

# Voluntary Chemical Castration For Sex Offenders Is Approved

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The State Duma has approved a draft law that mandates stiffer penalties for sexual offenses against minors, including increased prison time and voluntary chemical castration.

The draft law provides for a ban on the use of probation and deferred sentences for sex offenders, and repeat transgressors can now be sentenced to up to life in prison, an increase from previous guidelines of eight- to 20-year prison terms.

Chemical castration can be used as a preventive measure for repeat offenders, but only with the consent of the offender.

The medication used to induce chemical castration has numerous side effects, but the process is reversible by simply discontinuing use of the medication.

Additional medical procedures not specified in the description of the draft law published on the Duma website can be ordered by a judge on the basis of mandatory psychological examinations.

The law — approved Tuesday at its third and final reading — also provides for more severe punishment for defendants who are close relatives, teachers, or caregivers of child victims or employees of institutions that supervise youth.

Advocates of the law cited a recidivism rate as high as 97 percent as one of the most important reasons to pass the law, versus only 3 percent in countries where chemical castration is used, while opponents have criticized the law as being too expensive.

The law was initiated by the president and differs from a similar proposal that would have made chemical castration mandatory. The draft law was passed with 354 of 450 deputies voting in favor.

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