

Russia Moves to Ban ‘Foreign Agents’ From Running for Political Office

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Russian lawmakers on Monday [passed](#) a bill that bans “foreign agents” from running for any political office in the country, the latest in a series of tightening restrictions against those whom the Kremlin accuses of working in the interests of Western governments.

Hundreds of cultural figures, journalists, businesspeople, as well as news outlets and organizations, have been branded “foreign agents” — which carries negative Soviet-era connotations — since Russia introduced the legislation in 2012. “Foreign agents” are subject to rigorous self-disclosure and auditing requirements.

Russia’s lower-house State Duma voted [unanimously](#) in favor of amendments banning “foreign agents” from standing in federal, regional and local elections, as well as representing candidates or being election observers.

The bill will now be sent to Russia’s upper-house Federation Council, after which it will need to be signed by President Vladimir Putin in order for it to become law.

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State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said that 10 “foreign agents” currently serving in political office in Russia have six months to “get rid of this status,” otherwise they could be removed from their posts.

“Either be citizens of your country [and] work in its interests, or you can’t represent residents in bodies of power,” Volodin said during deliberations.

The “foreign agents” election ban was first [proposed](#) after several individuals designated as “foreign agents” announced plans to run for Moscow’s City Duma later this year, according to independent media.

Journalist Ksenia Sobchak noted that the bill initially [made no mention](#) of the “foreign agent” ban when it was submitted to the Duma in December and only [appeared](#) ahead of Monday’s vote.

In March, Putin signed a law [banning](#) advertisers from working with “foreign agents” in a move that has curtailed the ability of some independent media outlets to raise funds.

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