters)

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