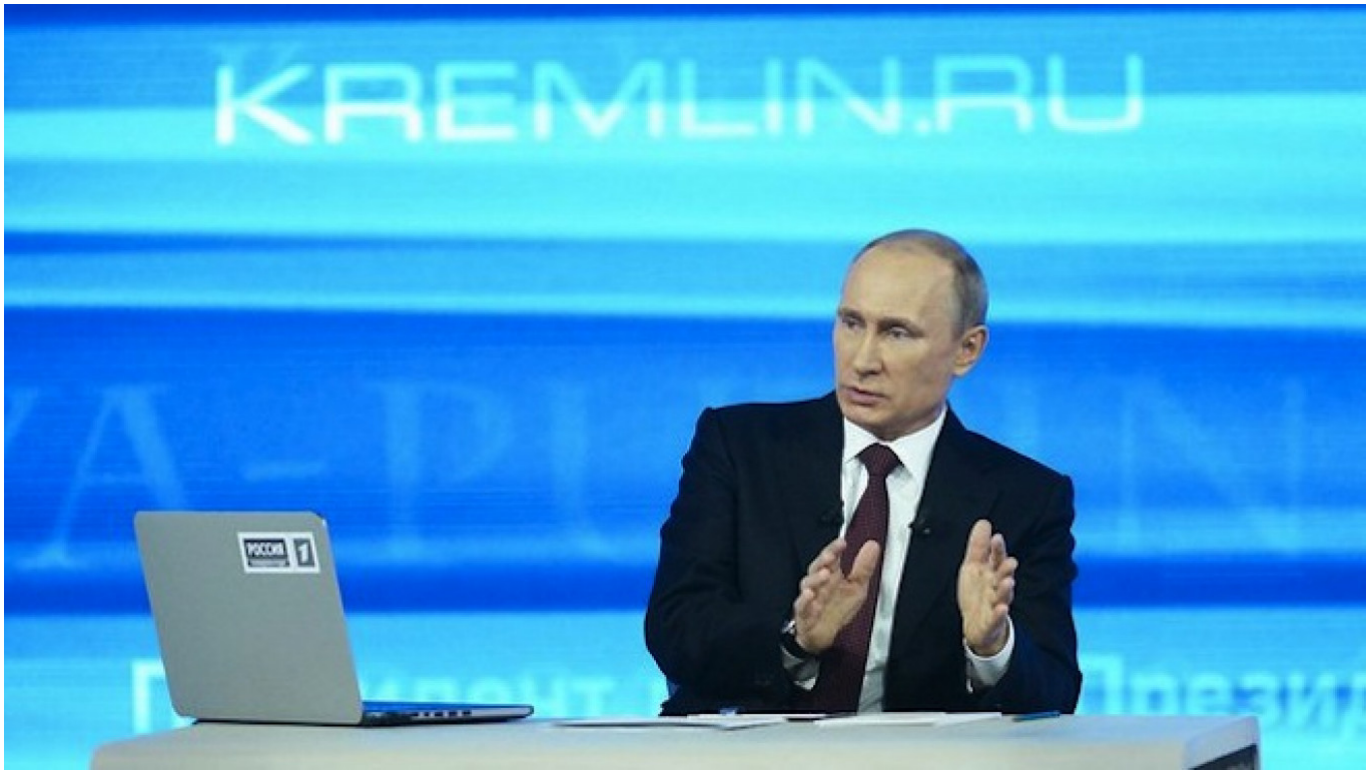
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Live Blog: President Putin Hosts Marathon Call-In on Russian Television

April 17, 2014



Ukraine and high housing bills are expected to be among the top issues on President Vladimir Putin's live call-in show Thursday when he answers questions from across Russia and perhaps as far afield as Alaska.

Follow our live blog to see what questions Putin is answering.

[View the story "Liveblog: President Putin Hosts Marathon Call-In on Russian TV" on Storify]

Ukraine and Crimea dominate the 10 most popular questions published on the call-in show's official website. People are asking Putin how he will deal with "further worsening of the crisis in Ukraine," how he can help residents of Crimea obtain Russian passports, and — in a jab at the West — how he is "able to keep a clear head amid an incoming barrage of lies and unjustified accusations."

On domestic issues, people are more worried about housing than the weakening ruble, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"Housing is the scourge of all Russia," Peskov said on Rossia 24 state television on Wednesday night. "People from different regions are dissatisfied with how much they have to pay for housing and utilities and what they have to pay."

He said people were less worried about the ruble, which has lost 8.7 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar since January.

Putin will be accepting questions submitted by the official website, as well as by text message, telephone, a special cell phone app, and a live video link from Sevastopol, the Black Sea port in Crimea that Russia annexed last month. The Kremlin also has sought questions from politicians and regular people in the U.S. state of Alaska, according to Canadian news site Eye on the Arctic.

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, which the Kremlin said corrected a "historical mistake," some in Russia would like to see the divide with Alaska eliminated by having Russia stake a new claim on the territory, which Tsar Alexander II sold to the U.S. for $7.2 million in 1867.

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