

Some Republicans Support Obama on Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S. Representative Billy Long

First-term Republican U.S. representatives led by Billy Long are willing to back President Barack Obama's effort to establish normal trade ties with Russia, setting aside differences over health care and taxes.

"We stand ready to achieve this goal" on Russia, states the draft of a letter Long, a Missouri Republican, said he plans to send Obama this week. Republicans "invite you to work with us, shoulder to shoulder, at all levels in order to swiftly move the legislation."

Long has signatures from at least 59 Republicans elected in 2010, when the party took control of the House, he said in a phone interview.

U.S. businesses including Caterpillar, Boeing and General Electric are urging lawmakers to repeal Cold War- era trade restriction so they won't be at a disadvantage against overseas

competitors when Russia joins the World Trade Organization.

That could be as soon as next month. On Tuesday, the State Duma voted in favor of membership in the Geneva-based trade forum. The Federation Council is scheduled to vote July 18.

Without permanent normal trade relations, the United States will be shut out of the WTO's dispute-settlement board to resolve trade differences with Russia, and U.S. companies won't be guaranteed the lower tariff rates that Russia has agreed to adopt, according to the Coalition for U.S.-Russia Trade, a Washington-based industry group.

Lawmakers in both parties have said action to improve trade ties with Russia should be accompanied by measures imposing financial and travel limits on human rights violators.

The Senate Finance Committee plans to consider both Russia trade issues as soon as next week.

While the Magnitsky human rights bill has advanced in the House, a bill clearing the way to give Russia improved status hasn't been introduced.

Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp, a Michigan Republican, and the Obama administration are seeking a bill without the human rights punishment.

Obama needs to do more to rally support, Long said.

"I can't sell the Democrats," he said. "The president can."

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