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10th Russian Governor Replaced Amid Falling Ratings for Ruling Party

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Three more Russian governors have quit this week as President Vladimir Putin continues renewing regional cadres facing elections next year amid falling ratings for the ruling United Russia party.

Ten governors have now been replaced since Sept. 26, all but one of them facing tough re-election prospects in the fall of 2019. The changes took place as the pro-Kremlin party suffered losses or faced runoffs in four governor's races last month and Putin signed an unpopular law raising the retirement age.

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The Kremlin appointed Radyi Khabirov, 54, the former head of Moscow region's Krasnogorsk district, to lead the republic of Bashkortostan. Ex-deputy transport minister Roman

Starovoytov, 46, was called in to head central Russia's Kursk region.

No replacements have yet been named for Zabaikalsky region's Natalya Zhdanova, who asked for forgiveness from fellow residents in a video address following her resignation, adding "I forgive everyone I owe."

Meanwhile, Kursk's 18-year governor Alexander Mikhailov signed off on a golden parachute – including retaining guards, enjoying free flights to Moscow and ensuring a state-funded funeral – before announcing his resignation.

Thursday's reshuffle coincided with the pro-Kremlin United Russia party firing its leaders in seven regions that hit election snags, including Zabaikalsky.

United Russia party leaders were also fired in Primorye, where the ex-governor was replaced after failing to secure re-election last month, and Vladimir, where a member of the LDPR party won the governor's race.

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