



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

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Analytical report

Results of candidate registration.

Administrative mobilization of voters

Experts from the Movement for the Defence of Voters' Rights "Golos" found that the authorities in Russia are trying really hard to persuade electorates to vote in the presidential elections on 18 March 2018. "Golos" experts analysed information from long-term observers in the regions as well as information from the media and messages from the crowdsourcing service "Map of Violations."

In a situation in which few doubt the outcome of the elections, the main intrigue of the campaign is the turnout, i.e. how many voters will want to take part in the voting process. The opposition leader Aleksei Navalny, who has been banned from running, is calling for a boycott of the presidential vote while the authorities are trying to demonstrate broad public support. To mobilize voters, the authorities are actively using those who are administratively dependent: civil servants, state employees, and employees of state enterprises.

There are truly dubious technologies in use: parents are lured to polling stations with the help of "school referendums," various parent polls, and competitions. It is particularly cynical to use children in mobilizing their parents to vote in the presidential election.

Cases of collecting workers' personal data at state enterprises and universities have become more frequent. In case of refusal to submit the data, the workers could be dismissed or find it difficult to secure state-sponsored support.

Of great concern is the new voting system "at the current location," which is easy to misuse and manipulate in order to increase voter turnout.

Specific examples can be found in the new report by "Golos".

Conclusions

- Registration of candidates nominated by parties currently in the State Duma based on the so-called "parliamentary privilege," i.e. without collecting voter signatures, creates obvious

inequality among candidates during the election campaign. Candidates who are deprived of this privilege are forced to spend time and other resources on collecting signatures which they could use to conduct a more effective campaign.

- The practice of collecting and presenting voter signatures during the 2018 presidential election campaign once again demonstrated that the signature collecting institute is not fulfilling its mission in the electoral process stipulated in its constitutionally significant goals: it does not confirm that the nominated candidate really enjoys the voters' support. Collecting signatures has become a purely technological task, which is solved with sufficient funds or with the help of administrative support.

- In a situation characterised by a low level of political competition and a predetermined election result, this election campaign has acquired a pronounced "administrative mobilization" character. On the one hand, there are various initiatives to encourage voter turnout; on the other, there is widespread use of technologies of direct administrative coercion to persuade people to vote.

- Examples of voter incentives and voter mobilization projects, which are used by administrations in many regions, are voter polls about local improvement projects, so-called "school referendums," children's contests during the pre-election period, and other school events scheduled for the March 18 Election Day. Many of them are very dubious in terms of electoral legislation and can potentially interfere in the activities of election commissions and in the voting process itself. A negative assessment of these risks was also given by the Central Election Commission of Russia. At the same time, the administrations were firmly against conducting other polls and referendums initiated by citizens and opposition MPs.

- Large-scale administrative use of educational institutions and minors as tools for indirect manipulative influence on parents to stimulate their participation in voting became a special feature of the current election campaign. This was achieved with the help of a whole range of activities whose objectives were to use children to attract the attention of parents to the elections, encourage parents to appear at polling stations in buildings where educational institutions are located, and use minors as a "means of delivering information" about elections and specific candidates.

- Often, state and municipal employees are directly involved in mobilization activities. A widespread phenomenon is the compilation of so-called "lists of voters" from among employees of state enterprises, students of various educational institutions, state and municipal employees, and law enforcement officers.

- Particularly concerning are the numerous cases of coercion of students, employees, and subordinates to write applications to vote at their place of temporary residence, thereby "attaching" them to polling stations located at their place of work or study, and making it possible to exercise control over their participation in voting. There are fears that the new "at the location" voting mechanism will become one of the main tools for manipulating the voting process. At the same time, it is worth noting that in the context of this campaign, voters who are administratively stimulated to participate in the election are not being instructed on which candidate to support.