

# THE DISABILITY TREATY

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international disability treaty that was inspired by U.S. leadership in recognizing the rights of people with disabilities. The CRPD is a vital framework for creating legislation and policies around the world that embrace the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was the model for the CRPD, which values of independence and respect and concept of reasonable accommodation are echoed throughout the treaty.

The United States signed the CRPD in 2009. On December 4, 2012 the United States Senate considered the ratification of the CRPD but fell 5 votes short of the super-majority vote required. The media coverage of the Senate's failure to ratify the disability treaty has been overwhelming and the CRPD's Senate leaders remain committed to bringing the disability treaty up in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## Why should the U.S. ratify the CRPD when we have the ADA?



ADA leader Justin Dart's hat in his honor at CRPD Senate hearing

### Ratification of the CRPD Exports U.S. Leadership

- A broad coalition of over **800 U.S. disability, civil rights, faith, business, and veteran organizations** support the U.S. ratification of the CRPD holding that American leadership in this arena is critical to the ultimate success of the treaty.
- Ratification is critical to maintaining our leadership role and to eliminating disability discrimination throughout the world and gives the U.S. legitimacy to export the model of the ADA to other countries.
- The absence of U.S. leadership in the CRPD and its Committee of experts matters. Ratification provides the U.S. an opportunity to play an important and expansive role in the development of disability rights around the world without having to change any U.S. laws or add additional costs to its budget.

### VSOs Strongly Support CRPD to Expand Opportunities for Veterans

- Major veteran service organizations, representing veterans of every generation, support ratification of the CRPD. These groups recognize that our **5.5 million** American veterans with disabilities will have greater opportunities to work, study, and travel abroad as countries implement the CRPD with leadership from the U.S.
- Military families support the CRPD as well. As one CRPD advocate described, having a disability prevented her husband from being able to serve overseas due to the lack of accessibility for her abroad. "Others had the opportunity to transfer overseas. Because of my disability, that was not an option."



VSO Press Conference on CRPD

### U.S. Business Supports Ratification of the CRPD to Benefit Business

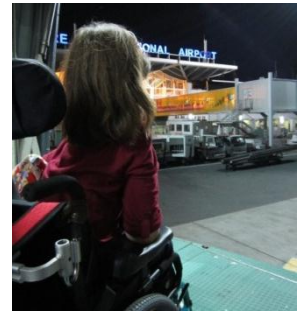
- The Chamber of Commerce, the U.S. Business Leadership Network, and the Information Technology Industry Council support U.S. ratification of the CRPD because it benefits business.
- Many accessible products are engineered, manufactured, or sold by U.S. corporations that can meet the new demands for the world's population of **1 billion** people with disabilities. As one business expressed at a Senate briefing by IBM, Adobe, and other key business leaders, "Investment follows opportunity. And to the extent we can make these technologies available on a worldwide basis, that's a bigger market and more opportunity for companies to deliver their products into the world."



Attendee uses U.S. innovation to participate in CRPD briefing by American business leaders

## CRPD Ratification Improves Global Accessibility

- 4 out of 10 American travelers are estimated to be people with disabilities and their companions yet they still face constant barriers and discrimination abroad.
- Students with disabilities represent less than 4% of students that choose to travel abroad.
- Not ratifying the disability treaty is hindering the United States' ability to provide expertise to many countries seeking to bring their standards of access for persons with disabilities up to those of the United States, which directly affects Americans with disabilities living, working, and traveling abroad.
- By ratifying the CRPD, the U.S. will offer decades of honed technical expertise to reduce barriers globally and ensure that Americans who travel and study abroad have the same access they enjoy here.



Dar es Salaam Airport

## CRPD Ratification Ensures Humane and Moral Treatment



- Without laws like the ADA abroad, millions of children and adults are housed in institutions without enrichment of a family life, community resources, or access to the most basic civil rights like a birth certificate or even a name. Until it ratifies the CRPD, the U.S. is a bystander on these critical matters.
- The reason U.S. persuasion, moral authority, and leadership can have such an impact on other countries through the CRPD is because of the stark discrimination that still exists in many parts of the world.
- U.S. leadership in fighting against discrimination against persons with disabilities such as infanticide and forced exclusion – and teaching about our example of an inclusive society – can make an immense difference.

Photos: Child and teenager with disabilities institutionalized abroad, Courtesy of Disability Rights International

## U.S Ratification of the CRPD Has Strong Bipartisan Support

- Republican leaders of disability legislation support ratification of the CRPD including former President George H.W. Bush, former Senator Bob Dole, former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh and former White House Counsel C. Boyden Gray.
- Senators McCain (R-AZ) and Barrasso (R-WY) led the treaty ratification effort with Senators Kerry (D-MA), Durbin (D-IL), and Harkin (D-IA) in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress under shared values of independence, respect, and dignity for all people with disabilities. This bipartisanship leadership for the CRPD continues in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, beginning in January 2013.



Advocates for CRPD rally on Capitol Hill for bipartisan support

## QUICK STATS ABOUT THE WORLD'S LARGEST MINORITY

- **57.8 million** Americans have one or more disabilities
- **5.5 million** American veterans are people with disabilities
- **1 billion** people with disabilities around the world
- **80%** of people with disabilities live in developing countries
- **1 in 4** of today's 20 year olds will be disabled before they retire
- **80%** of people with disabilities live in isolated rural areas

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