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On Tuesday, lawmakers in the Russian city of Екатеринбург voted overwhelmingly to end the direct election of mayors. This move will effectively oust the current mayor Евгений Ройзман, a social activist and outspoken critic of Putin, whose term ends in September and is unlikely to be appointed to his current role.

Speaking to the Echo of Moscow Radio station, Ройзман said, “It’s a direct insult to the citizens of Yekaterinburg, a belittling of the status of Yekaterinburg, a show of disrespect to the city, the city’s traditions.” Before the vote on Monday, thousands of people in the city protested against the proposal. In addition, Alexei Navalny—one of Putin’s most prominent opponents in Russian politics—condemned the action on social media, claiming that all opinion polls indicated that people prefer to choose their own mayors.

Going forward, in place of direct elections, the mayor will instead be chosen by local politicians from a list compiled by a special committee.

Although this may sound odd to listeners unfamiliar with Russian politics, there is actually more than a bit of precedent for it: as of now, there is only one regional capital—Kaliningrad—which still has mayoral elections, as opposed to the other forty-five which use the system Yekaterinburg has just adopted. The article *Russian Mayors Embattled*, which was published in Russian Analytical Digest in 2013, notes that mayoral power was largely marginalized following the passage of a 2003 federal law which allowed regional governors to implement a dual-executive on these cities: not only did this largely prevent the open election of mayors, but also split the power of the office into two positions. The mayor was given general policymaking authority, while the newly-created head of the city—also elected by local politicians from a pre-selected list—had more broad powers over the city budget, employees, and departments. Such was the case for Roizman, whose barring from office does not change much, if any, actual government policy. More than an actual political fight, this seems to be more of a show of power. There is no need for the Kremlin to deal with troublemakers or serious opposition when they can merely exclude them from participating in the political process at all.

For its part, the Kremlin declined to comment on the decision, saying that it was purely a local matter.

This has been Cameron Lallana with KDVS news. Tune in in Mondays from 6-7pm for our weekly news show.