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Russian Olympic Gold Medalist Kabaeva Requests Early State Duma Departure

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Alina Kabaeva

State Duma deputy and former rhythmic gymnastics champion Alina Kabaeva requested an early departure from the legislature, after having spent seven years in office, TASS reported Monday.

Kabaeva, a member of the ruling United Russia party, was elected to the Duma initially in 2007, and reelected in 2011. It remains unclear what Kabaeva's vocation will be in her post-Duma life.

The former Olympic champion quickly climbed to the upper echelons of national politics after retiring from gymnastics in 2007.

She played a central role in the torch-lighting ceremony at the Sochi Olympic Games in February as one of the final torchbearers, running alongside tennis star Maria Sharapova, pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva and wrestler Alexander Karelin.

The 31-year-old has been at the heart of speculation about President Vladimir Putin's personal life since 2008. Russian tabloids windmilled rumors that Putin had secretly married the two-time Olympic medalist and fathered her child. Both parties have denied such reports.

The Duma is set to consider Kabaeva's request on Tuesday. Two other United Russia Duma deputies, Alexander Bogomaz and Viktor Zubarev, also requested early departures from the legislature. Both men hope to take on regional government positions to which they were elected during the nationwide election day on Sunday, Kommersant newspaper reported.

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