

Beat: News

Russian lawmaker proposes taking kids from gay parents

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USPA News - A Russian legislator proposed a bill Thursday that would allow courts to strip parents of their parental rights if one or both of them are found to have engaged in sexual acts with a person of the same sex, expanding the country's controversial anti-gay propaganda law. The draft bill was submitted by United Russia lawmaker Aleksey Zhuravlev, who is seeking to make changes to the Family Code which currently allows parents to be stripped of their parental rights in the event of alcoholism, drug abuse, and premeditated crimes against a child's life.

Zhuravlev's proposal would add "non-traditional sex" among a child's parents as a basis for denying custody. "If one of the child's parents indulges in sexual contact with persons of the same sex, the damage to the child's psyche is immense as a mother or father serves as an example for their offspring," he wrote, according to a translation by state-run TV station RT. The proposed amendment would not only apply to families broken up because one of the parents engaged in sex with a person of the same gender, but also to families where gay sex is openly practiced. A wife who suspects her husband is engaging in homosexual acts would be able to file a complaint with the courts, where they have "specialists trained in everything," Zhuravlev explained. But it remains to be seen how much support the bill will gather, and it was not immediately clear when the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, will debate the bill. Several lawmakers have already denounced the draft bill, which is certain to create even more international outrage if approved. "Communist Party parliamentarians are ready to discuss the bill if Zhuravlev agrees to personally monitor the non-traditional sexual practices in families and presents an official report on the results of such monitoring," Communist Party secretary Sergey Obukhov was quoted as saying by RT. Olga Batalina, deputy head of the State Duma Committee for Family and Children, was also skeptical of the proposal and suggested in comments to a local newspaper that Zhuravlev should spend more time thinking about how to keep children with their parents, instead of finding new ways to break up families. Last month, Russia's Interior Ministry said authorities will enforce the controversial anti-gay propaganda law during next year's Winter Olympics in Sochi. The ministry ensured athletes and guests will face no discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, but cautioned that the law in question applies to the entire Russian Federation. "The Ministry of Internal Affairs will, during the Olympic Games, as well as at any other time, operate under Russian law in general and also apply the law on the protection of children from promoting non-traditional sexual relationships," the ministry said at the time, explaining that the law only targets those who encourage children to enter into same-sex relationships and not gays in general. Reports that Russia may enforce the controversial law during the Winter Olympics had raised international concern in recent months, with some pro-LGBT groups, officials and celebrities calling for a boycott of the event. But others, such as British Prime Minister David Cameron and U.S. President Barack Obama, said a boycott would not be helpful. During an interview earlier this week, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized that his country has no laws against gays. "You kind of create an illusion among millions of spectators that we do have such laws, but we do not have such laws in Russia," he said. "Russia has adopted the law banning propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors, but these are completely different things."

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