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Vologda Governor Escalates Fight With Liquor Store Giant Krasnoe & Beloe

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Alexei Belkin / NEWS.ru / TASS

The national liquor store chain Krasnoe & Beloe is closing all of its stores in the northwestern Vologda region, the local governor claimed Monday, only for the company to deny the move hours later.

Governor Georgy Filimonov announced that Krasnoe & Beloe, one of Russia's largest alcohol retailers, is "leaving" the region after its license was allegedly terminated at the company's request. He framed the move as a win for his administration's new restrictions on alcohol sales.

"This is the direct result of Vologda's new regional law limiting alcohol sales," Filimonov wrote on Telegram.

Krasnoe & Beloe founder Sergei Studennikov told the RBC news outlet that the governor's claim was a "lie." While the company acknowledged losing its alcohol license, it denied plans to exit the region entirely.

Filimonov, however, doubled down: "Let them sell bread and groceries then. I'd advise them to change their storefront sign because they won't sell alcohol in the Vologda region. They have no license."

He also promised to help laid-off workers find new jobs through regional labor services and encouraged landlords of vacated shops to rebrand them as cafes or bakeries.

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Last week, Filimonov said Vologda region authorities temporarily banned the sale of alcohol at dozens of Krasnoe & Beloe stores, citing alleged safety violations. He claims more than half of the region's 610 liquor stores have shut down since January.

Alcohol sales in the region have been restricted since March, with stores permitted to sell alcohol only on weekdays between noon and 2 p.m. Filimonov has defended the policy as part of a broader campaign to combat alcohol-related deaths, accusing liquor retailers of engaging in "alcohol terrorism."

"We respect the rights of entrepreneurs, but we don't need 'dealers of death' in our region," he said Monday.

Filimonov, a political outsider appointed by President Vladimir Putin in 2023, has drawn controversy over a series of hardline proposals, including a call to ban abortions. More than 120 members of the ruling United Russia party, of which he is a member, called for his dismissal earlier this year.

The governor has also clashed with billionaire Alexei Mordashov, whose company Severstal has major interests in the region, over what he described as failures to meet investment targets in the local wood processing industry.

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