
Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): An Important Step for Civil and Human Rights

Background

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights treaty that seeks to prohibit discrimination against disabled people around the world. The CRPD was inspired by U.S. leadership in recognizing the rights of people with disabilities, particularly the adoption in 1990 of the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA). The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations has played an important role in gaining U.S. recognition and protection of the civil and human rights of persons with disabilities.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, American Indians/Alaskan Natives experience the highest rate of disability at 16.3%; Black or African American at 13.9%; White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) at 13.2%; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone at 8.8%; Hispanic or Latino (of any race) at 8.4%; and Asian alone at 6.4%. In addition, females experience a rate of disability at 12.4% and males at 11.9%. Furthermore, persons 65 years or older experience the highest rate of disability at 36.6%; persons 18 to 64 years at 10.2%; persons 5 to 17 years at 5.2%; and persons under 5 years at 0.8%.¹

Globally, the situation is even more severe. Eighty percent of people with disabilities live in developing countries with the majority living in rural areas where services for people with disabilities are often nonexistent or inadequate at best.² Ratification of the CRPD by the United States would enable the U.S. to continue its global leadership on human rights, specifically by eliminating discrimination and advancing protections and services for individuals with disabilities.

The Impact of Ratification

The CRPD seeks to ensure that countries across the globe provide people with disabilities the same rights as everyone else in order to live full, satisfying and productive lives. Ratification of the treaty is critical to promoting the ADA's and CRPD's shared principles of equality, nondiscrimination, inclusion in society, accessibility and respect for the inherent dignity of persons with disabilities.

Status

President Obama signed the CRPD in 2009. Like all treaties, it was subject to an extensive interagency review and forwarded to the Senate for ratification last year. In July 2012, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on CRPD and reported it favorably out of committee with a bipartisan vote. In the lame-duck session of Congress, the treaty secured 61 votes but failed to secure the two-thirds super majority the Constitution requires for ratification of a treaty.³ The CRPD's Senate supporters are committed to bringing the treaty up for a vote again this year.

Questions and requests for additional information should be directed to June Zeitlin of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights at zeitlin@civilrights.org.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/documents/2011-american-fact-finder-report-s1810.pdf>

² "Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities," United Nations Enable Development and Human Rights for All, n.p., n.d., Web.

³ "Archive of CRPD in 112th Congress," U.S. International Council on Disabilities, n.p., n.d., Web, December 2012.