

Russian TV Airs Empty Stage as Election Candidates Skip Debate

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The debate host stands across from two empty podiums, where candidates were supposed to stand.

Video grab

Russian television [aired](#) what is perhaps one of the world's shortest political debates after none of the candidates for next month's regional elections showed up for the event.

The state broadcaster Russia's regional affiliate in the Siberian region of Kemerovo went ahead with the debate program on Wednesday evening despite the no-shows.

"Hello, we're broadcasting joint campaign events for the elections to the legislative assembly of Kuzbass," said the host Andrei Toropov.

"No one came to the studio, so regular programming will follow," he added, wrapping up 15 seconds of the broadcast.

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Candidates from the Communist Party and the far-right Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), who are leading the local party tickets, were supposed to take part in the televised debate, [according](#) to the business daily *Kommersant*.

Communist Party secretary Nikolai Mukhin told *Kommersant* that their candidate, Yekaterina Gruntova, could not make it because of a previously scheduled meeting with constituents.

Gruntova's counterpart from LDPR, Stanislav Karpov, was also tied up in campaign events with party leader Leonid Slutsky, who was visiting the region at the time of the broadcast, according to LDPR representative Kirill Pravin.

The ruling United Russia party and A Just Russia For Truth vowed to take part in upcoming debates broadcast over radio, *Kommersant* reported.

The current governor of the coal-rich Kemerovo region, Sergei Tsivilev, is up for re-election in September alongside candidates for the regional legislative assembly, where United Russia enjoys a comfortable majority of seats.

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