

Amendments to Protest Law Reduce Fines, Organizer Responsibility

By [The Moscow Times](#)

August 08, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

New amendments purport to fix constitutional issues with the 2012 law on public demonstrations, but legal experts say the measure can still be used to infringe on Russian citizens' freedom of assembly.

The amendments, drafted by the Justice Ministry and headed to the State Duma, were based on the results of a constitutional review of the law, Vedomosti reported.

The Constitutional Court, which conducted the review earlier this year, did not find any significant violations of civil rights in the law, but recommended minor changes to remove any inconsistencies with the Constitution.

In particular the court recommended eliminating community service as a punishment for non-violent violations, lowering the fine for violations during public rallies and giving judges the right to set fine amounts at various levels. It also said that punishing organizers

for any damage inflicted by protesters during a rally was incompatible with the legal principles of individual responsibility and violated the freedom of assembly.

The amendments adhere to the court's recommendations but still allows rally organizers and individual protestors to be prosecuted jointly when damages from an event are somehow connected to organizers' negligence.

The minimum fine for violations of the law will decrease from 10,000 rubles (\$300) to 2,000 rubles (\$60).

Vadim Solovyov, head of the Communist Party's legal service, said the new wording of the provision about organizers' responsibility during public demonstrations still violates the common principles of individual responsibility and that organizers may be punished simply for filing an application for a rally.

Lawyer Dmitry Agranovsky called the proposed amendments simply cosmetic because they do not alter the repressive purpose of the law, discouraging citizens from taking part in protests.

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