

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5116

To support Russia's democratic forces in exile and to codify sanctions imposed under certain Executive orders relating to the Russian Federation.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

Mr. CARDIN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To support Russia's democratic forces in exile and to codify sanctions imposed under certain Executive orders relating to the Russian Federation.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Belarus and Russia Investments in Democratic Govern-
6 ance during Exile Act” or the “BRIDGE Act”.

7 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
8 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Definitions.

Sec. 3. Findings.

Sec. 4. Sense of congress.
Sec. 5. Russians in Exile Affairs Unit.
Sec. 6. Supporting operations of independent media and civil society.
Sec. 7. Supporting USAGM Ukraine initiatives.
Sec. 8. Preventing wrongful detentions.
Sec. 9. Status of exiled Russian individuals in Europe.
Sec. 10. Diplomatic missions for consular services.
Sec. 11. Recognition of expired Russian Federation passports.
Sec. 12. Findings regarding Belarus.
Sec. 13. Status of exiled Belarusian individuals in Europe.
Sec. 14. Helping Belarusian individuals fleeing authoritarianism.
Sec. 15. Codification of certain sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation.

1 SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

2 In this Act:

3 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on Foreign Relations
4 of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs
5 of the House of Representatives.

6 (2) BELARUSIAN INDIVIDUAL IN EXILE.—The
7 term “Belarusian individual in exile” means a
8 Belarusian individual who has been unable to return
9 to Belarus because of a credible threat of persecu-
10 tion.

11 (3) CREDIBLE THREAT OF PERSECUTION.—The
12 term “credible threat of persecution” means a threat
13 that causes an individual to have a reasonable fear
14 of persecution as a result of the pro-democracy ac-
15 tivity of that individual.

1 (4) PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST.—The term
2 “pro-democracy activist” means an individual who
3 advocates for democratic reform.

4 (5) PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVITY.—The term
5 “pro-democracy activity” means activity taken to
6 promote democracy.

7 (6) RUSSIAN INDIVIDUAL IN EXILE.—The term
8 “Russian individual in exile” means a Russian indi-
9 vidual who has been unable to return to the Russian
10 Federation since February 24, 2022, because of a
11 credible threat of persecution.

12 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
13 the Secretary of State.

14 (8) USAID.—The term “USAID” means the
15 United States Agency for International Develop-
16 ment.

17 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

18 Congress finds the following:

19 (1) The United States has sought to support
20 democracy in the Russian Federation and with Rus-
21 sian individuals since 1991, including through pro-
22 gramming by USAID valued at \$3,000,000,000 be-
23 tween 1992 and 2012 to support democracy, eco-
24 nomic growth, health, women, and youth, including
25 programming in the Russian regions.

1 (2) In May 1997, the North Atlantic Treaty
2 Organization (referred to in this section as
3 “NATO”) and the Russian Federation signed the
4 NATO-Russia Founding Act, which established a
5 NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council to build
6 trust and communication between the two parties.

7 (3) Numerous nongovernmental organizations
8 in the United States, including the National Endow-
9 ment for Democracy, American Councils, and the In-
10 stitute of International Education have worked to
11 support Russian individuals and build ties between
12 the people of the United States and the Russian
13 Federation.

14 (4) In 2012, the Russian Federation expelled
15 the USAID, rejecting assistance meant to support
16 Russian individuals and harming the United States-
17 Russian Federation bilateral relationship.

18 (5) In May 2015, the Russian Federation en-
19 acted a law that permits Russian authorities to
20 extrajudicially shut down foreign and international
21 organizations operating in Russia by declaring them
22 to be “undesirable”. Russian authorities have since
23 labeled as undesirable numerous nongovernmental
24 organizations that have worked to strengthen the re-
25 lationship between the United States and the Rus-

1 sian Federation, including the National Endowment
2 for Democracy, American Councils, and the Institute
3 of International Education.

4 (6) The Russian Federation launched an illegal
5 and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and a
6 brutal, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which
7 caused NATO to suspend cooperation with the Rus-
8 sian Federation.

9 (7) Russian opposition leader, pro-democracy
10 activist, and anti-corruption campaigner Alexei
11 Navalny died in a Russian prison on February 16,
12 2024, the day after he appeared in court in a
13 healthy condition.

14 (8) Recently released Russian opposition figure
15 Vladimir Kara-Murza was unjustly imprisoned for
16 almost 2 ½ years for speaking out against the Rus-
17 sian war in Ukraine.

18 (9) According to the Memorial Human Rights
19 Center, hundreds of political prisoners remain in
20 Russian jails, including—

21 (A) Moscow municipal deputy Aleksei
22 Gorinov;

23 (B) pensioner Igor Baryshnikov;

24 (C) the mother of a human rights lawyer,
25 Zarema Musaeva; and

1 (D) journalist Maria Ponomarenko.

2 SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

3 It is the sense of Congress that—

13 SEC. 5. RUSSIANS IN EXILE AFFAIRS UNIT.

14 (a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 120 days
15 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
16 and the Administrator of USAID, in coordination with the
17 heads of other relevant agencies and departments, shall
18 submit a report to the appropriate congressional commit-
19 tees on a plan to establish a “Russians in Exile Affairs
20 Unit” (referred to in this subsection as the “Unit”).

21 (b) REQUIRED ELEMENTS.—The report required
22 under subsection (a) shall include—

23 (1) a plan for establishing and staffing the
24 Unit;

1 (2) a description of how the Department of
2 State and USAID will carry out the responsibilities
3 described in subsection (c);

4 (3) the estimated annual appropriations re-
5 quired to carry out such responsibilities;

6 (4) 3 potential locations in Europe at which the
7 headquarters of the Unit could be located;

8 (5) the advantages and disadvantages of estab-
9 lishing the Unit;

10 (6) an estimate of the number of Russian indi-
11 viduals in exile; and

12 (7) an assessment of Russian individuals in
13 exile, including—

14 (A) the reasons such individuals left the
15 Russian Federation, particularly in relation
16 to—

17 (i) the invasion of Ukraine in 2022;
18 and

19 (ii) increased political repression in
20 the Russian Federation;

21 (B) how such individuals have been en-
22 gaged since leaving the Russian Federation;
23 and

(C) how United States officials and intermediaries have communicated with such individuals since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

4 (c) DUTIES.—The primary duties of the Unit shall
5 be—

(1) to facilitate communication and engagement with pro-democracy activists who are Russian individuals in exile;

17 (5) to lead engagement with European and
18 Eurasian governments and private sector companies
19 to resolve issues impacting Russian individuals in
20 exile;

21 (6) to assess challenges and develop solutions to
22 problems faced by Russian individuals in exile, in-
23 cluding—

24 (A) access to bank accounts, credit cards,
25 and online payment platforms;

(B) issuance of travel documents, visas,
and work permits; and

(7) to evaluate the feasibility of developing a
“whitelist”—

20 (i) facilitating financial transactions;
21 (ii) monetizing media content pro-
22 duced by pro-democratic activists in the
23 Russian Federation; and

13 SEC. 6. SUPPORTING OPERATIONS OF INDEPENDENT
14 MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY.

15 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
16 gress that—

17 (1) state-sponsored Russian-language propa-
18 ganda and disinformation in Eastern Europe and
19 Central Asia sows discord and instrumentalizes Rus-
20 sian-speaking individuals to further disseminate
21 propaganda and disinformation;

(2) professional independent journalism informed by local voices can provide Russian-speaking individuals with reliable, accurate information that

1 will mitigate the harmful influence of Kremlin-
2 aligned propaganda and disinformation; and

3 (3) because there is no clear dividing line be-
4 tween Russian individuals residing inside the Rus-
5 sian Federation and Russian individuals in exile be-
6 cause they are part of the same community of pro-
7 democracy activists, assistance in the interest of
8 benefitting future democracy in the Russian Federa-
9 tion may be channeled through Russian pro-democ-
10 racy activists in exile, including support for the de-
11 velopment and expansion of pro-democracy grass-
12 roots initiatives and a civic infrastructure that is no
13 longer legally possible within the Russian Federa-
14 tion.

15 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
16 authorized to be appropriated \$40,000,000, for each of the
17 fiscal years 2025 through 2028 to USAID and the Bureau
18 for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the Depart-
19 ment of State to support independent media and civil soci-
20 ety in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia that are
21 providing reliable and fact-based news to Russian-speak-
22 ing populations and furthering the development of civic
23 activity within the country.

1 SEC. 7. SUPPORTING USAGM UKRAINE INITIATIVES.

2 There is authorized to be appropriated \$40,000,000
3 for each of the fiscal years 2025 through 2028 to the
4 United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) to con-
5 tinue and expand USAGM Ukraine related initiatives, in-
6 cluding those run through Radio Free Europe/Radio Lib-
7 erty, Technology Services and Innovation, Voice of Amer-
8 ica, Office of Policy and Research, the Middle East Broad-
9 casting Network, Radio Free Asia, and the Office of Cuba
10 Broadcasting.

11 SEC. 8. PREVENTING WRONGFUL DETENTIONS.

12 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
13 gress that—

14 (1) the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy
15 for Hostage Affairs, which was established by sec-
16 tion 303 of the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery
17 and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act (22 U.S.C.
18 1741a), conducts crucially important work to bring
19 home United States citizens who are wrongfully de-
20 tained, including successfully securing the release
21 from the Russian Federation of United States citi-
22 zens Trevor Reed, Brittney Griner, Paul Whelan,
23 Evan Gershkovich, and Alsu Kurmasheva;

24 (2) due to the coordinated efforts of the United
25 States, Germany, Slovenia, Norway, Poland, and
26 Türkiye, allied governments successfully secured the

1 release of American citizens, American nationals,
2 German citizens, and Russian dissidents, including
3 Vladimir Kara-Murza, Ilya Yashin, Andrei
4 Pivovarov, Oleg Orlov, Lilia Chanysheva, Ksenia
5 Fadeyeva, and Vadim Ostashev;

6 (3) the United States should continue to advo-
7 cate for the release of Russian political prisoners,
8 Belarusian political prisoners, and Ukrainian hos-
9 tages held in Russian and Belarusian jails, including
10 by working creatively with allies and partners to ex-
11 pedite their release;

12 (4) United States citizens should not travel to
13 the Russian Federation or other countries with a
14 history of wrongfully detaining United States citi-
15 zens in an attempt to gain leverage over the United
16 States; and

17 (5) the Russian Federation should meet the
18 basic needs and respect the human rights of all
19 United States citizens in its custody.

20 (b) DISCLOSURE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RISK
21 BY AIR TRANSPORTATION PASSENGERS.—

22 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 44907 of title 49,
23 United States Code, is amended by adding at the
24 end the following:

1 “(g) DISCLOSURE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RISK
2 OF WRONGFUL DETENTION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERA-
3 TION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law and
4 without regard to whether the Secretary of Transportation
5 conducts an assessment pursuant to subsection (a), takes
6 another action pursuant to this section, or provides other
7 notice pursuant to this section, each air carrier and for-
8 eign air carrier that provides passenger air transportation
9 between the United States and the Russian Federation,
10 and any online marketplace selling such passenger air
11 transportation, shall, when issuing a ticket to a passenger
12 for any travel itinerary that begins in the United States
13 and concludes in, has a connecting flight within, or passes
14 through the Russian Federation—

15 “(1) provide a warning about the history of the
16 Russian Federation wrongfully detaining United
17 States citizens and citizens of other countries; and

18 “(2) obtain an acknowledgment from each such
19 passenger that the passenger understands the risk of
20 possible wrongful detention for any travel itinerary
21 that concludes in, has a connecting flight within, or
22 passes through the Russian Federation.”.

23 (2) REPORT.—Section 44938(a) of title 49,
24 United States Code, is amended—

1 (A) in paragraph (9), by striking “and” at
2 the end;

3 (B) by redesignating paragraph (10) as
4 paragraph (11); and

5 (C) by inserting after paragraph (9) the
6 following:

7 “(10) an assessment of the activities carried
8 out under section 44907(g) of this title; and”.

9 (3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made
10 by paragraphs (1) and (2) shall take effect on the
11 date that is 60 days after the date of enactment of
12 this Act.

13 **SEC. 9. STATUS OF EXILED RUSSIAN INDIVIDUALS IN EU-
14 ROPE.**

15 It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should
16 urge the European Commission of the European Union
17 and other relevant European government agencies to pro-
18 vide legal documentation to enable international travel to
19 appropriately vetted Russian individuals in exile who face
20 a credible threat of persecution in the Russian Federation.

21 **SEC. 10. DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS FOR CONSULAR SERVICES.**

22 Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment
23 of this Act, the Secretary shall designate at least 3 addi-
24 tional diplomatic missions to provide consular services for
25 citizens of the Russian Federation in countries—

- 1 (1) that have direct flights from the Russian
2 Federation or in which land borders with the Rus-
3 sian Federation remain passable; or
4 (2) in which large numbers of citizens of the
5 Russian Federation who left the Russian Federation
6 on or after February 24, 2022 reside.

7 **SEC. 11. RECOGNITION OF EXPIRED RUSSIAN FEDERATION
8 PASSPORTS.**

9 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
10 ment of this Act, the Secretary, in coordination with the
11 Secretary of Homeland Security, shall develop a process
12 for recognizing expired Russian Federation passports as
13 valid for travel to and from the United States until the
14 Secretary certifies to the appropriate congressional com-
15 mittees and to the Commissioner for U.S. Customs and
16 Border Protection that it is safe for a Russian individual
17 in exile to return to the Russian Federation for document
18 renewal.

19 **SEC. 12. FINDINGS REGARDING BELARUS.**

20 Congress finds the following:

21 (1) Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya was the apparent
22 winner of the 2020 Belarusian presidential election,
23 in which the people of Belarus voted in record num-
24 bers, in an impressive display of their commitment
25 to democracy.

1 (2) Alyaksandr Lukashenka brutally cracked
2 down upon the thousands of peaceful protestors that
3 turned out in protest of election fraud by the
4 Lukashenka regime, arbitrarily detaining more than
5 35,000 individuals and subjecting many of these in-
6 dividuals to torture.

7 (3) The Lukashenka regime continues to un-
8 justly imprison more than 1,500 people, including
9 opposition leaders Viktar Babaryka, Siarhei
10 Tsikhanouski, Maria Kalesnikava, Radio Free Eu-
11 rope/Radio Liberty journalists Andrey Kuzneczyk
12 and Ihar Losik, and Ihar Losik's wife Darya Losik.

13 (4) The Lukashenka regime has supported and
14 facilitated the Russian Federation's illegal war
15 against Ukraine, including by allowing the Russian
16 Federation to fire ballistic missiles and launch offen-
17 sive strikes against Ukraine from the territory of
18 Belarus for the purpose of invading Ukraine and
19 murdering Ukrainian citizens.

20 (5) The Lukashenka regime has a policy of
21 forcing Belarusian pro-democracy activists to return
22 to Minsk for renewal of documents vital to maintain-
23 ing their residency status in a safe third country,
24 placing these Belarusians at risk of detention and
25 torture.

1 **SEC. 13. STATUS OF EXILED BELARUSIAN INDIVIDUALS IN**
2 **EUROPE.**

3 It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary should
4 urge the European Commission of the European Union
5 and other relevant European government agencies to pro-
6 vide legal documentation to enable international travel to
7 appropriately vetted Belarusian individuals in exile who
8 face a credible threat of persecution in Belarus.

9 **SEC. 14. HELPING BELARUSIAN INDIVIDUALS FLEEING**
10 **AUTHORITARIANISM.**

11 (a) **HOMELESS NATIONALITY DESIGNATION.**—Not
12 later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this
13 Act, the Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of
14 Homeland Security, shall designate citizens of Belarus as
15 a homeless nationality, in accordance with section 504.4–
16 8(E)(1) of volume 9 of the Foreign Affairs Manual (9
17 FAM 504.4–8(E)(1)), for the purpose of processing visas
18 for Belarusian citizens until the Secretary certifies to ap-
19 propriate congressional committees that the United States
20 has consular representation in Minsk.

21 (b) **EXTENDED DOCUMENTATION.**—Not later than
22 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
23 Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland
24 Security shall develop a process for recognizing expired
25 Belarusian passports as valid for travel to and from the
26 United States until the Secretary certifies to the appro-

1 prial congressional committees and to the Commissioner
2 for U.S. Customs and Border Protection that it is safe
3 for a Belarusian individual in exile to return to Belarus
4 for document renewal.

5 (c) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after enact-
6 ment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in
7 coordination with the Secretary, shall submit a report out-
8 lining—

9 (1) whether Belarus meets the criteria for a
10 designation of temporary protected status under sec-
11 tion 244 of the Immigration Act of 1990 (8 U.S.C.
12 1254a); and

13 (2) if Belarus does meet such criteria, whether
14 the Secretary of Homeland Security intends to make
15 such a designation.

16 **SEC. 15. CODIFICATION OF CERTAIN SANCTIONS WITH RE-**
17 **SPECT TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—Each person listed or designated
19 for the imposition of sanctions under an executive order
20 described in subsection (b) as of the date of the enactment
21 of this Act shall remain so designated, except as provided
22 in subsections (c) and (d).

23 (b) EXECUTIVE ORDERS SPECIFIED.—Executive or-
24 ders specified in this section are—

1 (1) Executive Order 13849 (22 U.S.C. 9521
2 note; relating to authorizing the implementation of
3 certain sanctions set forth in the Countering Amer-
4 ica's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (22 U.S.C.
5 9401 et seq.));

6 (2) Executive Order 13883 (22 U.S.C. 5605
7 note; relating to administration of proliferation sanc-
8 tions and amendment of Executive Order 12851 (22
9 U.S.C. 2797 note; relating to the administration of
10 proliferation sanctions, Middle East arms control,
11 and related congressional reporting responsibilities));

12 (3) Executive Order 14024 (50 U.S.C. 1701
13 note; relating to blocking property with respect to
14 specified harmful foreign activities of the Govern-
15 ment of the Russian Federation);

16 (4) Executive Order 14039 (22 U.S.C. 9526
17 note; relating to blocking property with respect to
18 certain Russian energy export pipelines);

19 (5) Executive Order 14065 (50 U.S.C. 1701
20 note; relating to blocking property of certain persons
21 and prohibiting certain transactions with respect to
22 continued Russian efforts to undermine the sov-
23 ereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine);

24 (6) Executive Order 14066 (50 U.S.C. 1701
25 note; relating to prohibiting certain imports and new

1 investments with respect to continued Russian Fed-
2 eration efforts to undermine the sovereignty and ter-
3 ritorial integrity of Ukraine);

4 (7) Executive Order 14068 (50 U.S.C. 1701
5 note; relating to prohibiting certain imports, exports,
6 and new investment with respect to continued Rus-
7 sian Federation aggression);

8 (8) Executive Order 14071 (50 U.S.C. 1701
9 note; relating to prohibiting new investment in and
10 certain services to the Russian Federation in re-
11 sponse to continued Russian Federation aggression);
12 and

13 (9) Executive Order 14114 (88 Fed. Reg.
14 89271; relating to taking additional steps with re-
15 spect to the Russian Federation's harmful activi-
16 ties).

17 (c) TERMINATION OF SANCTIONS.—The President
18 may terminate the application of sanctions under sub-
19 section (a) with respect to a person if the President cer-
20 tifies to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Sen-
21 ate, the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Af-
22 fairs of the Senate, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
23 the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Fi-
24 nancial Services of the House of Representatives that—

25 (1) such person—

1 (A) is not engaging in the activity that was
2 the basis for such sanctions; or

3 (B) has taken significant, verifiable steps
4 toward stopping the activity that was the basis
5 for such sanctions; and

6 (2) the President has received reliable assur-
7 ances that such person will not knowingly engage in
8 any activity subject to sanctions in the future.

9 (d) EXCEPTIONS.—

10 (1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

11 (A) AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY.—The
12 term “agricultural commodity” has the meaning
13 given such term in section 102 of the Agricul-
14 tural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5602).

15 (B) GOOD.—The term “good” means any
16 article, natural or manmade substance, mate-
17 rial, supply, or manufactured product, including
18 inspection and test equipment, and excluding
19 technical data.

20 (C) MEDICAL DEVICE.—The term “medical
21 device” has the meaning given the term “de-
22 vice” in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug,
23 and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321).

24 (D) MEDICINE.—The term “medicine” has
25 the meaning given the term “drug” in section

1 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic
2 Act (21 U.S.C. 321).

3 (2) EXCEPTION RELATING TO IMPORTATION OF
4 GOODS.—A requirement to block and prohibit all
5 transactions in all property and interests in property
6 referred to in subsection (b) shall not include the au-
7 thority or a requirement to impose sanctions on the
8 importation of goods.

9 (3) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH THE UNITED
10 NATIONS HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT AND LAW EN-
11 FORCEMENT ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions specified in
12 subsection (b) shall not apply with respect to the ad-
13 mission of an alien to the United States if admitting
14 or paroling the alien into the United States is nec-
15 essary—

16 (A) to permit the United States to comply
17 with the Agreement regarding the Head-
18 quarters of the United Nations, signed at Lake
19 Success June 26, 1947, and entered into force
20 November 21, 1947, between the United Na-
21 tions and the United States, or other applicable
22 international obligations of the United States;
23 or

24 (B) to carry out or assist authorized law
25 enforcement activity in the United States.

1 (4) EXCEPTION TO COMPLY WITH INTEL-
2 LIGENCE ACTIVITIES.—Sanctions specified in sub-
3 section (b) shall not apply to any activity subject to
4 the reporting requirements under title V of the Na-
5 tional Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3091 et seq.)
6 or any authorized intelligence activities of the United
7 States.

8 (5) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.—Sanctions
9 specified in subsection (b) shall not apply to—
10 (A) the conduct or facilitation of a trans-
11 action for the provision of agricultural commod-
12 ities, food, medicine, medical devices, humani-
13 tarian assistance, or for humanitarian purposes;
14 or
15 (B) transactions that are necessary for, or
16 related to, the activities described in subpara-
17 graph (A).

○