

Selling Alcohol to Minors Now Carries Jail Time

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

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Medvedev's anti-alcohol drive is the country's first serious attempt to deal with the population's love for booze since a campaign was launched in 1985 by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. **Vladimir Filonov**

Selling alcohol to underage customers could result in a prison sentence under a raft of laws aimed at protecting children that President Dmitry Medvedev signed Thursday.

Individuals will be fined 3,000 to 5,000 rubles (\$100 to \$170) and companies 80,000 to 100,000 rubles for selling alcohol to customers under 18, according to the [law](#) on alcohol sales signed by Medvedev.

Repeating the offense within six months of the fine would land the person in prison for up to one year, according to the bill, a copy of which is available on the Kremlin's web site.

"This might be a belated measure, but an important one nevertheless," said Nina Ostanina, a State Duma deputy with the Communist Party who sits on the chamber's Family Affairs

Committee.

"Threat of jail time implies a new level of responsibility," she said Thursday.

High fines will also encourage the police to be more active about enforcing the legislation, she said.

Of the 2 million of the country's officially registered alcoholics, some 60,000 are under 14, the Health and Social Development Ministry has said. "Child alcoholism has emerged in the country," chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko said Wednesday.

Medvedev signed into law earlier this week a bill that broadens the legal definition of alcoholic drinks. The legislation is to result in tighter regulations on the sale and promotion of beer and of alcoholic cocktails, which enjoy immense popularity with teenagers thanks to low prices and ready availability in the country's ubiquitous kiosks and convenience stores.

Medvedev's anti-alcohol drive is the country's first serious attempt to deal with the population's love for booze since a campaign was launched in 1985 by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The previous campaign, however, was highly unpopular and caused moonshine production to skyrocket rather than consumption to plummet.

Another law signed by Medvedev on Thursday will [introduce](#) a media rating system to protect children from "harmful information" that can "damage the psyche" and "form a distorted worldview," according to the Kremlin. Guidelines for determining "harmful" information remain to be established.

The law obliges all television and radio shows to warn their audience with age restrictions. Media outlets, as well as audio and video recordings in broad distribution, must have age warnings on their covers. Web sites must place the warnings on their home pages.

Making harmful information available to minors will result in fines ranging from 2,000 to 50,000 rubles, and companies may have their activities suspended, the law says.

The same law also bans all advertisements in school textbooks and notebooks, as well as within or near the premises of schools and other children's facilities.

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