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Putin Reshuffles Regional Governors Ahead of 2019 Vote

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President Vladimir Putin has replaced three more governors ahead of regional elections later this year as low ratings for the ruling United Russia party risk upsetting its hold on power.

Sixteen regions are scheduled to elect new governors on Sept. 8 this year. Putin replaced 10 leaders in Oct. 2018 after an unpopular government move to raise the pension age saw a wave of discontent across the country.

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Over the past 24 hours, governors in Chelyabinsk, the republic of Altai, and the republic of Kalmykia have resigned in quick succession.

The RBC news website also reported the imminent departure of Murmansk governor Maria Kovtun on Wednesday.

According to Dmitry Badovsky, a political scientist and the head of the Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Research (ISEPR), the latest round of replacements did not catch anyone by surprise.

“Strategically, the entire governor’s corps should be revamped,” he told The Moscow Times.

Estimating that the reshuffles are halfway done, Badovsky predicted two to three more resignations this spring cycle.

“The reliance on new nominees, young technocrats, has already borne fruit,” he added.

Russian political scientist Mikhail Vinogradov has said April is the “latest possible” time for regional leaders to settle in ahead of the Sept. 8 vote.

Update: Two more governors, Maria Kovtun from the Murmansk region and Yury Berg from the Orenburg region announced their resignations on Thursday.

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