



Stronger Together

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## Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Position: The Epilepsy Foundation strongly supports the reintroduction and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.** The Epilepsy Foundation urges the Senate to reconsider the CRPD in order to remain a world leader in disability issues. In 2012 the treaty received 61 votes, just six shy of the necessary two-thirds majority needed for ratification. The CRPD would improve the rights of those with disabilities throughout the world, and your ratification of this treaty would help to maintain the United States position as a leader in disability rights.

**Background: The CRPD would reaffirm the rights of those living with disabilities in the United States and help establish these rights abroad.** The treaty is based off of the same American values that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is, and encourages those living with disabilities to live independent and productive lives. The treaty is a rare opportunity for America to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, maintain a global leadership role, and protect U.S. citizens and business interests abroad while incurring no costs for the American people.

The treaty has gone through an extensive review lasting almost three years that has determined that the CRPD is consistent with US legislation on most points, and where there is disagreement the United States can propose reservations, understandings, and a declaration that would ratify the CRPD, but not incur any additional obligations. With this process the United States would remain as a global leader in disability rights as our ratification would allow us to participate in the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to advise on further protections for disabled persons throughout the world.

As of July 2014 a total of 147 countries have ratified the treaty, many of them important allies, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and France, and the United States must ratify the treaty to maintain its commitment to human rights. Last Congress, a bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Senators Kerry (MA), McCain (AZ), Durbin (IL), Barrasso (WY), Harkin (IA), Udall (NM), Moran (KS) and Coons (DE) played a leadership role in moving the treaty to the Senate floor with the support of the disability community. Unfortunately, the treaty received affirmative votes from sixty-one Senators, just six votes short of the two-thirds majority required for ratification. This ended the second session of the 112th Congress without a global showing of unity with other nations on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

While the Epilepsy Foundation was greatly disheartened by the treaty's defeat, we are encouraged by the bipartisan support it received among the 61 Senators, including Senators John Kerry and John McCain. Disappointed, but not deterred, we are confident that the CRPD will be reintroduced during the 113th Congress.

**We urge Senators to consider voting in favor of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**