

Sverdlovsk Lawmaker Calls for Halloween Pumpkin Purge

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Dmitry Belitsky / Moskva News Agency

A lawmaker in the Sverdlovsk region is calling on young Russians to hurl pumpkins into a local river, framing the act as a sucker punch against Halloween and the creeping reach of Western culture.

Vyacheslav Vegner, a representative from the ruling United Russia party, [said](#) he planned to lobby fellow lawmakers to help fund a campaign that would reward pumpkin throwers with free theater tickets ahead of the Oct. 31 holiday.

“If our young people are running around with these pumpkins, why not offer them a simple alternative: toss the pumpkin into the Iset River,” Vegner told local media on Monday. “In return, we’ll give them a theater ticket.”

“This is a culture imported from the outside,” he added in an interview. “These spooky images, devils and pumpkins — none of this represents our culture. We have plenty of our own good, beautiful holidays that align with our cultural code.”

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Some environmental experts criticized the proposal, with a former official from the neighboring Chelyabinsk region saying large quantities of organic waste could trigger widespread decay, depleting oxygen levels and degrading the water quality in the Iset River.

“It would be much better to bring these pumpkins to a zoo or wild animal rescue centers,” [said](#) Vitaly Bezrukov, the Chelyabinsk region’s former environmental minister and current head of an environmental consultancy firm.

Russian politicians at the national level have echoed Vegner’s anti-Halloween sentiments in recent days, with State Duma lawmaker Vitaly Milonov [calling](#) the holiday “propaganda of everyday superstition and ignorant occultism.”

Instead, Milonov said Russia should promote its own traditional holidays like Maslenitsa and Orthodox Easter as forms of “soft power.”

Despite calls in Russia each year to ban Halloween or provide more “patriotic” alternatives, parties connected to the holiday and other themed events remain popular among young Russians in major cities, though it is still not widely celebrated across the country.

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