

Deputies Propose Prison Terms for Mocking Anthem

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mocking the Russian anthem could turn from an off-color joke to a criminal offense if amendments submitted by the A Fair Russia party pass the State Duma, a news report said Friday.

There are three state symbols mentioned in the Constitution — the Russian flag, crest and anthem — but only the visual symbols are protected by the Criminal Code, the bill says.

Desecrating the flag or crest is punishable by up to a year in prison. Mocking the anthem, currently just an administrative offense, should be punished equally, said Oleg Mikheyev, one of the Duma deputies who authored the bill.

Countries such as Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine already have similar laws, Mikheyev said, Izvestia reported.

Mocking the anthem of any country is punishable by up to two years imprisonment in Ukraine, he said.

"Can we permit a situation when in Moscow it is possible to deride our national anthem all you want, but in Kiev you can't? I believe that we must finally protect our national symbols ourselves," Mikheyev said.

The deputy complained about satirical videos incorporating the anthem that are now circulating online and about a parody of the anthem written by prominent author Vladimir Voynovich.

Told of the proposal, Voynovich said that the state should have anticipated problems with the anthem earlier.

"The current text is so mediocre, it is such utter prattle, that it is a parody of itself. When this text was being approved, they ought to have realized in advance that these words would not inspire any kind of respect," Voynovich said.

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