

Putin's new amendments revere God, ban same sex marriages



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during a meeting with members of a working group created to discuss constitutional amendments in Moscow on Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2020. The working group proposed holding a nationwide vote on the changes on April 22.

ALEXEI DRUZHININ, SPUTNIK/AP

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday submitted a slew of new proposed amendments to the country's Constitution that include a mention of God and describe marriage as a heterosexual union.

Putin first proposed amending the constitution in January's state-of-the-nation speech, saying it is necessary to broaden the powers of parliament and to bolster democracy. Kremlin foes have described the proposed changes as part of Putin's efforts to remain in charge after his current six-year term ends in 2024.

The Kremlin-controlled parliament quickly endorsed Putin's draft in the first of three required readings last month, and is set to give it the final approval next week, setting the stage for a nationwide vote on April 22.

Following up on proposals from a Kremlin working group that worked in parallel with lawmakers, Putin on Monday presented 24 pages of additional amendments for the second reading set for March 10.

Lawmakers say they include an article that points to a millennium-long Russian history and pledges homage to "ancestors who bequeathed to us their ideals and a belief in God."

The amendment follows a proposal by the Russian Orthodox Church to add a reference to God to the Constitution.

Another amendment describes marriage as a "union of a man and a woman," a wording in sync with Putin's long-stated opposition to same-sex marriages.

The new set of amendments doesn't offer any clue, however, what position Putin might take to continue calling the shots after his term ends. The 67-year-old Russian leader has been in power for more than 20 decades, making him the nation's longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.