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Dozens of Russian Lawmakers File Incomes Below Poverty Line

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

At least 68 members of local Russian legislatures have reportedly declared either no income whatsoever or income that puts the lawmakers below the national poverty line despite owning real estate and other property.

According to the latest official data, 19.3 million Russians earned an income below the poverty line in 2017, or 13.2 percent of the overall population. Russia raised the minimum wage to equal the minimum subsistence level at 11,163 rubles ($198) this year.

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Fourteen regional deputies declared zero income in 2017, the RBC business portal reported on Thursday, while 54 declared an income below the poverty line.

“[The declaration system] is drifting toward becoming a sham,” Transparency International deputy head Ilya Shumanov was cited by RBC as saying, explaining that legal loopholes allow lawmakers to withhold assets without technically breaking the law.

RBC found that deputies in the regions of Ingushetia, Kalmykia, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Altai and the Republic of Tyva earned the fewest, at 1 million rubles ($16,000) to 1.8 million rubles ($29,000) per year.

The highest earners were found in the Kamchatka, Magadan and Chelyabinsk regions, earned average annual wages of 121.3 million rubles, 85.8 million rubles and 76.5 million rubles respectively.

Five regions have not yet released their deputies’ declarations at the time of publication.

“It’s impossible to dismiss [the regional deputies], there is no institution for recalling deputies,” ex-Labor Minister Pavel Kyudkin was quoted as saying.

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