

Communists Campaign Against Reforms Giving Putin More Years in Power

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Public polling has shown majority support for the amendments that would reset Putin's presidential term count. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Russia's Communist Party has launched a campaign urging supporters to vote against a set of constitutional amendments that would allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power for the next decade and a half.

Russians are set to vote on July 1 to approve Putin's changes to Russia's basic law that would, among other things, allow him to serve two more presidential terms and remain president until 2036. All 43 members of the Communist Party in the Russian parliament voted [against](#) the provision resetting Putin's terms and [abstained](#) from the vote on the overall package of amendments in March.

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“The new version of the Constitution only strengthens the presidential dictatorship and

oligarchic rule that are leading the country to disaster,” the opposition party’s leadership [said](#) in a statement.

“Boycotting the ‘nationwide vote’ will do nothing,” they said Thursday. “We believe that everyone should express their opinions the way their conscience dictates.”

Criticizing the ruling authorities for “rushing through” the parliamentary vote to approve the amendments, the presidium of the Communist Party’s central committee also characterized the July 1 vote as “a ritual.” One lawmaker [compared](#) the public vote to a “survey.”

“It doesn’t have the status of a referendum and doesn’t line up with electoral legislation,” the Communist Party’s leadership said.

The statement coincides with [calls](#) from individual party members to vote against Putin’s constitutional amendments and the [arrest](#) of a popular socialist blogger who planned to stage protests.

Prominent Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny had urged Russians to [boycott](#) the vote when lawmakers approved the constitutional amendments in March.

The Kremlin reiterated Friday that the amendments would not go into effect if the public were to vote against them.

Public polling has shown majority support for the amendments, which in addition to resetting Putin’s presidential terms include provisions enshrining social guarantees. The Meduza news website has reported that the Kremlin expects a turnout of 55% and 60% of votes approving the amendments.

The MBKh Media news website [reported](#) Friday that the Kremlin’s political strategists have framed the July 1 plebiscite as “a celebration of victory” over the coronavirus pandemic. Russia has continued to see more than 8,000 coronavirus cases and around 150 deaths per day in recent weeks as authorities declared that Russia has passed the peak of its outbreak.

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