

Congressmen Want Gays Safe in Sochi

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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More than 80 members of Congress have called on US Secretary of State John Kerry to take steps to ensure the safety of gay American athletes, staff and spectators at the winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia next year, a US congressman said Monday.

"We urge the State Department to determine the appropriate course of action to assure the safety and well-being of LGBT and LGBT-supporting individuals involved in or attending the 2014 Sochi Olympics and Paralympics," the lawmakers said in a letter sent to Kerry last week.

The letter seeking assurances for the safety of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) people was authored by Representative Jerrold Nadler, and signed by 82 other members of Congress.

The letter spelled out specific points of concerns about the new Russian legislation, signed into law in June by Russian President Vladimir Putin, which bans providing information about homosexuality to minors, including:

- Penalties for those found to be publicly supportive of LGBT equality
- Punishment for violations including public acknowledgement of one's sexual orientation, displays of affection between same-sex partners, statements in support of LGBT rights, and the use of symbols such as rainbows which are commonly associated with the LGBT community
- Arrest and detention of foreign nationals for up to 15 days

Critics say the law is part of a broader crackdown on Russia's gay community, while proponents say it shields children from harmful influences.

The letter also referred to reports of hate crimes and violent attacks against members of the LGBT community in Russia, and a ban on LGBT pride parades.

"Russia's record of anti-LGBT legislation and persecution pose serious concerns for the safety of LGBT Sochi Olympic participants and spectators," it read.

"The United States must do everything we can to protect those Americans who are traveling to Russia for the Olympic and Paralympic Games this winter. Russia's anti-LGBT laws defy basic human rights that should be guaranteed to everyone at all times and in all places," said Nadler in a statement.

"These laws are completely contrary to the uniting spirit of the Olympics, which brings diverse nations together in a spirit of peaceful and friendly competition," he added.

The State Department did not respond to a request from RIA Novosti for comment on the letter.

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