

Contentious Science Reform Bill Passes in Second Reading

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The State Duma on Friday passed a bill to reform the Russian Academy of Sciences in the second of three readings, amid threats from the Communist Party that it would initiate a vote of no confidence in the government over the high-profile legislation.

A total of 334 of 450 deputies voted for the bill and one abstained at Friday's plenary session, the last before the summer recess.

A third reading of the bill has been postponed until fall, a move supported by Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin, who said the issue required "broad social discussion" to find a consensus, RIA Novosti reported.

The most contentious part of the government-proposed bill is a provision that would strip the academy of the right to manage its property, which some researchers say is motivated by certain officials' financial interests. The government says the reforms are intended to make

researchers spend more time on science and less time focused on their earnings.

Education and Science Minister Dmitry Livanov, one of the bill's most prominent supporters along with Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, said Friday that the legislation “at its core does not initiate a reform of research activity” and that “truly fundamental questions” regarding the organization and financing of scientific research in Russia would begin to be discussed soon.

The Communist Party's Duma faction did not attend Friday's plenary session, and it raised the possibility of holding a no-confidence vote in the government after the reform bill passed in a first reading on Wednesday. Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, whose party has played a leading role in recent efforts to oust Livanov from his post, said the reasons for the no-confidence vote would be made public on Monday.

Ninety-two deputies attached their names to the motion, surpassing the 90 signatures needed to raise a no-confidence vote, though the party hopes to generate further support for the vote among regional deputies, Gazeta.ru reported.

While the party could initiate such a vote at any time, it may choose to do so in the fall, when utility prices are set to rise, deputy faction leader Sergei Reshulsky said.

For a vote of no-confidence in the government to pass, it must be supported by 226 of the 450 lawmakers in the Duma.

Under the Constitution, if the Duma passes a no-confidence vote twice in three months, the president must fire the government or dissolve the Duma.

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