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Top Novosibirsk Lawmaker Quits Party, Blaming United Russia 'Hegemony'

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A party member standing in front of a United Russia sign.

A senior local lawmaker in Novosibirsk has withdrawn from the ruling United Russia party after nearly a decade in its ranks, saying the party has turned into a gathering of "yes-men" serving the executive power without the support of the people.

Municipal lawmaker Vyacheslav Ilyukhin on Tuesday announced his resignation in a critical statement published by local Taiga.info news portal, saying that United Russia "had been a different party" when he joined it in 2005.

"We were not afraid of confrontations if it meant defending the interests of the city and its residents," he said in the statement. "Unfortunately, everything has changed. United Russia has transformed from the ruling party to a rulers' party."

Ilyukhin said United Russia's "hegemony" had turned local legislative bodies "into mere tools

in the hands of the executive power."

According to Ilyukhin this change had undermined the party's popularity and its dwindling support base in the Siberian city was exposed during last year's mayoral elections when its main candidate lost to a Communist party opposition challenger.

"People cannot be deceived," he said.

Ilyukhin claimed he had tried to urge the United Russia faction that he headed in the city's legislature to take a more independent stance, but had been unable to persuade his colleagues.

"Unfortunately, some of my fellow party members have become ordinary yes-men," he added.

The lawmaker said he had backed United Russia for ten years as a supporter and later a member.

Ilyukhin heads the municipal construction committee in the city legislature, Kommersant reported Wednesday, praising him as one of the most high-standing United Russia members in the assembly.

At least four prominent United Russia members in Novosibirsk have left or been expelled from the party over the past two years, Kommersant reported, adding that two of the dissenters are currently serving as first deputy mayors of the city.

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