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Russian State Company Bosses to Keep Salaries Secret as Anti-Corruption Decree Softened

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's most highly paid state company bosses will no longer have to endure the humiliation of making their salaries public in a surprise softening of a controversial anti-corruption decree.

The decree, signed by President Vladimir Putin in 2013 as part of a slate of anti-corruption measures, forced CEOs of state-owned firms to publicly declare their salaries.

The new ruling by the government states that bosses of companies with private shareholders do not qualify as public servants and therefore do not fall under the 2013 decree.

"Leaders of commercial organizations with state participation, if they are open joint-stock companies ... are not state employees," Natalya Timakova, press secretary to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, told news agency RBC this week.

On Tuesday Rosneft vice president Mikhail Leontyev hailed the decision, saying "we have nothing to hide."

The government's ruling reverses what had been a gradual tightening of enforcement of the 2013 decree. At the end of last year, the government ordered that the heads of Russia's largest companies, among them Gazprom chief Alexei Miller, Rosneft head Igor Sechin and Russian Railways chief Vladimir Yakunin, to announce their salaries on their corporate websites.

Yakunin, a friend of Putin, bitterly protested the law at the time, saying that it was "unreasonable interference in [his] personal life" before eventually caving in. Rosneft's Sechin, another longtime Putin ally, has also been reluctant to publish his income, famously suing the Forbes Russia magazine for estimating his salary at $50 million in 2012.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the presidential administration had not influenced the Prime Minister's office in the decision, news agency Interfax reported Tuesday.

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