

Putin Continues Governor Reshuffle After Election Snag

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Mikhail Metsel / TASS

Two more governors have quit a week after Russian President Vladimir Putin replaced three regional chiefs facing tough re-election prospects amid unpopular plans to raise the retirement age.

Thousands took to the streets in recent months in protests against the Russian government's plans to begin increasing the pension eligibility age in 2019. As the reform plans dented the popularity ratings of Putin and the ruling United Russia party, four of the 19 governor's races in September resulted in either runoffs or losses for Kremlin-backed incumbents.

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Last Wednesday, Putin replaced one of the unsuccessful incumbents in the Far East Primorye region with a functionary who had led three regions since 2005.

Two other governors were replaced last week — by a former bodyguard in the northern Astrakhan region and a Kremlin staffer in the North Caucasus republic of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Tuesday ushered in two more governor resignations — Lipetsk region's 20-year incumbent Oleg [Korolyov](#) and Kurgan region's Alexei [Kokorin](#).

Korolyov and Kokorin were listed alongside 10 governors that Russia's Vedomosti business daily [speculated](#) could be on the chopping block this reshuffle season.

All five new appointees face tough re-election prospects in 2019, though the Kabardino-Balkar legislative assembly elects its governor.

The RBC news website [cited](#) two sources close to the Kremlin as saying that the reshuffle had been planned before the Sept. 9 regional elections.

Political analysts have posited to RBC that the Kremlin is renewing its cadres to give them time to prepare for the 2019 electoral cycle.

A total of 21 governors across 85 Russian regions have been replaced between mid-2016 and fall 2017, according to RBC.

Meanwhile, Vladivostok Mayor Vitaly Verkeyenko also [announced](#) his resignation on Tuesday over what RBC sources said was ex-Primorye governor Andrei Tarasenko's election failure.

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