

Obama Grants Russia Permanent Normal Trade Relations

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama formally granted permanent normal trade relations to Russia on Thursday, following congressional action that cleared the way for removal of a Cold War-era vestige on trade but also raised tensions with Moscow.

"The Russian Federation has been found to be in full compliance with the freedom of emigration requirement" under the 1974 Jackson-Vanik amendment, Obama said in a proclamation.

That provision had tied favorable U.S. tariff rates to the rights of Jews in the Soviet Union to emigrate freely.

The House of Representatives and the Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation allowing Obama to grant permanent normal trade relations, or PNTR, to Russia to ensure that U.S. companies share the full benefits of Russia's recent accession to the World Trade

Organization.

But Congress tied the PNTR bill to legislation that punishes Russian human rights violators by barring them from visiting the United States and freezing any assets they have in U.S. banks.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday harshly criticized the human rights measure, named for Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian anti-corruption lawyer who died in 2009 in a Russian jail.

"This is very bad. This, of course, poisons our relationship," Putin said at his annual news conference.

Putin said he backed tit-for-tat legislation approved by the State Duma that prevents Americans from adopting Russian children and bars entry to U.S. citizens accused of abusing Russians' rights.

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