

Yekaterinburg Court Won't Keep Panova in Pre-Trial Detention

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Yekaterinburg court on Wednesday denied a petition that would have put Aksana Panova, a prominent independent journalist who is also a close ally and romantic interest of the city's newly elected mayor Yevgeny Roizman, in pretrial detention.

Panova faces two counts of blackmail, one of fraud and a fourth charge of using her former position as editor-in-chief at the news agency Ura.ru to appropriate 13 million rubles (\$400,000) of company funds for personal use.

"Everyone knows that her prosecution is because of the governor's personal attitude plus her independent journalistic position," Roizman said in an interview with Dozhd television last Tuesday.

During the interview Roizman said that he was essentially forced to run for mayor of Yekaterinburg due to the prosecution of Panova and political pressure leveraged against his

anti-narcotics organization City Without Drugs.

With Panova as his campaign manager, Roizman won the mayoral race on Sept. 8 with more than 30 percent of the vote, an unprecedented victory for an opposition candidate.

The alleged harassment of both Panova and Roizman began in 2012 after Yevgeny Kuivashev was appointed governor of Sverdlovsk region.

Following several articles critical of the new government, Ura.ru began to receive requests that it cease publishing articles about Roizman's foundation, which were refused.

As for the governor's "personal attitude," Kuivashev reportedly took a dogged romantic interest in Panova despite knowing of her involvement with Roizman.

Kuivashev called Panova up to 10 times a day. When his attentions went ungratified, Panova found herself scrutinized by 21 separate investigators, the stress of which caused her to lose the child she was carrying, Ekho Moskva host Yulia Latynina said on her radio program Saturday.

The request for the defendant to be kept in pretrial detention came from Yevgeny Belonosov, a Yekaterinburg City Duma member who alleges that the news agency Panova currently heads, Znak.ru, blackmailed him by threatening to publish false information, Interfax reported.

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