

## Putin signs law on gambling zones in Russia

Contributed by Administrator  
Saturday, 30 December 2006

MOSCOW - The Russian president has signed a law setting up four gambling zones in the country, the Kremlin press service said Saturday.

Vladimir Putin proposed the new law after the Interior Ministry probed the operation of several gaming arcades in the capital allegedly linked to the Georgian mafia.

The law bans gaming facilities operating outside specified zones, which are to be located in the Altai Territory (southwest Siberia), Primorye (Far East), the Kaliningrad Region (Russia's exclave on the Baltic Sea), and on the border of the Rostov Region and the Krasnodar Territory in the south of the country.

It envisions the establishment of two types of zones where gambling will be permitted.

The new rules will come into effect on July 1, 2009.

The first type of zone is in residential areas. These can be established on land allocated for urban and rural development. The federal government will issue permits to gambling establishments in these areas, in coordination with local authorities.

Permits will be issued for five years, and will allow each organizer to set up one gambling facility per permit.

The second type consists of gambling zones established on parcels of land belonging to federal or municipal authorities, not allocated for urban or rural development. These plots will be leased to the owners of gambling businesses by the Russian government.

The draft also outlines requirements for the owners of gambling establishments. Owners must be Russian companies that have not been created by the government or local authorities, and whose net assets are not less than 600 million rubles (about \$22.4 million).

The bill also outlaws Internet-based gambling, and sets a minimum gambling age of 18 years.

Under the new law, gaming outlets or slot machines must not be located in apartment buildings, street kiosks, childcare centers, educational or healthcare institutions, railway terminals, airports, seaports, public transport, passenger lounges and waiting areas, sports facilities, state and government agencies, or religious organizations.

All gambling businesses that fail to meet the requirements proposed in the bill will be shut down after July 1, 2007.

Those establishments that meet the requirements will be allowed to operate without special permits until January 1, 2009, when the new law comes into effect.

In a bid to restrict gambling, Moscow has already removed 70% of gaming facilities from the city since the beginning of this year.

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