

Russian law proposes removing gay parents' children

Proposal highlights Putin's hardline course on social issues as he seeks to boost support among conservative voters

Reuters in Moscow

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Vladimir Putin is taking a harder line on social issues. Photograph: Yuri Kadobnov/AFP/Getty Images

A member of Russian president [Vladimir Putin](#)'s ruling party tabled a draft law on Thursday to take children away from homosexual parents, adding to a series of measures that activists say are undermining [gay rights](#).

The draft law, which follows legislation banning gay "propaganda", would add homosexuality to a list of conditions including drug and child abuse that can lead to parents being stripped of custody over their children.

The proposal highlights the more hardline course on social issues that Putin has charted in his third presidential term as he seeks to boost support among conservative voters.

"In the case when a parent has sexual contact with people of their own gender, the damage that can be inflicted on the psyche of a child is enormous," Alexei Zhuravlyov, author of the draft, wrote in submitting it to the Russian parliament's lower house, the Duma. He said between 5% and 7% of people across [Russia](#) were of "non-traditional" sexual orientation and at least a third of those had children.

It was not clear if Zhuravlyov's proposal had a strong chance of becoming law, but it follows other legislation signed by Putin that rights activists and western governments say are discriminatory against homosexuals.

Homosexuality was decriminalised after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, but many Russians still view it as either an affliction that requires medical treatment or a crime deserving of prosecution.

Putin said this week that Russia's love for composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky, who was homosexual, was proof that the country appreciated its gay population.

But gay activists say they are being turned into scapegoats for problems including low birth rates and an HIV/Aids epidemic that is closely tied to drug use.

One new law prevents them from adopting children. Another on so-called gay "propaganda", which bans advocating non-traditional sexual relations around children, has caused an uproar in the west and triggered calls for a boycott of Russia's 2014 Winter Olympics in the Black Sea resort town of Sochi.

Putin has struck an increasingly conservative tone after protests against his 13-year rule, which have arisen mostly in Moscow and other larger cities in late 2011 and 2012, and rights activists accuse him of cracking down on dissent.



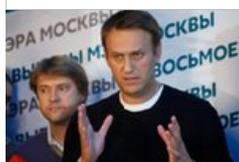
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