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Russia Moves to Grant Ex-Presidents Lifetime Immunity From Prosecution

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Russians approved Putin's constitutional reforms in a vote this summer. **Kremlin.ru**

Russian lawmakers submitted legislation Thursday that would grant former presidents lifetime immunity from criminal prosecution under President Vladimir Putin's constitutional reforms, Interfax reported.

Under current laws, presidents cannot be held criminally or administratively liable for crimes committed while serving their terms. A parliamentary working group assessing Putin's constitutional reforms proposed earlier this year to extend presidential immunity beyond their terms of office.

"The bill secures immunity guarantees for ex-presidents beyond the terms of their presidential powers," Interfax quoted Senator Andrei Klishas, the group's co-chair, as telling reporters.

"This expands the timeframe of immunity guarantees for a president who stops exercising their powers," added Klishas, who chairs the upper-house Federation Council's Committee

on Constitutional Legislation and State Building.

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The newly proposed bill also grants both chambers of the Russian parliament the power to strip presidents of immunity by a two-thirds majority within three months if they are accused of high treason or other felonies.

The latest legislation comes a week after Putin submitted another bill under his constitutional reforms giving ex-presidents a lifetime seat in the senate, the Federation Council.

The Kremlin said during Thursday's press briefing that many other countries provide lifetime guarantees for their former presidents and that Russia's moves are not new in international law.

Both pieces of legislation are part of constitutional reforms, which Russians approved in a nationwide vote this summer, that pave the way for Putin to extend his rule until 2036 after his current term ends in 2024.

They need to pass both in chambers of parliament, which are held by pro-Putin political parties, a combined four times before Putin signs them into law.

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