

Sobyanin Wants to Abolish Absentee Ballots

By [The Moscow Times](#)

July 02, 2013

The  Moscow Times

Acting Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin has submitted a bill to the Moscow City Duma that would abolish the use of absentee ballots in city elections, but he said the proposed change would not be implemented before the upcoming mayoral election, a news report said Tuesday.

Election observers say the widespread use of absentee ballots is among the techniques that made it possible for fraudsters to rig the results of several key recent elections in Russia, including the 2011 State Duma elections and last year's presidential vote.

"The practice of using absentee ballots in elections raises many questions among experts and observers" who suspect election fraud may be taking place, Sobyanin said at a city government meeting Tuesday. "I ask the deputies to consider and adopt a bill that would put an end to that."

He added that the proposed amendment would affect all elections in the capital, including the

City Duma elections next year, but that the procedures for the Moscow mayoral vote in September would not be changed, RIA Novosti reported.

"As far as the election for Moscow mayor is concerned, it has already been set and any changes to the electoral law cannot affect it," Sobyenin was quoted as saying.

On Monday, the Moscow City Election Committee decided to print only 10,000 absentee ballots for the Sept. 8 elections. Moscow has more than 7 million eligible voters.

More than 30 candidates are planning to take part in the city's mayoral election, including Sobyenin, who is running as an independent candidate but with support from ruling party United Russia. He is the overwhelming favorite in the race.

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