

Senate Committee Approves Magnitsky Bill

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A pin worn by an activist bearing the face of Sergei Magnitsky and the words "We demand justice." **Igor Tabakov**

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov warned Wednesday that the United States should consider its moves carefully after a Senate committee unanimously accepted a bill that would punish Russian officials linked to the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a lawyer who died in pretrial detention in 2009.

"[They have] an opportunity to weigh the consequences after all, so we urge our U.S. partners and U.S. lawmakers to do just that," Ryabkov said, adding that it was "too early" to say exactly how Russia would respond, RIA-Novosti reported.

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, which would require the United States to deny visas and freeze the assets of those linked to the scandal around Magnitsky's death, in a unanimous vote Tuesday.

The bill was also approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee earlier this month.

Despite broad support in Congress, U.S. President Barack Obama's administration has spoken against the bill, calling it unnecessary and saying it had already dealt with demands to punish Russian officials involved in human rights violations.

A number of U.S. lawmakers have called for the bill to be linked to the repeal of the 1974 Jackson-Vanik act, an outdated human rights provision which tied trade with the Soviet Union to Moscow's allowing Jews and other minorities to leave the country.

Russia has also repeatedly railed against the bill, warning it would take commensurate measures if the bill passes into law.

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