

Russia's Novosibirsk Abolishes Direct Mayoral Elections

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Novosibirsk Mayor Anatoly Lokot. **Kirill Kukhmar / TASS**

Local officials in Russia's third-largest city scrapped direct mayoral elections on Wednesday.

Novosibirsk, the most populous city in Siberia, had been one of just three Russian cities with over 1 million residents that retained direct mayoral elections amid a vigorous centralization of power by the Kremlin.

The bill abolishing direct voting and introducing elections of mayors by the Council of Deputies — a body de facto controlled by the regional governor — was [approved](#) in February by the Novosibirsk region's Legislative Assembly.

The vote in the Legislative Assembly was met with a series of single-person [pickets](#) protesting the abolition of the popular vote.

"It's unclear why we would need the mayor's office at all if everything will be controlled by the governor directly," independent municipal deputy Anton Kartavin [said](#) of the City

Council's decision Wednesday that finalizes the change.

Kartavin was among just five deputies who voted against the decision, which was endorsed by 38 others.

Separately, a local court on Wednesday [declined](#) the opposition's appeal of the local mayor's office ban on a rally calling for the resignation of Novosibirsk Governor Andrei Travnikov and decrying rising utility prices. The rally's organizers vowed to continue their attempts to organize the gathering and receive authorization from local officials.

A similar [rally](#) organized by Kartavin and other local opposition deputies in March in Novosibirsk drew about 300 people.

Direct mayoral elections were also abolished Wednesday in Koltsovo, a scientific research town located some 25 kilometers east of Novosibirsk.

Russia's capital Moscow and its second-largest city St. Petersburg are now the only major cities where the mayor is directly chosen by the electorate.

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