The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. Senate Passes Combined Rights and Trade Bill

By Justin Lifflander

December 06, 2012



The Senate voted 92 — 4 to approve the bill that establishes permanent normal trade relations with Russia, according to the Senate website. Russia's Foreign Ministry called the passage "a performance in the theater of the absurd."

American business leaders rejoiced while Russian officials fumed at the expected news that the United States Senate had passed the combined human-rights-trade bill on Thursday.

The Senate voted 92 — 4 to approve the bill that establishes permanent normal trade relations with Russia, according to the Senate website. The bill ends a disused 1974 provision that tied trade relations with the former Soviet Union to the emigration of Jews, and allows the U.S. to take full advantage of Russia's recent accession to the World Trade Organization.

But the legislation also calls for a blacklist of Russian officials allegedly involved in the death in a Moscow prison of anti-corruption lawyer Sergei Magnitsky. Individuals on the list, as well as other human rights violators in Russia, will be denied visas to the United States

and have their assets there frozen.

"The decision of the U.S. Senate is a performance in the theater of the absurd. It seems that in Washington they have forgotten what year it is, and think the Cold War is not over," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement on its website.

Alexei Pushkov, the head of the State Duma's international affairs committee said that Moscow could pass a "corresponding law," Itar-Tass reported.

But the American business community was ecstatic, having pushed congress for months to move on the trade legislation, which also covers Moldova.

"The Senate's historic bipartisan vote today moves us closer to having our trade with Russia covered by the rules of the World Trade Organization," U.S. trade representative Ron Kirk said. "As a result, American businesses and workers will have better access to the growing Russian market on the same terms as their global competitors, and the United States will have WTO procedures available to help ensure that Russia abides by its commitments. We are eager for America's businesses and workers to begin to reap the benefits of applying the WTO rules and procedures to our bilateral trade."

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the same legislation by an overwhelming majority last month. The bill now heads to the White House, which has expressed strong support for the measure. President Barack Obama is expected to sign it this year.

Related articles:

- Senate Considering Magnitsky Bill on Wednesday
- Shuvalov Says Magnitsky Response Won't Affect Trade
- Why Obama Should Sign the Magnitsky Act

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/12/06/us-senate-passes-combined-rights-and-trade-bill-a19988