

Sverdlovsk Workers to Be Flown In for Pro-Putin Rally

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More than 800 workers from the Urals region of Sverdlovsk will come to Moscow for a rally in support of presidential candidate Vladimir Putin on Thursday, Sverdlovsk region Union Federation press secretary Aksana Sgibnyeva said.

Six hundred of them will travel by train, while around 200 others will fly in for the event, Sgibnyeva said, Interfax reported. The Union Federation will split the cost of the workers' trip with their employers, she said.

Moscow City Hall approved plans for a march and rally in support of Putin's presidential bid at Luzhniki stadium on Thursday, the national holiday Defender of the Fatherland Day. Organizers expect up to 40,000 participants in the event.

On Feb. 4, a pro-Putin group held an "anti-orange" rally at Poklonnaya Gora in Moscow at which speakers shouted anti-Western slogans and demonstrators held signs with messages praising Putin's leadership. The event drew tens of thousands of people but was marred by reports of many participants having been forced or paid to attend.

Putin's main base of support lies outside the nation's capital, especially among blue-collar workers, many of whom view the long-time leader as a guarantor of stability.

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