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Traveling Lawmakers Could Miss Out on VIP Treatment

By The Moscow Times

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Lawmakers' use of VIP lounges, like the one in Sheremetyevo airport pictured above, is under review.

The Finance Ministry wants to bar senators and State Duma deputies from using swanky VIP lounges at airports and train stations at the state budget's expense, relegating them to slightly less cushy halls for official delegations.

In a letter sent to the Federation Council, Deputy Finance Minister Tatyana Nesterenko wrote that under Russian law, deputies and senators are only entitled to "the free use of halls for official delegations," not VIP lounges, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

The use of VIP lounges costs the state budget about 30 million rubles ($925,000) a year for senators, and another 70 million rubles for Duma deputies, the report said.

The Federation Council's protocol committee reviewed the letter on Oct. 4 and decided to form a task force together with their Duma colleagues to look into the matter. Senator Oleg

Panteleyev, who is to represent the Federation Council on the task force, said the group would find out how many VIP lounges and halls for official delegations there are around the country, and try to determine what the difference is between the two types of facility.

Although this study has not yet been completed, Panteleyev was able to say that the law may have to be updated, since it was adopted in the mid-90s.

"The law on the status [of senators and deputies] was adopted in 1994, when VIP lounges didn't exist yet, and there were only waiting halls for official delegations," Panteleyev said. "The law doesn't take VIP halls into account; perhaps the law needs to be amended."

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