



Rand Paul Wants to Scrap Some U.S. Sanctions on Russia

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Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) is introducing an amendment that would lift U.S. sanctions on Russian lawmakers, *The Daily Beast* has learned.

The amendment, which will be introduced at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting on Wednesday, stipulates that existing U.S. sanctions on members of the Russian Federal Assembly will be lifted if Moscow agrees to lift its own sanctions on certain American members of Congress.

Paul's amendment is not likely to go anywhere on a foreign relations panel that is overwhelmingly skeptical of Russia and unwilling to lift sanctions in exchange for such a concession as the one Paul has outlined. At least one fellow senator—who herself is banned from traveling to Russia—is already objecting.

“Thanks, but no thanks. As a senator who has been sanctioned by the Kremlin, I see absolutely no need for this amendment and strongly believe that sanctions should continue to be enhanced for Russian leadership rather than weakened,” Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), who was denied a Russian visa last year, told *The Daily Beast*. “As the Kremlin continues to attack our institutions and democracy, this amendment would be a capitulation to Putin's aggression.”

Paul has made sanctions relief a cause of his since returning from Moscow last month. During that trip, which he took without any of his colleagues, Paul met with Russian officials and delivered a letter from President Donald Trump to Russian President Vladimir Putin, which the White House later said was written at Paul's request. In addition to meeting with former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev, Paul had an hour-long sit-down with Konstantin Kosachev, the chairman of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's legislature. During that meeting, according to Paul's office, the senator invited Kosachev, who himself is banned from entering the U.S., to send Russian lawmakers to the U.S. Capitol to meet with their American counterparts. Paul's amendment would be the first step toward allowing those Russians to travel to the U.S.

The Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, paid for Paul's trip.

The Kentucky senator has long been a proponent of President Donald Trump's strategy to establish a better working relationship with Russia and with Putin. He has criticized his

colleagues for their tougher stances on Russia, arguing that the U.S. should be promoting dialogue with Russia. And upon his return from Moscow, he openly questioned the purpose of the NATO alliance during a foreign relations committee hearing.

“Senator Rand Paul believes that dialogue and diplomacy are vitally important to global peace,” Sergio Gor, the senator’s deputy chief of staff, told The Daily Beast. “It is important to remember that the United States and Russia hold more than 90% of all nuclear weapons. While there is plenty we might disagree on, we won’t be able to resolve those difference if the two sides aren’t engaging in dialogue.”