

Putin Likely to Run as Independent in 2018 Election

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Kremlin Press Service

President Vladimir Putin will likely run as an independent candidate in presidential elections next year to capitalize on his widespread public support, news outlet [RBC](#) reported, citing three sources close to the Kremlin.

Running as an independent would allow Putin to position himself as a candidate for all Russians, taking advantage of his high approval rating, which is greater than support for United Russia, the majority party, the sources told RBC.

“Putin is a non-partisan president, an arbiter, an expression of the views of holders of completely different political beliefs, a leader of the majority,” political scientist Konstantin Kalachyov told RBC. “It’s more convenient for him to run as an independent.”

Putin ran as an independent candidate in 2000 and 2004, and as a representative of United Russia in 2011.

A source close to the presidential administration cited by RBC said a majority of experts inside the Kremlin agreed that in the elections slated for March next year, Putin should also run as an independent.

In a survey carried out by the state pollster VTsIOM in mid-June cited by RBC, 97 percent of people who approve of United Russia policies, said they supported Vladimir Putin as president.

Putin's support is especially high among women, middle and upper classes, and residents of medium and small cities and villages, the poll showed.

Putin himself has not yet spoken out about his candidacy, although he is widely expected to run — and win — next year's elections.

In the annual "Direct Line" question and answer session on June 15, he [avoided](#) giving a direct answer to the question on whether he would be president in a year, saying it would be up to the voters to decide.

Presidential Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Putin's reelection campaign is currently not on the Kremlin's agenda, [Interfax](#) reported.

"This topic is not featured on the Kremlin's daily agenda," Peskov said on Thursday. "It simply does not exist yet."

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