



The Movement for the Defense of Voters' Rights "Golos"
golosinfo.org

Moscow, January 22, 2018

Analytical report

Nomination of candidates for the March 18, 2018 presidential elections in the Russian Federation (part 1)

Table of contents

Conclusions

1. Appointment of elections; campaign schedule

2. Nomination and registration of candidates; ensuring political competition

2.1. Candidates from political parties

2.2. Self-nominated candidates

2.3. Summary of the nomination process.

3. Informing voters during nomination and signature collecting

3.1. Coverage of the nomination process on the site of the CEC of Russia 3.2.

Campaign participation of the Election Commissions of the Subjects of the
Russian Federation

Recommendations

The movement "Golos" carries out long-term monitoring of the presidential elections in the Russian Federation, scheduled for March 18, 2018. Election campaign monitoring aims to ensure the campaign's compliance with the principles and standards of free and equal elections.

The "Golos" expert group receives information from the media, from participants and organizers of the elections, and from public observers and voters who report information about violations during the campaign to individual representatives of the movement and through the crowdsourcing service "Map of Violations." Long-term "Golos" observers are on the ground in 40 entities of the Russian Federation with a total of about 70 million registered voters.

Conclusions

- **A positive change compared to the 2012 presidential elections is a significant reduction in the required number of signatures to be collected by candidates in support of their nomination** (down from 2.0 to 0.1 million for candidates nominated by non-parliamentary parties, and to 0.3 million for self-nominated candidates).
- However, in general, the legal inequality of candidates from parties represented in the State Duma as opposed to candidates from other parties (as well as self-nominated candidates) remains unchanged. The inequality is manifested in the fact that candidates nominated from parliamentary parties are exempt from the requirement to collect signatures.
- A last-minute decision on December 15 regarding the date of the elections, and the subsequent December 18 announcement of this decision, created additional difficulties for many election campaign participants (e.g. loss of two days that would have been convenient for conducting nomination events; pressure to get election business done before the winter holidays; shortening of the period for collecting signatures; the need to open an electoral account before the new year, etc.).
- **An earlier announcement of the start of the election campaign would have created more equal and favorable conditions for the nomination of candidates.** In the present circumstances, the incumbent has more resources and facilities than non-incumbents for operational organization and implementation of a large-scale plan for collecting voter signatures.
- **The new 2018 campaign requirements for the number of voter signatures and**

documents that need to be submitted by candidates, removed previously insurmountable barriers to participation in the presidential elections. During the presidential election of 2012, 5 candidates from political parties and 10 self-nominated candidates were initially nominated for the elections, of which only 5 self-nominees and 1 non-parliamentary candidate were admitted to the campaign. A far greater number—22 candidates—were nominated for the 2018 campaign from political parties, and 15 as self-nominees. 2 self-nominees and 13 candidates from non-parliamentary parties were allowed to collect signatures. 2 candidates were registered by the CEC of Russia on a "parliamentary privilege" without collecting signatures.

- **Current legislative restrictions on the right to be elected president that relate to previous convictions and the need for the presidential nominee to have a valid residence permit, are excessive, unfair, and undemocratic.** The legal uncertainty of these issues deprives entire categories of Russian citizens of passive suffrage. There are doubts among some parts of Russian society in the legitimacy of these restrictions, which leads "Golos" to conclude that Russia has not created the **best possible conditions** for implementing passive electoral rights and holding free elections.

- **In the absence of an independent judiciary, these restrictions serve as an electoral barrier, as shown in the case of Aleksey Navalny.**

- **There are still no guarantees from the state to enable realization of the right to self-nomination by the providing legally required premises for holding a meeting of at least 500 citizens of Russia in one place,** with a notarized certification of their presence.

- **In most cases, the activities of the Central Election Commission (CEC) related to the registration of voter groups in support of the self-nomination of candidates or registration of authorized representatives of parties do comply with the requirements of the electoral law, as well as the decisions of the CEC do not raise serious objections.** In certain cases, the CEC of Russia provided additional assistance to candidates and did not delay decision making.

- The timeline for the start of the information campaign by election commissions regarding the forthcoming elections is largely unprecedented.

- **Observers note the active involvement of the entire system of election commissions in the campaign to increase voter turnout.** According to reports from several regions, members of some precinct election commissions are forced to conduct information activities outside their official 30-day work period: they are encouraged to carry out home visits in order

to inform voters about the elections and to conduct polls about voters' willingness to participate in the presidential elections, which is absolutely unacceptable. It is also important to stress that the work of the precinct commission is a voluntary social activity.

- Taking into account that in the upcoming presidential election the question of voter turnout is politicized and directly related to the demonstration of support or protest, both for the political system as a whole and for one of the candidates (i.e. the obvious favorite of the election race), the participation of precinct election commission members in additional, non-legal campaigning violates the political neutrality of election commissions with the aim of increasing the overall turnout and involves the commissions in political struggle.
- **With rare exceptions, the activities of the election commissions of the subjects of the Russian Federation related to organizing and holding initiative group meetings for the nomination of presidential candidates did not provoke any complaints.**

1. Appointment of elections; campaign schedule

The 2018 presidential election campaign officially started only on December 18, 2017. However, in accordance with Federal Law No. 19-FZ "On the Elections of the President of the Russian Federation," the upper house of parliament could have announced the presidential election 100 days before Election Day, that is, on December 7, 2017.

Moreover, the publication of the decision could have been made on December 15. However, this only happened in the newspaper "Rossiyskaya Gazeta"¹ on December 18.

Thus, it would seem that the start of the campaign was deliberately delayed compared to the earliest possible date (December 7) by 11 days, and compared to the supposed "natural" starting date (December 13) by 5 days.²

The date of the official start of the election campaign determines the schedule of many official electoral actions of the candidates.

¹ <https://rg.ru/2017/12/18/vibori-dok.html>

² For more details see OpEd of Arkady Lyubarev (member of the Council of the Movement for the Defence of Voters' Rights "Golos", member of the expert consultative group under the chair of the CEC of Russia): "What is the reason for delaying the beginning of the presidential campaign"
<https://www.golosinfo.org/ru/articles/142394>

Had the campaign begun on December 7, the deadline for document submission for self-nominees would have been December 27, and for party nominations January 1. Thus, the main activities related to the nomination of candidates would have happened before the New Year holidays, i.e. in late 2017. Because the campaign only started on December 18, the deadline for document submission for self-nominees turned out to be January 7, and for the party nominations January 12.

In practice, the most convenient time for nomination activities is the weekend, when one can gather supporters and delegates without distracting them from their main work. If the election campaign had started on December 7 or 8, the candidates could have the nominations on December 9 or 10. In reality, they had to wait until **December 23 or 24**. As a result, candidates or parties lost two weeks, which is a critical amount of time for self-nominees and non-parliamentary parties who have to collect signatures. The deadline for signature submission to the CEC of Russia—January 31—is fixed in the law and does not depend on the beginning of the election campaign. For example, the political party Yabloko had to move its congress to a later date due to the late start of the campaign.

Late publication of the decision on the appointment of the presidential elections created additional difficulties for self-nominees and non-parliamentary parties. These difficulties were related to the requirement that nominees open a special electoral account in the state bank “Sberbank” and that they pay for the printing of subscription lists from that account in a timely fashion.

Consequently, the Golos movement believes **that the five-day deadline for publishing the decision on the appointment of the federal elections is completely redundant.**

It is encouraging to note that not all concerns previously expressed by “Golos” have come true. Indeed, some of the candidates held their nomination procedures on the weekend of January 23-24 (altogether 13 candidates did this, including Pavel Grudinin from the Communist Party and Ksenia Sobchak from the Civil Initiative), On January 30, three more candidates held their nomination procedures. Many candidates, especially those with significant resources (for example, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and Russian President Vladimir Putin), were nominated on weekdays. At the same time, considering the limited time before the New Year holidays (weekends and non-working holidays from December 30, 2017, until January 8, 2018), the CEC of Russia acted quickly and made decisions promptly. Documents submitted for nomination were examined in a period of one to three days, rather than the legally allowable five-day period.

2. Nomination and registration of candidates; ensuring political competition

Compared to the presidential elections in 2012, the signature collection barrier has significantly decreased. Whereas in the prior presidential campaign candidates were required to collect 2 million voter signatures, now they are required to collect 100 thousand signatures if they are nominated from a non-parliamentary party, and 300 thousand signatures if they are self-nominated. We believe that this change created more suitable conditions for a realistic collection of signatures in support of a nomination.

At the same time, the legal inequality of opportunities of candidates from parties represented in the State Duma, compared to candidates from other parties and self-nominated candidates, has been preserved. This inequality is expressed in the fact that candidates nominated by a parliamentary party are exempt from the need to collect signatures.

The “Golos” movement believes that the additional restrictions on passive electoral rights enforced by the electoral law—such as the requirement for a presidential candidate to possess a residence permit and not to have administrative penalties or convictions—are excessive, unfair, and undemocratic. **These restrictions deprive entire categories of Russian citizens of passive suffrage for unlimited or unreasonably long periods. In the absence of an independent judiciary, these restrictions, in fact, serve as an electoral barrier, as was evident in the case of Aleksey Navalny.**

According to official data,³ from December 18, 2017, to January 12, 2018, the CEC of Russia

³ <http://www.cikrf.ru/news/cec/2018/01/12/06.html>

received notices regarding events related to the nomination of candidates for the post of President of the Russian Federation from 70 nominating subjects: 24 political parties and 46 citizens who announced their self-nomination. 36 candidates submitted their applications to the CEC of Russia: 22 from parties (one candidate was nominated repeatedly from another party after the first rejection) and 15 self-nominees.

2.1. Candidates from political parties

By January 17, the CEC of Russia registered authorized representatives of **15 political parties**:⁴ LDPR (candidate Zhirinovskiy), "Chestno"/Human. Justice. Responsibility/" (candidate Khudyakov), "Yabloko" (candidate Yavlinsky), "Party of Growth" (candidate Titov), "Alliance of Greens" (candidate Agurbash), "Russian National Union" (candidate Baburin), "Monarchist Party" (candidate Bakov), CPRF (candidate Grudinin), "Civil Initiative" (candidate Sobchak), "Party of Good Deeds" (candidate Gordon), "Party of Social Reforms – Profit from Natural Resources – People" (candidate Polishchuk), "Party of Social Protection" (candidate Kozlov), Communist Party "Communists of Russia" (candidate Suraykin), "ROT Front" (candidate Lisitsyn), and "People's Party of Russia" (candidate Volynets).

Representatives of **four** political parties ("Women's Dialogue," "Small Business Party of Russia," "People Against Corruption," and "Native Party") were denied registration of authorized representatives due to violations that occurred during nomination congresses and lack of necessary documents.

The candidate from the "Social Democratic Party of Russia," Ramazanov, refused to continue to participate in the elections. The candidate from the "Communist Party of Social Justice," Oleg Bulayev, declined the nomination.

On January 15, during the meeting of the CEC of Russia, an incident occurred involving a candidate from the "Russian Socialist Party," Irina Gagite. Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Russia Nikolay Bulaev had suspicions about the authenticity of the documents submitted for Ms. Gagite's registration. Mr. Bulaev threatened to transfer the documents for examination to other institutions and recommended that they be withdrawn. Ms. Gagite followed the advice and withdrew her candidacy.

Thus, 12 candidates were permitted to start collecting voter signatures. Candidates Grudinin

⁴ The CEC registered authorized representatives of 16 parties, but after the registration candidate Ramazanov of the SDPR withdrew his nomination

from the Communist Party and Zhirinovskiy from the LDPR, as candidates from parliamentary parties, were exempted from the requirement to collect signatures. Hence, at the time of writing, only two candidates were registered: V. V. Zhirinovskiy (LDPR) and P. N. Grudinin (Communist Party of the Russian Federation).

2.2. Self-nominated candidates

Initially, **three** groups of voters created in support of self-nominated candidates Vladimir Putin, Vladimir Mikhailov, and Aleksandr Chukhlebov were registered by decisions of the Central Election Commission of Russia.

However, on January 5, 2018, registration of a group of voters created in support of self-nominated candidate Chukhlebov was cancelled at the initiative of the CEC of Russia and by a decision of the Supreme Court (which was upheld on January 15, 2018). In our opinion, Chukhlebov suffered from a gap in the legislation.

Thus, only two self-nominated candidates so far, Putin and Mikhailov, have opened special electoral accounts for the formation of election funds and have begun collecting voter signatures.

CEC refused to register groups of voters created in support of the self-nomination of **twelve** candidates (Volovik, Gamzatova, Kuznetsov, L. Lee, Lurie, Navalny, Polonsky, Prisyagin, Pugachev, Stolpak, Cherepnin, and Yatsun). Some of the reasons for the refusal were: lack of passive electoral right of several candidates (Navalny, Lurie); lack of the legally required minimum of voters (500) necessary for a candidate's self-nomination (Polonsky, Lurie, Prisyagin, Kuznetsov – in total 24 candidates; the smallest number of voters participated in the nomination of Mr. Tcherepnin: 34 people); lack of notarization of the registration record of members of a group of voters during a meeting in support of a candidate's self-nomination (for example, candidates Stolpak and Prisyagin); non-submission or inadequate submission of documents mandatory when submitting an application for registration of a group of voters (candidate Pugachev, whose documents contain incomplete information about voters, and candidate Volynets); untimely notification of the CEC about a meeting in support of a candidate's self-nomination (for example, candidate Pugachev, who notified the CEC of Russia 4 days before the event, rather than the required 5 days,⁵ and candidate Volynets).

⁵ This requirement, and the grounds for refusing to recognize the nomination of a candidate, seem unnecessarily strict. The reason for this requirement is so that the election commission organizing the elections can ensure the presence of one of its members at the event. A hard 5-day period is important if the nomination event takes

As previously observed, it is obvious that the changed requirements for the number of voter signatures as well as for the necessary documents to be submitted by candidates have ceased to be an insurmountable barrier to participation in the presidential elections. In the presidential campaign of 2012, five candidates from political parties and 10 self-nominees declared their aim to run, and only five self-nominees and one candidate from a non-parliamentary party could collect the sufficient number of signatures. In the elections of 2018, 22 candidates from parties and 15 self-nominated candidates were nominated, and two self-nominated and 13 non-parliamentary party candidates were given permission to collect signatures.

In most cases, the CEC's decision-making process and procedures for registering voter groups in support of self-nomination of candidates or registration of authorized representatives of a party, as well as the decisions themselves, did not raise serious objections. The greatest resonance and public scrutiny resulted from the CEC's decision to refuse to register the initiative group for Alexei Navalny's nomination. In our opinion, the non-participation of some members of the CEC in voting on this issue prevents us from understanding their position. At the same time, some members of the commission made individual assessments of Mr. Navalny during the discussion prior to the voting.

2.3. Summary of the nomination process (as of January 16, 2018)

№	Candidate	Party / self-nomination	Date			Decision*
			Nomination meeting	Submission of documents	CEC decision	
1.	Zhirinovskiy	LDPR	Dec. 20	Dec. 21	Dec. 22	Registration
2.	Titov	Party of Growth	Dec. 21	Dec. 22	Dec. 25	Registration
3.	Yavlinsky	Zabloko	Dec. 22	Dec. 22	Dec. 25	Registration

place in a different locality than the location of the commission. It is not very difficult to ensure the presence of CEC members at a congress of a party or at a meeting of an initiative group taking place in Moscow, if the CEC were informed about the event 3-4 days in advance.

4.	Lisitsyna	ROT Front	Dec. 21	Dec. 23	Dec. 25	Rejection
5.	Semerikova.	Female Dialogue	Dec. 20	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Rejection
6.	Baburin	Russian National Union	Dec. 22	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Registration ²
7.	Suraykin	Communists of Russia	Dec. 24	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Registration
8.	Polonsky	Self-nomination	Dec. 24	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Rejection
9.	Navalny	Self-nomination	Dec. 24	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Rejection
10.	Lurie	Self-nomination	Dec. 24	Dec. 24	Dec. 25	Rejection
11.	Sobchak	Civic Initiative	Dec. 23	Dec. 25	Dec. 26	Registration
12.	Polishchuk	Party of Social Reforms	Dec. 23	Dec. 26	Dec. 28	Registration ²
13.	Khudyakov	CHESTNO	Dec. 21	Dec. 26	Dec. 28	Registration
14.	Bakov	Monarchist Party	Dec. 23	Dec. 26	Dec. 28	Registration ²
15.	Ramazanov.	SDPR	Dec. 23	Dec. 26	Dec. 29	Registration ³
16.	Chukhlebov.	Self-nomination	Dec. 24	Dec. 26	Dec. 28	Registration ³
17.	Putin	Self-nomination	Dec. 26	Dec. 27	Dec. 28	Registration
18.	Agurbash.	Green Alliance	Dec. 21	Dec. 28	Dec. 29	Registration ²
19.	Sidorov	Small Business Party	Dec. 21	Jan. 3	Jan. 5	Rejection
20.	Gordon	Good Deed	Dec. 23	Dec. 27	Dec. 29	Registration
21.	Grudinin	Communist Party of the Russian Federation	Dec. 23	Dec. 28	Dec. 29	Registration ¹

22.	Kozlov	Party of Social Protection	Dec. 23	N/A	Jan. 2	Registration ²
23.	Lisitsyna	ROT Front	Dec. 27 (2 nd time)	Dec. 28	Dec. 29	Registration ²
24.	Mikhailov.	Self-nomination	Dec. 25	Dec. 28	Dec. 29	Registration ²
25.	Gamzatova	Self-nomination	Dec. 30	Jan. 1	Jan. 5	Rejection
26.	Volovik	Self-nomination	Dec. 24	Jan. 2	Jan. 5	Rejection
27.	Yatsun	Self-nomination	Dec. 26	Jan. 4	Jan. 5	Rejection
28.	Li Lucky	Self-nomination	Dec. 30	Jan. 3	Jan. 5	Rejection
29.	Volynets	People Against Corruption	Dec. 30	Jan. 6	Jan. 10	Rejection
30.	Kuznetsov	Self-nomination	N/A	Jan. 7	Jan. 10	Rejection
31.	Prisyagin	Self-nomination	Dec. 26	Jan. 7	Jan. 10	Rejection
32.	Pugachev	Self-nomination	Jan. 4	Jan. 7	Jan. 10	Rejection
33.	Stolpak	Self-nomination	N/A	Jan. 7	Jan. 10	Rejection
34.	Cherepnin	Self-nomination	Jan. 3	Jan. 7	Jan. 10	Rejection
35.	Gagite	Russian Socialist Party	N/A	Jan. 11	Jan. 15	Withdrawn
36.	Volynets	People's Party of Russia	Dec. 1	Dec. 1	Jan. 16	Registration ²
37.	Bulaev	Communist Party of Social Justice	N/A	Dec. 1	Jan. 16	Withdrawn
38.	Kopenkina	Native Party	Nov. 1	Dec. 1	Jan. 16	Rejection

Notes:

Registration – The CEC of Russia made the decision to register a group of voters or authorized representatives of the party.

Registration¹ – Zhirinovskiy registered as a candidate on December 29, 2017; Grudin in on January 12, 2018.

Registration² – Baburin was given the right to open an electoral account on December 29, 2017; Polishchuk, Agurbash, and Mikhailov on January 2, 2018; Lisitsyna, Bakov, and Kozlov on January 5, 2018; Volynets on January 16, 2018.

Registration³ – On December 29, 2017, Ramazanov refused further to participate in the elections immediately after the registration of authorized representatives of his party; the registration of a group of voters in support of the nomination of Chukhlebov was canceled by a decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation (the decision has not yet been enforced).

3. Informing voters during the nomination and signature collection stages

3.1. Coverage of the nomination process on the site of the CEC of Russia

The principle of equal coverage of election campaigns of all candidates by state bodies is an important component of ensuring the general equality of candidates.

The website of the CEC of Russia (www.cikrf.ru) published several types of materials on the progress of the nomination process: news reports on the receipt of documents from candidates, review materials with information on the progress of the nomination, decisions of the commission, and reports on the results of each meeting. Additional places to spread this information are the official accounts of the CEC of Russia in social networks.

As a result, the decisions of the commission and detailed reports on the results of each meeting were published promptly and in full. Additionally, three review reports were published with information on the progress of the nomination (on January 7, January 11, and January 12). For the candidates' convenience, the CEC published information on the schedule for the submission of documents.

At the same time, some news reports published on the website of the CEC of Russia regarding the results of the submission of candidate documents caused concern for the "Golos" movement. The CEC published 13 such items, mentioning the names of 15 candidates out of 38 who submitted documents to the CEC of Russia. **Thus, 23 candidates were deprived of equal coverage on the CEC website in regard to the submission of their documents.**

Furthermore, the lack of an equal approach could be seen inside the published 13 reports. In the reports of December 26, January 3, January 11, and January 12, there are no names of candidates, only the names of the political parties that nominated them. Only 4 out of 13 news reports had photographs of candidates from the procedure for accepting documents, depriving other candidates of this advantage.

It should be considered that the CEC of Russia is the organizer of the presidential elections in Russia and the official source of electoral information. The official website of the CEC of Russia is actively used by the media, voters, and election participants. The selective submission of information distorts the real picture of the course of the election campaign. **The presence on**

the CEC website of information about document submission by one candidate and the lack of such information about another candidate not only creates inequality and an information vacuum but gives a bad example to regional election commissions and the media, who are often criticized for similar transgressions.

3.2. Campaign participation of the Election Commissions of the Subjects of the Russian Federation

At the candidate nomination stage for the presidency of the Russian Federation, activities of the election commissions of the subjects of the Russian Federation (ECSRF) are very limited. The main tasks of ECSRFs related to the preparation of lower-level election commissions (ECSRFs conduct their training) and preparation of polling stations for Election Day.

Currently, the selection of members of precinct election commissions is ongoing. At the same time, the ECSRFs are extremely reluctant to involve representatives of the observer community (exceptions are the commissions in the St. Petersburg and Samara regions) in the training of precinct election commissions (PEC) members, although the observers are familiar with the training programs.

Participants in the “Golos” movement are eager for closer interaction with the ECSRFs and are ready to actively participate in the training of the members of precinct election commissions—especially considering that the election commissions of the subjects of the federation took up the training of public observers. The current situation, in which the training of observers is carried out by those whom the observers should monitor, cannot but cause worries.

Currently, the ECSRFs pay much attention to informing voters about the forthcoming elections and are engaged in large-scale information and explanatory work. Almost in all regions, practically the day after the appointment of the elections, ECSRFs launched an advertising and information campaign using official election symbols designed by the CEC.⁶ Commissions are responsible for hundreds of banners, billboards, screens, posters, etc.,

⁶ The contract for 37 million rubles was won by "IMA-consulting."
<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2017/11/29/743518-tsik-utverdila-logotip-viborov-2018#%2Fgalleries%2F140737493664110%2Fnormal%2Flast>

located in the regions.⁷

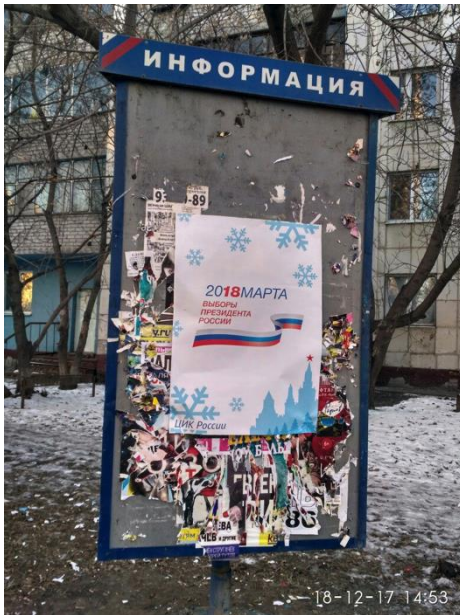


City of Vladimir



Voronezh

⁷ For example, on December 8, 2017, more than 600 banners appeared in the Perm region <https://www.business-class.su/news/2017/12/18/v-permskom-krae-poyavilos-bolee-400-bannerov-k-vyboram-prezidenta>: “Banners for the March 2018 presidential elections appeared in the Perm region. As the “Business Class” was told in the regional election commission, there are more than 400 banners with information on presidential elections in Prikam, and about 200 in Perm. Banners are paid from the federal budget at the expense of the CEC of Russia, explained the regional election commission.”



CEC posters outdoors and in a shuttle bus in the city of Tyumen.

However, the placement of CEC information banners did avoid certain "excesses on the ground" (i.e. local problems). In the city of Ivanovo, the local Commission violated Art. 35.1 of Federal Law No. 50-FZ "On Objects of Cultural Heritage," which prohibits the placement of outdoor advertising on cultural heritage sites. A banner was placed on the Palace of Arts, which is an object of cultural heritage of regional importance.⁸



In the city of Kalach, Voronezh region, an advertising banner from the CEC of Russia was placed

⁸ <http://1000inf.ru/news/77100/>; <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39394>

on a monument of nineteenth-century regional architecture along Krasnoarmeyskaya Street (facility number: 3600182000). Moreover, the monument houses a department on the culture of Kalacheevsky municipal district administration.⁹



The promptness in the placement of information materials by the CEC of Russia and the ECSRFS show unprecedented advance preparation of the advertising campaign, and give evidence of significant funds allocated to it. According to Ella Pamfilova, Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Russia, the total budget of the information campaign, including the regional component, is 770 million rubles. **The question arises as to whether such significant expenditures are reasonable and justified.** Another question is why there such attention wasn't given to the election of deputies to the State Duma of Russia in 2016. **In the very near future, there may be of shortage of advertising spaces for candidates' election campaigns.**

In recent days, "Golos" received information¹⁰ that in Moscow, St. Petersburg,¹¹ Samara Saratov region,¹² the Republic of Karelia,¹³ as well as in other regions, members of precinct election commissions outside the 30-day period of their activities are forced to participate in

⁹ <http://www.list-org.com/company/829362>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/brewerov/posts/1810587725681654?pnref=story>

¹¹ <http://m.fontanka.ru/2018/01/10/101/>

¹² <http://daytlt.ru/zavtra-v-tolyatti-nachnyotsya-predvybornyj-pokvartirnyj-obhod> ; http://guberniatv.ru/news/startovalo_informirovanie_o_vyborah_prezidenta_rf/

¹³ <http://politika-karelia.ru/?p=36341>

rigorous door-to-door visits to voters. In the Perm Krai, commission members in rural areas are forced to look for and ring up their former “countrymen” (who left their region but retained registration there) and ask them to re-register at another polling station at the place of their present residence. In Moscow, commission members even get paid a fee for such activities and are accompanied by representatives of the local government. In St. Petersburg, such activities happen under the supervision of local officials and without pay. The idea seems to be that during the first round of such visits, the PEC members are to inform the citizens about the forthcoming elections; during the second one, they are to bring an invitation with the address of the polling station; and during the third one, they should remind the voters about Election Day. Amendments to the law "On Elections of the President of the Russian Federation" increased the duration of information work for members of the commissions from 10 to 30 days (commissions will start their work only on February 15).

It is important to emphasize that work for precinct election commissions is a voluntary public activity, and that additional and forced involvement of PEC members in repeated visits to voters’ homes can cause (and already causes, judging by their reactions on social media¹⁴) their discontent and departure from the commissions. Considering that in the forthcoming presidential elections the question of voter turnout is politicized and associated with demonstrating support for or protest against both the political system itself and one of the candidates (i.e. the obvious favorite of the campaign), the participation of PEC members in campaign activities that go beyond what they are legally required to do so that they increase voter turnout violates their political neutrality and involves them in political campaigning. Moreover, it is unacceptable for PEC members to participate in any kind of polling about whether voters are going to vote or not. There is one additional risk associated with the participation of PEC members in campaigning, and this has to do with the likelihood of officials and police officers being present during these home visits. The very appearance of administrative officials and members of precinct commissions can be perceived as an attempt to coerce and control the vote. ***The movement "Golos" is convinced that there are other ways to convey to voters the information they need about the forthcoming elections and voting options.***

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/127906321324346/permalink/139888203459491/> ; <https://7x7-journal.ru/post/102625>

Several regional election commissions actively use both traditional and social media networks in their information activities. According to estimates of long-term observers, information activity of election commissions is particularly strong in St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Kostroma, Moscow, and Leningrad regions, as well as in Perm Krai and the Republic of Mari El.

At the same time, the activities of other commissions of the subjects of the Federation are extremely opaque, and their resources are not sufficiently informative. (This is the case, for example, with the commissions of the Republic of Karelia, the Altai Territory, the Krasnoyarsk Territory, and the Kirov, Kurgan, Lipetsk, Rostov, Samara, Tambov, Tver, and Tyumen regions). This is especially true of the Moscow City Election Commission, whose information activities have become very formal after many years of same leadership. This is happening in the Moscow region—the region with the greatest media and socio-political activity in the country. The CEC of Russia has already complained about the extremely insufficient awareness of voters during the Moscow municipal elections in September 2017¹⁵.

ECSRFs pay attention to educational activities among young people, actively involving them in youth election commissions,¹⁶ participating in various youth forums and festivals, and organizing special youth-oriented projects¹⁷. However, “Golos” finds the effectiveness of such activities not particularly high.

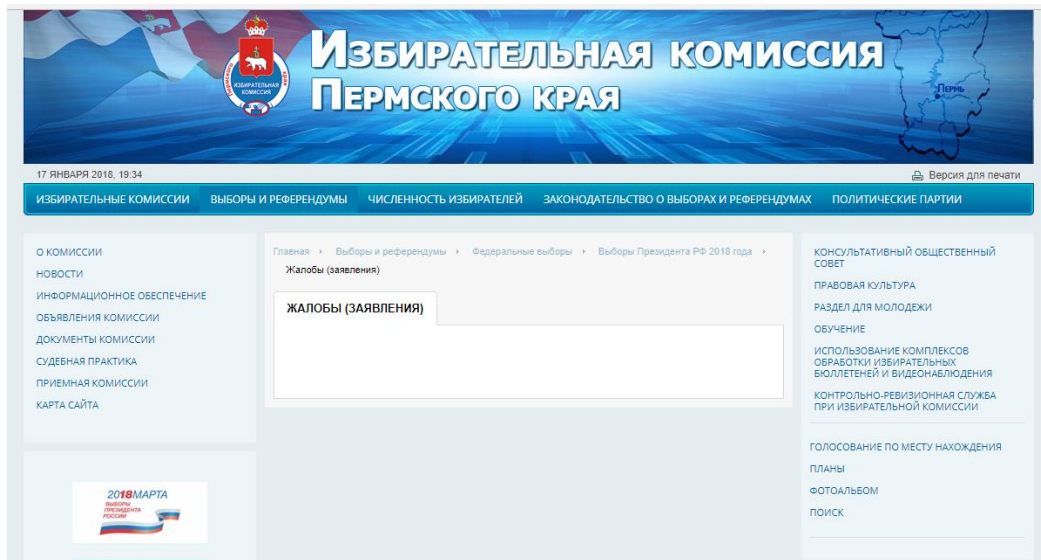
In 2016-2017, under the influence of the new policy of the CEC of Russia with respect to public observers and independent experts, several ECSRFs created their own public and advisory councils. Some representatives of the observer community, for example from the “Golos” movement (in Perm Krai, Republic of Karelia, and Saratov, Tver, and Yaroslavl regions), were invited to join some of the councils. But lately, the activities of most of the public councils have become formal (Krasnodar Territory), ceased altogether (Yaroslavl Region and Perm

¹⁵ <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/59afe90d9a79474223a43e39>

¹⁶ <http://мик12.рф>: https://vk.com/club118461306?w=wall-118461306_77%2Fall
https://vk.com/club118461306?w=wall-118461306_77%2Fall&z=photo-31557489_456245064%2Fwall-118461306_77

¹⁷ For example, the CEC of Mari El, together with two youth organisations, is implementing "Access Map" project, which aims to inform voters about polling stations. It includes a description of the polling stations in the context of municipalities: the number of polling station, their location, the name of the organization, a photo describing the adjacent territory, and availability of barrier-free elements.

Territory), became non-transparent in terms of the councils' formation (Tver Oblast), or the councils are no longer even being formed (Kostroma region). For example, in the Perm region in 2017, the council met 3-4 times to discuss preparations for the gubernatorial election and other issues. After the elections on September 10, 2017, there was no council meeting to discuss the results of the campaign and the council did not meet at all for about six months, under the pretext of renewing its membership.



A good example of problems pertaining to the information activities of the election commissions, and, perhaps, an example of their non-professionalism or political engagement, is a case recorded on the official website of the commission of the city of Yekaterinburg.¹⁸ On January 6, the website of the electoral commission posted campaign material reporting on the collection of signatures in support of the self-nomination of Vladimir Putin. The material also described the possible consequences of his election or non-election, while emphasizing that there was no alternative to this candidate.

In general, the activities of the election commissions of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are traditionally mostly related to informing voters and conducting various preparations for Election Day. At the same time, observers note the active inclusion of the ECSRFs and subordinate commissions in the campaign to increase voter turnout. Some of the latter activities (e.g. home visits by PEC members, statements by members on the need

¹⁸ <https://www.kartanarusheniy.org/2018-03-18/m/39422>

to increase voter turnout, banning leaflets calling for a boycott of the elections, use of the information resources of electoral commissions to report on the activities of candidates' headquarters) raise doubts about the political neutrality of the commissions.

Recommendations

To Legislators:

- Abolish excessive, discriminatory, and undemocratic restrictions on passive election rights.
- Establish equal requirements (including the necessary number of signatures of voters in support of a nomination) for all candidates, regardless of the subject of nomination (parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties, self-nomination).
- Bring back the electoral deposit (an electoral deposit is the sum of money that a candidate is required to pay to an electoral authority before he or she is permitted to stand for election).
- Transfer the function of appointing the presidential election directly to the CEC of Russia and set an exact deadline for it (for example, 100, 95, or 90 days prior to Election Day).
- Formalize the duty to provide candidates nominated by self-nomination state or municipal property (on a paid or non-paid basis) for meetings of initiative groups (like those provided for campaign meetings with voters).

To the Election Commissions:

- Refrain from the practice of recruiting PEC members for additional voter visits not provided for by law in order to increase overall turnout.
- Actively involve representatives of election observation organizations in the training of precinct commissions and public observers.
- Include representatives of election observation organizations in the public and advisory councils of the ECSRFs. Together with representatives of the observer community, develop a standard list of issues for discussion at council meetings during the election campaign.
- Strictly follow the principle of equality of candidates' rights in commissions' information policy, including on official websites.

* * *

Expert group that worked on the report:

- *Vitaly Kovin, expert of the "Golos" movement;*
- *Grigory Melkonyants, co-chairman of the "Golos" movement;*
- *Vitaly Averin, coordinator of the regional network of the "Golos" movement;*
- *Regional long-term observers.*