

Senate Looks to Revive Magnitsky Bill

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WASHINGTON — Human rights legislation named after a lawyer who died in a Russian jail is likely to be considered by a U.S. Senate committee this spring, panel chairman Senator John Kerry said Tuesday. ❑The Sergei Magnitsky Bill would require the United States to deny visas and freeze the assets of people with links to his detention and death, as well as to those who commit human rights violations against other whistle-blowers like him.

"I'd like to try to put it on a business meeting for when we return (from spring recess in mid-April), and we should aim to do it," Kerry said Tuesday at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting after the panel's ranking Republican, Richard Lugar, urged the committee to finally take up and vote on the legislation. ❑The 2009 death of the 37-year-old Magnitsky, who worked for equity fund Hermitage Capital and died after a year in Russian jails, spooked investors and tarnished Russia's image.

The Kremlin human rights council says he was probably beaten to death. Before his arrest, he had testified against Interior Ministry officials during a tax evasion case against Hermitage. ❑Senator Benjamin Cardin introduced the Magnitsky bill in May of last year. A companion bill by Representative James McGovern was introduced in the House of Representatives. ❑But the Obama administration did not embrace the legislation, and no action has been taken

in Congress.

U.S. envoy to Russia Michael McFaul recently noted that the United States had already imposed visa restrictions on some Russian officials believed to be involved in Magnitsky's death. This made the Magnitsky bill "redundant," McFaul said. ☒Cardin, who is also a member of the committee, said he was trying to work out differences with the Obama administration on the bill.

Cardin said the best opportunity for passing it would be in conjunction with legislation on trade relations with Russia that is expected to come before Congress in the coming months. ☒But trying to link the Magnitsky bill to the trade legislation could run into trouble from other Democrats.

Senator Max Baucus, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said Tuesday that he was inclined to oppose adding the Magnitsky bill to the trade legislation. ☒Baucus' office said he has expressed a willingness to work with Cardin and find the best path forward for human rights legislation.

Over 40 U.S. Republican senators said in a letter to U.S. President Barack Obama that they would oppose any attempt to limit U.S. missile defense capabilities.

The letter came as a response to a remark by Obama, who was caught telling Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on an open microphone that [he would have "more flexibility"](#) after his "last election" on the issue of a planned U.S.-led missile shield in Europe.

(RIA-Novosti)

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