

Muscovites Allowed to Impeach Mayor

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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City Hall approved in the final reading on Wednesday a bill that gives Muscovites the right to call for the mayor's impeachment in a referendum.

"An impeaching right is a form of direct democracy and one of the measures given to Russian citizens to control how the mayor carries out functions assigned by legislation," the bill says.

Procedures to conduct a referendum are sophisticated, however, and require at least 50 percent of Moscow's electorate to vote for impeachment.

According to the bill, impeachment is possible in two cases: if the mayor violates the law or consistently fails to carry out his functions without good reason. Both cases must be proved in a court of law after a complaint from political parties or at least 100 voters.

In a statement on City Hall's website, Tatyana Portnova, head of the city's commission on state-building and municipal government, described the bill as innovative and said that the new amendments democratized the impeachment process.

In a separate interview with Moskovskaya Pravda, however, she conceded that impeachment is an exceptional measure.

In order to conduct the voting, at least 25 percent of voters must sign a paper in support of the voting. According to the Moscow Election Commission, 7,289,000 voters are registered in Moscow, meaning 1,822,000 of them would have to provide their signatures for impeachment.

The legislation also stipulates that an impeachment voting initiative can only be announced at least a year after the mayor took his position. The new rules will apply only to the next mayor, to be chosen in elections scheduled for 2015.

In Moscow, the post of mayor ceased to be elective in 2006, after federal law called for mayors and governors to be appointed by the president. Direct elections were renewed in Moscow last summer.

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