The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Orthodox Patriarch Urges Russians to Vote in Presidential Elections

January 08, 2018



**Patriarch Kirill (Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency)**

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox church, has called on believers to vote in the coming presidential elections in March, in which President Vladimir Putin is expected to secure another term.

The religious leader has been Putin's ally since the Russian leader's return to the presidency in 2012. Kremlin officials are hoping for Putin to win 70 percent of the vote amid a 70-percent turnout in the upcoming elections on March 18, amidst fears that a low voter turnout may weaken his mandate.

**Related article**: Kremlin Reliance on the Russian Orthodox Church May Backfire, Analysts Say

In an interview published on Jan. 7, the day the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas, Patriarch Kirill told the state-run television station Rossia 1 that voting was

“intrinsic” to the church.

“That’s why I would call on everyone, including Orthodox people, to definitely participate in the upcoming presidential elections. It’s very important,” he said.

The patriarch issued a similar call to vote on Dec. 26, a day after election officials barred opposition leader Alexei Navalny from registering as a candidate.

Despite polls showing that most Russians seek to preserve a separation between church and state, the Russian Orthodox Church has strongly supported Putin's return to traditionalism and conservative values since the beginning of his third term in 2012.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/01/08/orthodox-patriarch-urges-russians-to-vote-in-presidential-elections-a60127