

State Duma Votes for Public Smoking Ban

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia took a step toward clamping down on the tobacco industry on Friday as a bill to ban smoking in public spaces and to restrict tobacco sales sailed through its first reading in parliament.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has said that 44 million Russians, nearly one in three, are hooked on smoking, and almost 400,000 die every year of smoking-related causes.

Under the draft legislation, tobacco advertising will be outlawed, and smoking in public places such as restaurants, bars and hotels will be phased out. The bill also bans kiosks and outlets in stations from selling cigarettes, much to the consternation of the kiosk owners, who say they could be put out of business.

Deputies in the State Duma, the country's lower house of parliament, voted overwhelmingly in favor of the bill at its first reading, with 429 votes in favor and two abstentions.

Deputy Health Minister Sergei Velmyaikin said in the Duma that the purpose of the bill was not to reduce the number of smokers, but to prevent that number from growing.

Foreign tobacco firms, including British American Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco, Japan Tobacco and Philip Morris, control more than 90 percent of Russian sales and have been lobbying to soften the proposed legislation.

Russia is the largest tobacco market after China. The cigarette market was estimated at be worth about \$22 billion in 2011 by Euromonitor International.

Lawmakers had initially thought that the legislation might come into force early next year, but following delays, the second reading is now not expected until spring 2013. If passed, the restrictions will be phased in and are expected to be fully in force by 2016.

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