



June 23, 2014

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**Support Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women and Passage of the International Violence Against
Women Act (S.2307)**

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Subcommittee on International Operations
and Organizations, Human Rights,
Democracy, and Global
Women's Issues
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rand Paul
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on International Operations
and Organizations, Human Rights,
Democracy, and Global
Women's Issues
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Paul:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, we thank you for the opportunity to submit our views regarding discrimination and violence against women globally and ask that this statement to be entered into the record of the Subcommittee hearing entitled "Combating Violence and Discrimination Against Women: A Global Call to Action" scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2014. Supporting the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and passage of the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA), S.2307, have long been top priorities of The Leadership Conference and our members. These are critically needed tools that the United States could utilize to address the persistent discrimination and horrific violence against women around the world. We urge you to take action to move forward with the ratification of CEDAW and the passage of IVAWA.

CEDAW, also known as the Women's Equality Treaty, offers countries a practical blueprint to achieve progress for women and girls by calling on each ratifying country to overcome discrimination. One of the key barriers addressed by CEDAW is gender-based violence. Many countries, including Afghanistan, South Korea and Mexico, among others, have looked to CEDAW as they reform their own laws and policies. The scourge of violence against women and girls, however, threatens the basic security of the United States and the world. This epidemic not only affects women, their families and communities, but it also undermines the stability and prosperity of whole societies. This, in turn, has a direct impact upon U.S. foreign policy, security interests, and democracy and peace-building efforts. Gender-based violence against women does not stop at U.S. borders. Rather, it affects the well-being of Americans by contributing to global instability.



CEDAW has been ratified by 187 countries. The United States is one of only seven countries in the world that has not ratified CEDAW, along with Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Palau, and Tonga. The United States' failure to ratify CEDAW undermines its leadership in the global fight to combat discrimination and violence against women, calls into question its credibility, and gives the appearance that the United States does not believe that reducing discrimination and violence against women should be a priority for governments around the world. CEDAW will give the United States a powerful new tool to persuade other countries to take all necessary steps to combat discrimination and violence against women around the world.

For these reasons, we urge you to support U.S. ratification of CEDAW and passage of IVAWA. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact June Zeitlin, Director of Human Rights Policy at (202) 263-2852. Thank you for your consideration of these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

Cc:

The Honorable Bob Menendez - *Chairman*
The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
The Honorable Chris Coons
The Honorable Dick Durbin
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Chris Murphy
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Ed Markey

The Honorable Bob Corker - *Ranking Member*
The Honorable Jim Risch
The Honorable Marco Rubio
The Honorable Ron Johnson
The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable John A. Barrasso