



## Rand Paul wants Trump to lift US travel sanctions on some Russian lawmakers

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August 17, 2018

**Washington (CNN)** Republican Sen. Rand Paul said Thursday that he plans to ask President Donald Trump to lift sanctions on members of the Russian legislature so that they are able to travel to the United States for meetings with US officials.

The Kentucky senator, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, invited the Russian lawmakers to the US capital during a trip to Moscow in early August. He told Fox News on Thursday that members of both houses of the Russian Federal Assembly have "agreed to come to Washington in the fall for further meetings." An aide told CNN that it would be the first time in three years that members of the upper chamber of the Russian assembly would attend official meetings in Washington.

"The downside is the chairman of each of the committees is banned from coming to the United States because of sanctions," Paul said on Fox News. "So one of the things I'm going to ask the President -- I'm going to talk to the President this weekend -- is I'm going to say, 'why don't we take people off the list who are in the legislature?'"

The senator's spokesperson, Sergio Gor, would not comment on whether Paul would travel to New Jersey and meet -- or golf -- with Trump this weekend, or whether that discussion would occur by phone.

Two Russian lawmakers who Paul wants to travel to Washington for official meetings and are banned by the US are Leonid Slutsky and Konstantin Kosachev -- both of whom chair relevant committees, according to a source familiar.

Paul's request of Trump is also a bit broader. He wants all US lawmakers who are banned from traveling to Russia be allowed to travel there -- in exchange for allowing all Russian lawmakers to travel to the United States. He plans to have discussions on this topic with Trump, along with officials at State and Treasury, an aide said.

Should the travel restrictions be lifted on the Russian lawmakers, it is unclear when the meetings would take place or with whom they would meet. The White House did not immediately reply to a CNN request for about Paul's desire to lift the travel sanctions.

Paul was among the most vocal Republican lawmakers to support the US President after Trump's news conference with Putin. Trump was widely criticized by members of his own party for appearing to side with Putin over the US intelligence community's assessment that Russia interfered in the US presidential elections. Trump later said he misspoke, but Paul accused the President's critics of "Trump derangement syndrome."

"Any country that can spy does, and any country that can meddle in foreign elections does," Paul said on CNN's "The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer" last month. Paul continued, "All countries are doing this, but we've elevated this to a higher degree, and we've made this all about the sour grapes of Hillary Clinton losing the election, and it's all about partisan politics now. This is truly the Trump derangement syndrome that motivates all of this."

Paul's trip to Russia was planned prior to Trump's summit with Putin in Helsinki, Finland. The senator wanted to help facilitate dialogue between two countries whose relationship is rocky at best, Gor said. The trip was paid for by the libertarian think tank the Cato Institute. The topic of Russian interference in the US elections did come up at the meetings, but Paul's view is that the countries need to move on to areas where they can collaborate, an aide told CNN.