

Entertainment Industry Leads Outcry Against Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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From Hollywood to Broadway, the entertainment industry is using its star power and financial muscle to raise a storm of protest over the anti-gay legislation in Russia that is battering the image of the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Actor-playwright Harvey Fierstein, British writer-actor Stephen Fry and "Star Trek" actor George Takei are among those who have publicly condemned the new law, fueling an uproar that is overshadowing preparations for the Feb. 7-23 Olympics.

With stars and activists using their high-profile platform to bring the issue to global attention, the gay rights crackdown in Russia has exploded into a hot-button controversy that is challenging Olympic leaders like no other since the protests over Tibet and human rights before the 2008 Games in Beijing.

President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron and former Olympic athletes

such as Greg Louganis have also denounced the law that prohibits the spread of "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" among minors.

The law, signed by President Vladimir Putin in June, imposes fines and up to 15 days in prison for violators. Hefty fines are levied for holding gay pride rallies. Foreigners can be deported.

Whether Putin is listening to the outcry is unclear, but the backlash has even triggered calls for a boycott of the games that he was instrumental in securing for Russia. Also, the souring relations between the U.S. and Russia over National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden, Syria, human rights and other issues has ratcheted up the tensions in the buildup to the Olympics. Obama canceled a planned summit meeting with Putin after Russia granted temporary asylum to Snowden.

Obama and Cameron have both ruled out a boycott because it would penalize the athletes who have trained for years to compete. The U.S.-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Games are widely viewed as failures.

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