

Bill Tightening Rules on NGOs Passes in First Reading

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The storm of criticism surrounding the bill instituting new rules for foreign-funded NGOs did not hinder its passage Friday in the Duma.

A controversial bill requiring foreign-funded non-governmental organizations to register as "foreign agents" easily passed in a first vote at the State Duma on Friday.

The bill has been slammed by rights groups and by the presidential council on human rights since its submission to the Duma by United Russia deputies last week.

But the storm of criticism and calls for more discussion of the bill did not hinder its passage in the first of three readings, with a clear majority of 323 lawmakers in the 450-seat Duma voting in favor. Four abstained and only one deputy voted against the bill, Interfax reported.

In its current version, the bill says that all NGOs that receive foreign funding and conduct "political activity" in Russia must register as "foreign agents" with the Justice Ministry

and submit regular reports on their finances.

Opponents of the bill have warned that it might be used to crack down on groups that criticize the authorities, such as anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International and independent vote-monitoring group Golos.

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