

# Poll: Russians Against High Protest Fines, Want Dialogue

June 07, 2012



Yabloko leader Sergei Mitrokhin being detained Wednesday while demonstrating against the protest bill.  
**Anton Tushin**

A poll by the independent Levada Center shows that 38 percent of Russians are against the protest bill that President Vladimir Putin could sign as early as today, and two thirds think the leader should enter into dialogue with opposition forces.

The bill, which would to increase fines to up to 300,000 rubles (\$9,000) for individuals who violate rally rules, cleared the final parliamentary hurdles Wednesday, now needing only the president's signature to become law.

In a country where the average annual income is several hundred dollars less than the maximum fine, the bill has become a controversial topic.

Only 17 percent in the Levada poll approve of the penalties to be enacted in the bill, while 26 percent said fines were a good idea, but those proposed in the bill were too high, Vedomosti reported.

About 70 percent of Russians have heard about the May 6 opposition rally that ended with violence by both demonstrators and police, prompting the creation of the bill. Forty-six percent said riot police reacted too harshly, while 4 percent said police were "too soft."

The poll revealed that 67 percent think Putin should enter into a dialogue with opposition protesters, but 45 percent said they thought he would try to stamp out opposition protests, up from 32 percent in a January poll.

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