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Russian Parliament's Upper House Trades Business Class for Economy, Takes Pay Cut

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Federation Council member Vadim Tyulpanov

Members of the Federation Council, Russia's upper house of parliament, have agreed to cut their salaries by 10 percent, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

The senators decided to reduce their salaries in order to economize state budget funds, Federation Council member Vadim Tyulpanov was cited as saying.

In addition, the senators intend to reduce their expenses by 10 percent on travel, including business trips, and are advised to travel economy class, rather than business class, whenever possible, Interfax reported.

They will also cut the number of committee meeting sessions in the regions from two or three meetings to one, which could save up to 200 million rubles ($3.2 million), Tyulpanov said.

The Federation Council has also resolved not to buy any new equipment this year. "This

mostly applies to office equipment. We came to the conclusion that we can manage with what we have," Tyulpanov was cited as saying.

The initiative is due to be formally approved Wednesday. "Then we will think of other possible ways to reduce our expenses," Tyulpanov said.

Last week, Sergei Naryshkin, chairman of the State Duma — the lower house of parliament — proposed reducing salaries and expenses by 10 percent. The initiative was approved by the government, the Federation Council and the Central Executive Committee.

Members of the presidential administration have also reportedly taken a 10-percent pay cut amid a proposal by Finance Minister Anton Siluanov to cut all government spending by 10 percent, with the exception of defense.

Russia's economy is forecast to shrink by at least three percent this year, weighed down by a precipitous dive in the price of oil, Russia's top export, coupled with ongoing Western sanctions.

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