



VOICE

Association for the Defense of Voters' Rights

www.golos.org

VOICE



ABOUT VOICE

Mission and goals

Voice is a non-partisan non-governmental organization founded in 2000, whose mission is to promote mechanisms for citizen participation in public decision making through development of coalitions of NGOs which will actively militate for free and fair elections, an open public decision making process, civic participation in the political process, a constructive dialog between citizens and elected officials, and increased citizens' participation in government.

Activities

- election observation;
- voter education;
- making the activities of the deputies public to their constituents;
- organizing events to bring together interest groups and elected officials;
- advocacy campaigns on issues related to the organization's mission and goals

Structure

VOICE has built a network of 15 regional branches, coming together in an organization characterized by internal democracy, open and inclusive decision-making, effective internal communication, allowing a rapid circulation of information, transparent finances, and a permanent concern for and assistance to the regional branches - a new type of organization for Russia. At the same time, the programs and activities the organization undertakes are oriented and open to citizens, engaging them in the respective activities.

VOICE works in the following regions of Russia:

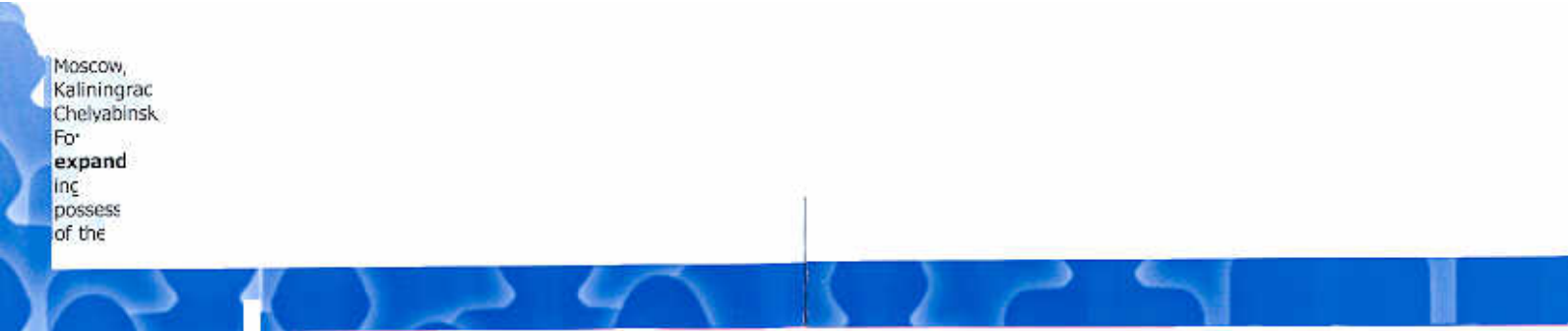
St. Petersburg, Astrakhan, Vladivostok, Vladimir, Yekaterinburg, Irkutsk, J, Krasnodar, Petrozavodsk, Tambov, Riazan, Samara, Saratov,

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the upcoming general elections in December 2003 the Association intends to **its federal network** of regional branches to 30 regions. When establish- new partnerships VOICE appeals to existing human rights organizations, which ; organizational and human resources and are interested in the improvement electoral process.



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The highest VOICE ruling body is the Board. Decisions are taken by the Board according to recommendations of the Consultative Board, which consists of coordinators from the most experienced and efficiently working regions. The Consultative Board works out the strategy of the organization. Twice a year a General Assembly is called to discuss current projects, evaluate activities and do strategic planning for the next six months with participation of founders and coordinators. Regional coalitions individually define work plan according to available resources within general project.

VOICE is funded by grants raised by both Moscow *office* and regional coalitions and it allocates 35% of its funds for the Moscow office and 65% for maintaining the network.

VOICE Moscow office jointly with NDI conducts trainings for all regions involving NDI experts and most experienced regional coordinators as trainers.

Achievements

In its three years of existence, VOICE affiliates have succeeded to:

- observe regional and local elections in 15 regions of Russia;
- achieve candidates' agreement on not using "dirty" election campaign technologies in some of the regions;
- achieve the revision of election commissions' composition, established with violation of the law;
- assist a district electoral commission in Yaroslavl to collect information to turn down an obscure candidate ran under the same name as another candidate to confuse voters;



- provide "hotline" to receive information on violations from citizens, candidates and political parties;
- train election commission voting members delegated by political parties;
- successfully lobby for the adoption of region allows providing for public hearings on legislative issues in Astrakhan and Yaroslavl;
- release information about the activities of regional deputies in 10 regions of Russia.



ELECTION OBSERVATION

Goal of the project

VOICE goal is to rebuild citizens' trust and increase their participation in electoral process, by carrying out non-partisan election observation campaigns and regularly releasing their findings to the general

public, at the same time attempting to involve them in the activity.

VOICE has observed regional and local elections in Yaroslavl, Astrakhan, Krasnodar, Saratov, Samara, Riazan, Vladimir, St. Petersburg, Karelia, Kaliningrad, Yekaterinburg, Cheliabinsk, Irkutsk, Lipetsk and Vladivostok through its regional branches moving its focus from election day observation to long-term observation.

Activities

- election observation with a grass root dimension and regularly release of findings to the general public;
- maintenance of hot-lines for complaints on electoral violations from citizens and candidates;
- training of members of electoral commissions, cooperation with electoral commissions in investigating and documenting electoral frauds;
- seminars and lectures for young voters in universities;
- creation and distribution of voter education materials.



2003 elections to State Duma

- educate voters on the importance of their vote, on the responsibilities and duties of those whom they elect and on the most common violations of their electoral rights they might be subject of;
- promote the interest of NGOs through electoral campaigns
- organize candidate forums and debates on issues of interest to NGOs);
- produce and disseminate a final report to include all violations made during electoral campaign and election day;
- after elections advocate for changes in the electoral law and practice, based on the observations made during elections (through round tables, materials and articles, lobby).

For the 2003 elections to State Duma VOICE is going to:

- observe elections (with a focus on electoral campaign);
- counter react to violations observed through the publications and through mobilization of interest groups and general public;
- regularly release observations on the conduct of the electoral campaign to both the Russian and international audience, to the regional and national media, to major NGOs, political parties, Central Electoral Commission, other electoral decision making or administrative bodies; duties of those whom they elect and on the most common violations of

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How VOICE will prepare for the election period

- add 15 more regions to its network;
- train all election observation teams;
- develop materials to assist the teams in their work;
- ensure an efficient exchange of experience between all regions.

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MONITORING OF AcnNG DEPUTIES AND INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF THEIR ACTIVITIES

Goals of the project

- to promote a dialog between deputies and citizens;
- to increase deputies' interest to work with their constituencies while fulfilling their delegated powers;
- to achieve the maximum transparency of decision taking process on all the levels of legislative and executive powers;

Activities



Moscow office

Main directions of work:

- collecting of information on roll call voting of State Duma deputies from VOICE regions and on comments to bills debated in the house and distributing of this information among regions;
 - conducting of round tables involving experts and State Duma deputies;
 - publishing of newspaper "Civil Voice";
 - publishing of information on the website www.golos.org;
 - coordination of regional partnerships.
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- collecting of information on legislature, on deputies body, on work of deputies' offices;
 - keeping of a data base on deputies (deputies' published statements on issues, which their constituencies are concerned with, extracts of their reports, recorded TV and radio appearances);
 - conducting of trainings for interviewers and members of the teams;
 - assessing of public awareness of deputies' work, conducting telephone polling of citizens called "Do you know your deputy?" in each region (which often show that deputies are not known due to their inaccessibility);
 - polling of deputies;
 - analyzing of most important issues discussed in legislative sessions and in committees;
 - conducting of public discussions, round tables, public hearings;
 - getting of roll call vote of deputies.

Methods used to inform NGOs and citizens

- maintaining of electronic data base for distribution of information among target groups;
- publishing of articles in mass media, preparing radio programmes;
- holding of press conferences;
- organizing of public events;

- producing of booklets and leaflets for citizens.

Results of the project

- wide distribution of information on VOICE activities in the project in all regions among NGOs, deputies, political parties and administration;
- analysis and evaluation of public interaction with legislatures;
- building of interest groups around VOICE (NGO activists, deputies, jour- nalists) who are ready to participate in the project, to conduct public advo- cacy campaigns;
- implementation of new methods and techniques by VOICE activists.



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