

New Anti-Gay Law Rejected by Russian Duma Committee

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The State Duma Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building has rejected a bill that would make it illegal to come out as gay in Russia, the Interfax news agency reported Monday.

Dmitry Vyatkin, the deputy chairman of the committee said that the draft bill was rejected "primarily due to the fact that from a formal legal perspective, the bill was illiterate," the RBC news agency reported.

The bill is due to be considered by the State Duma in a first reading on Jan.19.

The measure, initiated by Communist Party deputies Ivan Nikitchuk and Nikolai Arefyev, called for fines of up to to 5,000 rubles (\$63) for public expressions of "non-traditional sexual orientation," such as same-sex hugging, kissing and holding hands.

The lawmakers also proposed a prison sentence of up to 15 days for coming out as gay within educational, cultural or youth institutions.

The draft law drew criticism from the public, both in Russia and abroad. A petition on the online platform change.org against the new legislation gathered 41,900 signatures as of Monday.

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