

Belarusians Living in Russia Granted Right to Vote and Run in Local Elections

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People at the Belarusian Embassy in Moscow. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

President Vladimir Putin [signed](#) a law on Wednesday that allows Belarusian citizens permanently residing in Russia to vote in local elections and run for local office.

The law follows amendments signed in March to a 1998 agreement on mutual rights between the two countries. The updated agreement aims to further align the legal rights of Russian and Belarusian citizens living in each other's countries.

Putin submitted the ratified changes to Russian parliament earlier this month, and the bill was approved by the upper-house Federation Council last week.

The legislation mirrors existing laws in Belarus that allow Russian nationals to participate in local elections there.

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Putin previously said the move would help integrate Belarusians more fully into Russia's civic life, according to the state-run TASS news agency.

Belarusian officials, meanwhile, [say](#) they hope the agreement will eventually be extended to include voting rights at the regional level to "help form a common political space."

Russia and Belarus have formally pursued political integration since signing a Union State agreement in 1999, which envisions a shared currency, legal system and joint defense and foreign policy.

Analysts at the government-aligned Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies [said](#) the voting rights expansion in Russia will make a "significant contribution to the formation of the 'human face' of union integration."

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