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Ponomaryov Denies Ignoring Court Ruling Over Skolkovo Repayment

By The Moscow Times

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State Duma deputy Ilya Ponomaryov. **Evgeny Razumny**

State Duma deputy Ilya Ponomaryov denied reports that he will refuse to obey a court ruling obliging him to pay 2.7 million rubles ($82,000) to the Skolkovo Foundation for failing to deliver lectures he had been paid for.

Although Ponomaryov did tell Interfax that he would not pay the fine, this was only because he was awaiting the result of an upcoming appeal to the Supreme Court, Ponomaryov said.

"If the appeal happens and we lose it will be a different issue," he said.

He told Dozhd television Sunday that the media "sensation" around his remarks to Interfax earlier in the day was "completely hyped-up."

Interfax reported that Ponomaryov had responded "It isn't our method" when asked if he would return the funds.

An unidentified individual familiar with the situation had told Interfax that the court had already ruled in Skolkovo's favor and that Ponomaryov's property could be seized if he failed to pay off his debt.

Moscow's Gagarinsky District Court ordered Ponomaryov to pay the 2.7 million rubles in August, partially satisfying complaints by the Skolkovo innovation center, who said that the deputy had been paid $300,000 for 10 lectures but had only successfully delivered one.

The decision was upheld by a Moscow City Court in November on the same day that Ponomaryov announced plans to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Ponomaryov said that the money was paid to him to cover his "expenses" related to promoting Skolkovo, not for giving lectures.

He believes that the charges against him were part of a government attack on former Deputy Prime Minister Vladislav Surkov, who oversaw Skolkovo prior to his resignation in May.

"Actually the offensive was against the deputy prime minister, and I was used for illustrative purposes. As soon as the onslaught ended, the complaints against me immediately began to fall apart," the deputy said.

When asked to define his current role in the proceedings, Ponomaryov called himself "a witness."

"I think that the investigator understood the heart of the issue, and everything ended on that. No investigations are currently underway," he said.

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