

Putin Signs Law to Merge Russia's Two Highest Courts

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin has signed a law that will merge the country's two highest courts, a process that some observers say is aimed at strengthening presidential control over the judicial system.

The law, now available on a government website, will effectively abolish the Supreme Arbitration Court and pass its power to settle economic disputes to the Supreme Court over a six month period. The number of Supreme Court judges will increase from 25 to 170.

A 27-man panel that includes a representative of Putin will appoint the judges to the rebooted Supreme Court, which will be based in St. Petersburg, Interfax reported.

The amendment to the Constitution also means that Putin will be able to nominate the prosecutor general's deputies for approval by the Federation Council, Lenta.ru reported.

Previously, the prosecutor general nominated his deputies himself.

Critics of the law say that it will lead to the liquidation of the entire arbitration court system, widely held to be the only part of the legal system that works properly.

Putin proposed the merger at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June, citing the need to streamline judicial procedures. The bill passed through the [State Duma](#) in November and was approved by the Federation Council at the end of January.

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