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Foreigner Bill Sails Through Duma

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The State Duma waved through an amendment Friday that eases registration rules for foreigners, passing the new law in both a second and third reading, the parliament said on its web site.

The readings passed with 410 and 404 votes in favor, respectively, the Duma said. No information about votes against or abstentions was given.

The new rules say foreigners only have to register seven, not three, working days after arrival in the country, thus removing a lot of red tape for businessmen and tourists.

They also return the responsibility for registering foreigners working in the country to employers, doing away with a February reform that has made it the job of private landlords.

Last month's reform caused an influx of complaints from foreign businesses because many landlords refused to register their tenants or even authorize foreigners' employers to handle the registration.

The amendment, which was initiated by the Constitution and State Affairs Committee after

meetings with foreign business associations last month, should come into force on March 31, the Rosbalt.ru news agency reported.

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