

State Duma Elections of 2016 Double in Cost From Previous Vote

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The State Duma elections of 2016 will cost more than twice as much as the elections of 2011, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday, citing the secretary of the Central Elections Commission.

According to the commission's estimate, 15 billion rubles (\$238 million) will be spent on preparing for and holding the elections, compared with 7 billion rubles (\$111 million) in 2011. That estimate is based on the amount of money spent on the elections in 2011 and the ruble inflation rate of recent years, said the commission's secretary, Nikolai Konkin.

The inflation rate of 2016 hasn't yet been taken into consideration, and will be confirmed when the federal budget for 2016 is adopted, he added.

That is not the only extra expense the 2016 elections will incur. On Monday, the RBC news agency reported that the federal budget was increasing the sum allocated to the State Duma from its original 2014 estimate of 7.4 billion rubles (\$118 million) to 10.13 billion rubles (\$160 million).

That increase, according to RBC, is a result of moving the 2016 State Duma elections to September from December: The law outlining this change stipulates that deputies who lose the elections should retain as compensation three months' salary and any bonuses.

As a result, more funding — 3.95 billion rubles, almost 500 million rubles more than planned in 2014 — was assigned for the salaries of deputies and their assistants.

The law outlining shifting the elections from December to September was signed by President Vladimir Putin in July. The move elicited speculation that it was aiming at securing an easy win for the ruling party, as many voters are still on vacation in September.

Sergei Ivanov, head of the presidential administration, said earlier in June that moving the elections to September was a rational decision. "[I see in this decision] a certain economizing of funds," he was cited by the TASS news agency as saying.

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