

THE JACKSON LEGACY IN ACTION

A publication of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation

Summer 2018

Highlighting the power of Russian local elections



Vladimir Kara-Murza, Chairman of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom, making his remarks; and Grigory Frolov, Free Russia Foundation Vice President.

The Free Russia Foundation and the Jackson Foundation recently hosted a joint conference on *Strategies to Engage Russian Pro-Democracy Forces* in Washington, D.C. The Free Russia Foundation is a U.S.-based nonprofit that informs about Russian political developments and supports effective U.S. – Russia relations. The Foundation helped bring 10 Russian newly-elected local politicians to appear at the conference, who spoke about the recent success at the municipal level in Moscow.

It was heartening to hear Vladimir Kara-Murza, a major political opposition figure, describe in his keynote address the importance of local elections in a society like Russia's today: "In authoritarian states, municipal government is the only place for democratic life. Official propaganda loses some of its clout." This was evident in the broad array of young politicians, representing the full spectrum of Russian political parties, as they talked about election victories, campaign strategies, and what Kara-Murza characterized as "the astonishing result in an authoritarian system." It was clear that municipal success could be both a springboard to future victories at a regional or federal level and a place to provide valuable experience.

The audience consisted of a mix of U.S. governmental agencies—Congressional staffers, USAID, National Endowment for Democracy—and NGOS such as Freedom

House and Human Rights First—as well as journalists, academics and students. They seemed a bit stunned at the bravery and spunk of the young Russians who despite the odds, campaigned and won many seats in the September municipal elections.

Vitaly Venidiktov, organizer of the School of Municipal Deputies, talked about the long-term strategy for electoral success: "We see a road-map: from the Moscow Municipal election of 2017, to the Mayor of Moscow in 2018, to Moscow City parliament and St. Petersburg municipal elections in 2019, to the regional parliament elections in 2020, with the hope of electing our own faction in the State Duma by 2021." Listeners were impressed with the quality of the young political figures, their hopes for developing a more democratic Russia, and their belief in the education of

Russian citizenry. "Our citizens are on the way, step by step, toward democratic attitudes and values," Julia Galiamina, a Moscow Municipal Deputy predicted. "They are not just intimidated victims of authoritarianism."

Lara Iglitzin, Executive Director of the Jackson Foundation, spoke at the beginning of the day and facilitated a conversation about the importance of local political voices. "Senator Jackson had a deep and abiding belief in the power of ordinary citizens to have a voice in their own political future," she reminded the crowd. "Keep your eyes on the long-term goal of democratic Russia and keep working to make that happen."



Panelists Andrey Malygin and Anastasia Bryukhanova, municipal deputies from Moscow, and Andrey Davydov, St. Petersburg politician.

Jackson Leadership Fellows take D.C.

Once again a new crop of Jackson Fellows has taken Washington, D.C. by storm, meeting with several members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation—including individual meetings with Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell—and a slew of other useful organizations and individuals relevant to the Jackson Foundation and the Jackson legacy.

One particular audience that benefited from the Fellows' unique ability to inspire others and challenge dusty conventions was at the Woodrow Wilson Center. There, each of the Fellows spoke for a few minutes to a crowd of over 70 young Washington, D.C. interns—some of whom were barely in their first few days on the job—about navigating public service careers amid exceptional obstacles like the kind they might face today. One Fellow, Stephen Robinson, exhorted the interns to “get outside of yourself” and think about the larger whole of society. Christina Sciabarra, who is used to

counseling college students in her post at a major community college outside of Seattle, advised them: “If a door is not open—open it.”

The Fellows benefited greatly by the presence of three board members who took the time to travel with the group: Vice presidents Craig Gannett and Linda Mason Wilgis, and Board member Chuck Blumenfeld, who serves as the board advisor on the Fellows' alumni council.

Throughout the packed trip, the Fellows showed why they had been chosen in the first place to represent the Jackson brand. Individually and collectively, they are a passionate, idealistic, pragmatic, committed, and determined bunch. The Jackson Leadership Fellows program with its extraordinary young people represents one of the most exciting aspects of the Jackson Foundation's work today.



ABOVE: Jackson Leadership Fellows with members of the Washington State Delegation including Senator Maria Cantwell. BELOW: Representatives Rick Larsen, Pramila Jayapal, Derek Kilmer, and Suzan DelBene.

Jackson Leadership Fellows speaking at the Wilson Center event. ABOVE: Stephanie Celt and Joe Nyugen. BELOW: Brandon Hersey.

Photo courtesy of University of Washington



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The Jackson Legacy in Action, a publication of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, is distributed quarterly.

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