

Deputies Propose Blocking Web Sites for Posting Inaccurate Financial Information

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The State Duma financial markets and information policy committees have drafted a bill that would allow authorities to block access to Internet sites that publish incorrect information about banks and public companies.

The bill, authored by the committees' co-chairs Natalya Burykina and Alexei Mitrofanov, proposes to block all sites containing inaccurate information about financial institutions, credit and insurance organizations and other companies that are required to publish their financial results, Vedomosti reported.

In practice, it means that all companies traded on stock exchanges will be protected by the new law, while some law enforcement agencies have proposed to extend its scope to all commercial establishments, Mitrofanov said.

Those guilty of distributing false information about such companies may face fines of up to 1

million rubles (\$30,000) as well as criminal charges carrying punishments of up to two years in prison.

The bill has been sent for evaluation to the government and the Supreme Court, following which a decision regarding its presentation at the Duma will be made, Burykina said.

The Central Bank has generally supported the bill, a source familiar with the situation said.

Giving regulators new authority for blocking sites may further curtail freedom of press and freedom of expression in Russia, the bill's critics say.

The law should punish those who generate inaccurate information, not those who distribute it, head of the presidential council on human rights Mikhail Fedotov said. Moreover, blocking sites makes no practical sense, he added, because once information appears on one source, it is immediately copied on many other sites and still remains available.

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