

United Russia Boasts Highest 2012 Earners

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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For the second year in a row, United Russia's Grigory Anikeev topped the State Duma's earnings list, raking in a whopping 1.1 billion rubles (\$35 million) last year, according to income and property declarations for Duma deputies released [Monday](#).

Anikeev, the founder and owner of Abi Group, which has holdings in the food, retail, shopping malls and construction industries, also declared a house, three apartments, and four cars: a Hummer, a Kia and two Mercedes-Benz cars. In 2011, his declared income was 2.7 billion rubles.

Even in a country where corruption is high and government links are seen as a key to business success, the lavish revelations contained in the declarations seemed certain to cause eyeballs to pop and fuel demands for additional transparency.

The second- and third-highest reported earners in 2012 are also ruling party members.

Nikolai Bortsov and his wife reported a combined 1.15 billion rubles in income last year, as well as eight apartments, four houses and five cars, as well as a farm tractor.

Third-place finisher Vladimir Kononov claimed 475 million rubles in income and a helicopter.

By comparison, the Duma's faction heads seemed to live on more humble incomes of about 2.5 million rubles each. Liberal Democratic Party boss Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the top earner among them, saw his income fall from just over 3 million rubles in 2011.

The current Duma has no shortage of pro-Kremlin celebrities, such as actress and one-time Playboy cover girl Maria Kozhevnikova and former heavyweight champion Nikolai Valuyev, but it was wiggled crooner Iosif Kobzon who earned most among them, taking home 64 million rubles.

United Russia deputy Nikolai Kovalyov, head of the Duma's committee for overseeing lawmakers' declarations, said 447 of the chamber's 450 members had filed declarations, including records for 713 spouses and underage children, as required by law.

"Practically everybody submitted declarations. A great many even declared expenditures, even though there wasn't a place for it on the declarations form," Kovalyov wrote in a statement published on United Russia's website on Monday.

Declarations for two new deputies, Yelena Vtorygina of United Russia and A Just Russia's Irinchei Matkhanov, who joined the Duma on April 3, have not yet been published, Kovalyov said.

A handful of lawmakers have found themselves in hot water in recent months after bloggers accused them of owning undeclared real estate abroad. Vladimir Pekhtin, then-head of the Duma's ethics committee and a veteran parliamentarian, was forced to step down in February after being accused of owning property in Miami.

Thirty-six deputies declared real estate abroad, mostly in Europe. Two reported properties in the United States. Among the more exotic claims: a 174-square-meter apartment in the United Arab Emirates, and two houses in the Congo owned by a United Russia deputy.

Thanks to increased public scrutiny of such documents, this year's declarations are more accurate than in previous years, when even the Duma speaker was seen as brushing aside anti-corruption rules by not declaring his wife's income, said Ivan Ninenko of Transparency International in Russia.

"Everybody knows Pekhtin's story, so now they'll be more careful," he said by telephone, adding that another reason for deputies to be fastidious is a recent presidential decree that gives the Kremlin administration the authority to check declarations.

But while the income declarations system has made strides, it's still far from perfect, Ninenko said. Lawmakers or senior officials aren't required to indicate the source of their incomes, which are legally limited to teaching, book sales, income from investments, rent, and similar sources, he said.

Senior officials, including President Vladimir Putin, and Federation Council members

published their income declarations on [Friday](#). Hundreds of thousands of lower-level officials have until July 1 to submit the declarations, and all officials must submit information about large expenditures by that date.

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