

Russia to Allow Remote Voting for Putin's Constitutional Amendments

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The vote was originally scheduled for April 22. **Mikhail Tereschenko / Moskva News Agency**

Russian lawmakers have [passed](#) a bill to allow Russians to vote by mail or online for President Vladimir Putin's constitutional amendments that would allow him to stay in power through 2036.

The coronavirus epidemic forced the president to indefinitely [postpone](#) the public vote, originally scheduled for April 22. The proposed changes to Russia's Constitution would allow Putin — who has been in office either as president or prime minister since 1999 — to serve further terms without a break.

Lawmakers in the lower-house State Duma swiftly passed the bill in three readings Wednesday, meaning it needs a single vote from the upper-house Federation Council before it lands on Putin's desk for signing into law.

The Central Elections Commission will also rule on whether remote voting is necessary.

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Several lawmakers have opposed the bill, saying there's no need to expedite the public vote.

"If we don't pass this bill, we need to face the fact that in September many citizens will not be able to go to the polling stations because they will be obligated to comply with social-distancing rules," the Mediazona news website [quoted](#) State Duma deputy Dmitry Vyatkin as saying.

Putin has [seen](#) his popularity fall to historic lows since he first introduced the package of amendments amid a sweeping government shake-up in January, with public discontent brewing over his handling of the economic fallout from the coronavirus.

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