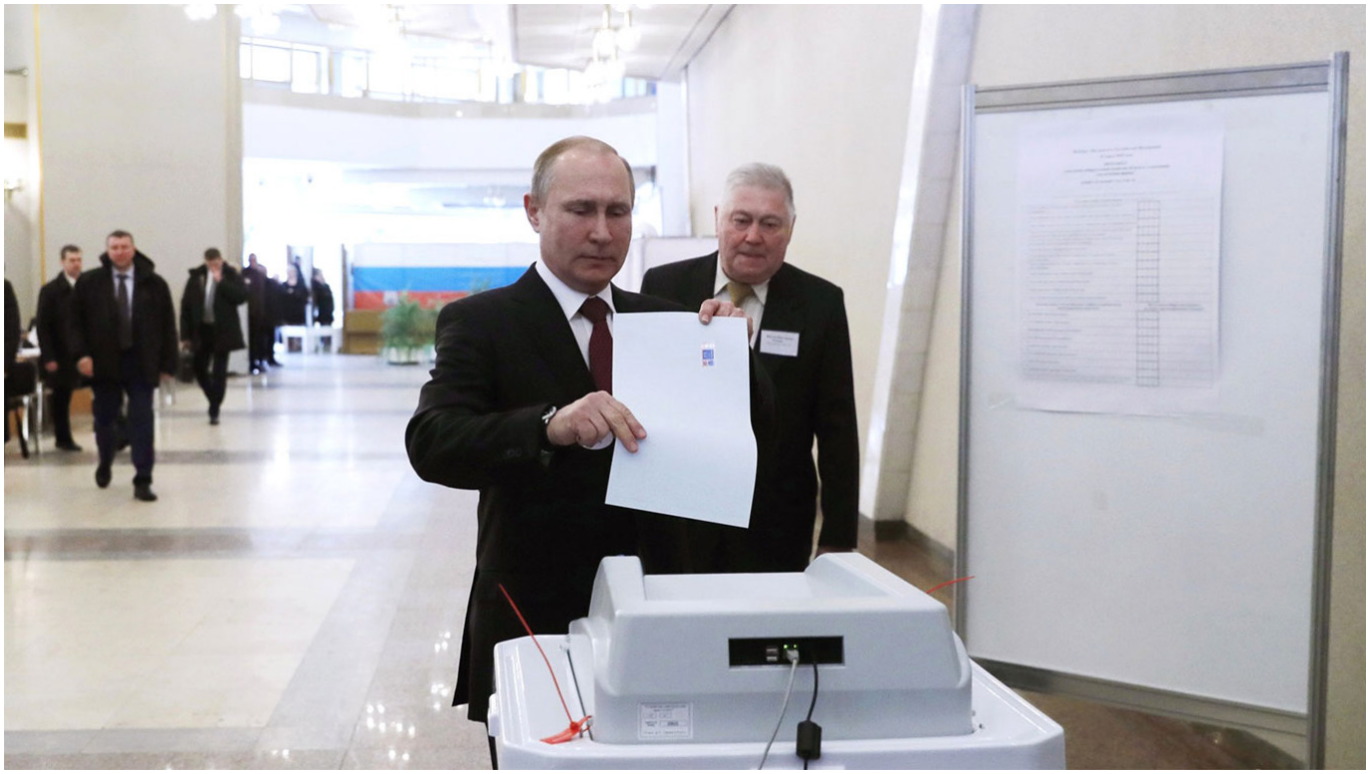
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Kremlin Says 'Theoretically Possible' to Not Hold Presidential Elections

August 07, 2023



Vladimir Putin seen voting in the 2018 Russian presidential election. **TASS / kremlin.ru**

Russian President Vladimir Putin can choose not to hold presidential elections next year because he will "obviously" win re-election, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said late Sunday.

Putin is widely expected to declare his bid for a fifth overall presidential term. Pre-war constitutional changes allow him to remain president until 2036.

"Although elections are a requirement of democracy and Putin himself has decided to hold them, theoretically it's possible not to hold them," Peskov told Russia's RBC news website.

"Because it's already obvious that Putin will be elected," he said, noting that the statement is "absolutely [my] personal opinion."

Related article: Kremlin Brings 'Party of War' to Heel Ahead of Key Regional, Presidential

Elections

Peskov spoke with RBC after the New York Times quoted him forecasting a 90% victory for Putin in next year's presidential election.

“Our presidential election is not really democracy, it is costly bureaucracy... Mr. Putin will be re-elected next year with more than 90% of the vote,” Peskov told NYT.

Peskov later claimed to have been misquoted but the publication, but stressed to RBC that his projection for Putin’s wide margin of victory is “based on the level of consolidation of society” around the Russian leader.

Russia’s next presidential election is scheduled for March 17, 2024, amid an intensifying crackdown on criticism of what the Kremlin calls its “special military operation” in Ukraine.

Mass anti-war protests are effectively outlawed under legislation passed in the wake of the invasion last year, and most prominent opposition activists have fled abroad in fear of being jailed.

This year, elections in dozens of regions across Russia will be held in September, with 18 regional heads, members of 16 regional parliaments, and 12 town councils, as well as the mayor of Khabarovsk in the Far East, being elected by direct vote.

The Kremlin is also expected to hold a vote in the four Ukrainian territories it claimed to have annexed last fall.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/08/07/kremlin-says-theoretically-possible-to-not-hold-presidential-elections-a82073