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## SENATE APPROVES RUSSIA SANCTIONS, LIMITING TRUMP'S OVERSIGHT

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In an overwhelming vote of 97-2, the U.S. Senate approved a new round of sanctions on Russia in response to the nations likely interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as well as its involvement in the Syrian civil war. The deal also prevents President Trump from loosening or rolling back restrictions on Russia without Congress approval, representing one of the most significant GOP-enforced checks on the president to date. Only two GOP senators, Utahs Mike Lee and Kentuckys Rand Paul, voted against the sanctions. Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen, a democrat, was absent for the vote.

The decision comes amid an ongoing investigation to determine whether members of the Trump administration colluded with Russian officials to influence the results of the election [ ] could signal a growing bipartisan concern over Trumps reported sympathy toward Russia. On Tuesday, ahead of the vote, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the Trump administration has been too eager [ ] too eager, in my mind [ ] put sanctions relief on the table. He added that the new sanctions will send a powerful, bipartisan statement that Russia and any other nation who might try to interfere with our elections will be punished.

Before Tuesday, the U.S. had already imposed sanctions on Russia for its annexation of Crimea and aggressive military action in Ukraine. The latest round of sanctions expands the list of blacklisted businesses and individuals in Russia, targeting anyone conducting malicious cyber activity on behalf of the Russian government. The sanctions also pertain to those supplying weapons to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is backed by Russia. The U.S. has frequently accused the Assad regime of carrying out human rights abuses, the latest of which reportedly involved cremating the remains of thousands of hanged prisoners. Finally, the sanctions target Russias mining, metal, shipping, and railway sectors, parts of its energy sector, and individuals who have conducted business with its intelligence or defense sectors.

While the new sanctions package still awaits approval from the House of Representatives and a signature from the president, Tuesdays sweeping bipartisan support suggests the deal is unlikely to be vetoed. In an effort to ensure the deals approval, senators also attached it as an amendment to a popular bill sanctioning Iran for its ballistic missile testing. Still, some Democrats are worried about how the White House will respond. One of the bills key negotiators, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, told reporters that people in the White House, we hear, are making calls in the House to try to stop [the bill], slow it, weaken it, dilute it.

On Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson argued the Trump administration should have more oversight over future sanctions. While Tillerson admitted that Russia must be held accountable for its meddling in U.S. elections, he added: We would ask for the flexibility to turn the

heat up when we need to, but also to ensure that we have the ability to maintain a constructive dialogue. The president, he said, should have the authority to adjust sanctions to meet the needs of what is always an evolving diplomatic situation.

But, for some of the deals most ardent supporters, diplomatic relations [ ] lack thereof [ ] the U.S. and Russia are less ambiguous. Vladimir Putins brazen attack on our democracy is a flagrant demonstration of his disdain and disrespect for our nation, said Arizona Senator John McCain shortly before the vote. This should not just outrage every American, but it should compel us to action. If Tuesdays vote is any indication, most senators agree that firm action is necessary, but question whether Trump or his advisors feel the same.

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