The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Lawmakers Pass Local Government Reform Bill Designed to Further Strengthen Kremlin Control

March 05, 2025

Alexander Ovchinnikov / TASS

Russia's State Duma passed a bill Wednesday overhauling the country's constitutionally mandated two-tier system of local self-government, further consolidating the Kremlin's control six years after President Vladimir Putin proposed the reforms.

The bill, which has been amended over 1,000 times since its introduction in 2021, allows regional authorities to decide whether to abolish lower-tier urban and rural municipal governments, shifting toward a single-tier system.

One of the bill's co-authors said that more than half of Russia's regions, as well as four partially occupied Ukrainian regions, have already adopted or plan to adopt the new system.

The remaining regions — primarily ethnic republics and annexed Crimea — are expected to either retain the two-tier system or partially transition to the new model.

Related article: Russia's Local Government Reform Will Destroy a Rare Channel for Letting Off Steam

Some observers warn the changes could create long-term problems for the Kremlin, including public protests and depopulation in small towns, by weakening ties between local authorities and residents.

State Duma lawmakers passed the bill in its third and final reading with a 318-80 vote and one abstention.

Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin described the final version as a compromise with regional leaders.

Russia's Communist Party, which unanimously opposed the bill, accused the ruling United Russia party of further eroding local governance.

"You've already canceled nationwide mayoral elections, put all local officials under the control of governors and ensured every deputy belongs to United Russia," Communist lawmaker Mikhail Matveyev said, according to the regional 7x7 news outlet.

"Now you're flushing 150,000 municipal deputies — the very people the government relies on — down the toilet," Matveyev added.

The upper-house Federation Council is expected to vote on the bill on March 14. If signed into law by Putin, the reforms will take effect 90 days later.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/03/05/russian-lawmakers-pass-local-government-reform-bill-designed-to-further-strengthen-kremlin-control-a88261