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New Petition Calls for Olympics to be Moved

By The Moscow Times

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The Equality For All organization in the U.S. has created a petition to relocate the 2014 Winter Olympics to Vancouver from Sochi to protest Russia's recently passed anti-gay propaganda law.

Internet celebrity and Star Trek star George Takei endorsed the petition Tuesday, sharing it with his 4.3 million Facebook followers, and the number of signatories subsequently jumped from 6,000 to over 75,000.

In his blog post endorsing the petition, Takei emphasized that the anti-gay propaganda law has "given license to hate groups . . . to act with violence and impunity," referring to wildly circulated videos of Russian neo-Nazis bullying and sometimes beating gay teens.

Takei added that the facilities in Vancouver would be suitable for the Olympic Games, as they were in "good condition," and that such a scenario would be the "easiest of possible

alternatives."

A similar petition with 300,000 signatures was delivered to the International Olympic Committee's headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland on Wednesday. It was signed by several former olympians and accompanied by a letter from openly gay British actor Stephen Fry.

The law that has sparked so much outrage has been dubbed "anti-gay," and it stipulates fines of between 4,000 rubles and one million rubles ($124 to $31,000) for promoting homosexuality among minors and was signed by President Vladimir Putin in late June. Critics say the vague wording of the law essentially bans all positive depictions of gay people and tacitly approves violence against the gay community.

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