

U.S.-Russia Visa Deal Wins Approval in Duma

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The approval of a long-awaited visa simplification deal between Russia and the U.S. was hailed as a positive step. Above, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

The bureaucratic burden on Russians and Americans traveling to each others' countries is set to lighten next year, after the State Duma voted Friday for a less onerous visa regime between the two countries.

The approval of a long-awaited visa simplification deal between Russia and the U.S. was hailed as a positive step, coming amid hot-tempered exchanges between the two countries over the conflict in Syria and the Magnitsky affair.

The agreement will make three-year, multi-entry visas standard for business travelers and tourists, up from the current maximum visa period of two years. Waiting times for visas will be no more than 15 days.

The pact could enter into force in late 2012 or early 2013, Communist Deputy and vice chair of the foreign relations committee Leonid Kalashnikov told The Moscow Times.

The agreement will now be sent to the Federation Council, then to President Vladimir Putin for his signature, before publication in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, the government newspaper. The law comes into force 30 days after an exchange of notes between the two countries, a final diplomatic formality.

The U.S. Congress does not need to ratify the law.

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