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Putin Casts Parliamentary Election as Barometer of Support for War, Urges Russians to Vote

By Reuters

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President Vladimir Putin at the United Russia party congress in June. **Kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday framed participation in an upcoming parliamentary election as a barometer of support for Russia's war in Ukraine and urged Russians to vote.

Russia holds a three-day parliamentary election starting on Friday to choose the composition of its 450-seat lower house of parliament, the State Duma, which has a track record of faithfully approving the Kremlin's initiatives.

It is the first parliamentary election since Russia launched its full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022 and comes at a time when opinion polls show some Russians have become more anxious about how the conflict affects them, as the economy is under strain, and as most anti-war candidates have been excluded from the ballot.

The political system is tightly controlled and the ruling United Russia party, backed by Putin, is widely expected to retain its dominance.

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In a televised address to the nation ahead of the vote, Putin referred to the war in Ukraine and to Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine, saying that casting a vote would help secure Russia's victory and demonstrate national resolve in the face of external pressure.

"Your choice and your will will once again demonstrate that millions of people stand behind our soldiers, that we are a united people bound together by shared values, historical memory, and love for our homeland, and that no one will succeed in dividing or intimidating us, or in undermining our statehood and our socio-political system," Putin said.

He said the vote would serve as a collective response to those seeking to weaken Russia, hinder its development, and deprive it of its sovereignty and right to determine its own future.

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