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Governor Backs Navalny in KirovLes Case (Video)

By The Moscow Times

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Governor Nikita Belykh testifying at a court hearing Wednesday.

Kirov region Governor Nikita Belykh testified on Wednesday that neither he nor Alexei Navalny, his adviser in 2009, could have influenced the terms of financial agreements between the KirovLes company and the state.

Belykh said that the charges against Navalny were "dubious" and that all contracts between KirovLes and the region were concluded through official tenders, RIA Novosti reported.

Navalny is currently standing trial in Kirov on charges of embezzling 16 million rubles ($500,000) worth of timber from the state-owned company while working with Belykh.

The governor said that Navalny was not the only specialist working for the region's administration in charge of reorganizing the company.

Belykh also said that his communication with the defendant was informal, and denied that Navalny had forced KirovLes to sell timber to businessman Pyotr Ofitserov's company, VLK, at below-market prices.

He then added that Navalny's actions had not caused any financial damage to the region.

The trial entered its ninth day on Wednesday.

Navalny denies the charges and says that the authorities are trying to discredit him and stifle his political activity.

He faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted and would be barred from running for political office in the future, an ambition he has previously expressed.

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