

Duma Passes Anti-Piracy Bill in First Reading

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An anti-piracy bill was tentatively approved in its first reading by the State Duma on Friday despite an outcry from Russian Internet companies and advocates of online freedom.

The bill, dubbed by critics “the Russian SOPA” after a similar U.S. proposal, would allow copyright holders to ask the authorities to block websites that provide any allegedly pirated content. Whole websites could be blacklisted under the legislation, which appoints a single court in Moscow to handle all copyright-related complaints nationwide.

The bill, which required 226 votes for approval, was backed by 257 lawmakers in the lower house. The bill is unofficially endorsed by the Kremlin, according to undisclosed governmental sources earlier cited by the Russian media. It requires two more readings to clear the Duma.

Yandex, Russia’s biggest online search engine, has slammed the bill on its corporate blog,

saying the legislation is riddled with technical flaws that could allow the government to ban practically any website indefinitely.

The bill protects the interests of copyright holders at the expense of web users and the Internet industry, whose representatives were not consulted by the bill's authors, Yandex said. The legislation was co-penned by an actress, an opera singer and a film director, all of whom are federal lawmakers.

Prominent anti-censorship website Rublacklist.net compared the bill to the United States' SOPA (Stop Online Piracy Act), rigorous anti-piracy legislation that was introduced in the U.S. Congress in 2011 but mothballed after a wave of protests, including by the English Wikipedia.

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