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Religious Holidays Could Become Official

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Religious holidays could become official nonworking days in regions that observe them, according to a draft bill introduced to the State Duma on Monday, Interfax reported.

The Supreme Court last month struck down a Bashkortostan law that would have made the Muslim holidays of Eid ul-Fitr and Eid al-Adha official days off. It cited the Labor Code, which gives local authorities no power to introduce official holidays.

The new legislative amendments, drafted by United Russia's Duma deputies from the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, would fix the omission, giving such power to regional authorities.

"Russia is a secular state, and therefore it would be completely incorrect to infringe upon a citizen's right to observe religious holidays," said Pavel Krasheninnikov, the bill's co-author.

No date for a hearing was set.

Orthodox Christianity is the most popular religion in nearly all regions, and Christmas is a federal holiday. But seven regions, mostly in the North Caucasus, have majority Muslim populations, and three — the republics of Kalmykia, Tuva and Buryatia — are majority Buddhist.

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