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Russia

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Alert: Families, Agencies Report Difficulties in Completing Russian Adoptions

On December 28, President Vladimir Putin signed into law Federal Law No. 272-FZ, which went into effect on January 1, 2013. The law bans the adoption of Russian children by U.S. citizens, bars adoption service providers from assisting U.S. citizens to adopt Russian children, and requires termination of the U.S. - Russia Adoption Agreement.

The United States continues to urge the Russian government to allow U.S. families already in the process of adopting a child from Russia to complete their adoptions so that these children may join permanent, loving families. The Department is aware of the recent public comments by the Kremlin spokesman and the Children's Rights Ombudsman that cases in which a court ruling exists will be permitted to move. We remain actively engaged with the Russian government and are seeking further clarity on what this means for pending adoptions and how the law will be implemented.

Since the law went into effect, however, the Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services have received reports from families and adoption agencies on difficulties encountered in Russia during the final stages of the adoption process. The difficulties include the postponement of court dates, delays in the issuance of adoption decrees, birth certificates, and Russian passports for adoptees, and confusion on the part of the Russian authorities over the release of children into the physical custody of adoptive parents. In addition, Russian authorities in some regions have told families and agencies that they are waiting to receive guidance on implementing the new law from the Ministry of Justice and Russian Supreme Court; officials in those regions have said they expect the Ministry of Justice and Supreme Court to issue instructions within 30 days.

The United States will continue to urge the Russian government to provide details on how it will implement the new law. But prior to traveling to Russia, we urge families with pending adoption cases to consider the above reports and, in cooperation with their adoption service providers, to attempt to confirm that Russian authorities will process their adoptions to conclusion and provide all required documents.

U.S. families in the process of adopting a child from Russia may continue to reach out to the Office of Children's Issues at RussiaAdoption@state.gov. The Office of Children's Issues will reach out directly to families as additional information becomes available. Further information regarding intercountry adoption from Russia will also be posted on www.adoption.state.gov.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Russia enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step>. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.