



<http://disabilitytreaty.org>

## **How to Meet Your Senator (or their staff) to Advocate for the CRPD**

### ***What is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?***

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international treaty—an agreement among nations that sign and ratify it. Countries that ratify the CRPD are agreeing to provide people with disabilities the same rights and opportunities that other people have. The CRPD is similar to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Like the ADA, the CRPD asks countries to stop discrimination against people with disabilities. Some people call the CRPD “the Disability Treaty”.

### ***Background on the CRPD***

The U.N. adopted the CRPD in December 2006. The U.S. signed it July 2009. The next step in the U.S. is for the Senate to ratify it (agree to it). More than 135+ countries have ratified it.

The U.S. Senate tried to ratify it in December 2012. That effort failed by 5 votes. Now the Senate is preparing to try again. More than 700 disability, veterans, faith, international development, human rights, and business organizations, including the U.S. International Council on Disabilities, are advocating for U.S. ratification of the CRPD. There are three steps to ratifying the CRPD in the U.S.:

- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee holds a hearing where people testify why they do or do not support U.S. ratification of the CRPD.
- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee develops a resolution calling for ratification and debates the resolution. The Committee may vote on amendments to the resolution. Then they vote on the whole resolution, as amended. If the resolution passes, it goes to the full Senate.
- The full Senate votes on the resolution. If it passes by at least 67 votes, the resolution goes to the President for his signature.
- More information about the CRPD at <http://disabilitytreaty.org> and at <http://usicd.org/index.cfm/crpd>.

### ***Why Meet with Your Senator?***

- Senators want to hear from their constituents. They want to know what people from their state think about important policy issues. They are waiting to hear YOUR opinion about the CRPD.
- You can advocate for the CRPD in many ways. You can call Senators, email them, tweet messages to them, leave messages on their Facebook pages, and more.
- All Senators have legislative staff and other assistants who review all messages sent to the Senator. They count how many messages they receive on any given topic. They count how many people support or oppose each issue.
- You also can schedule a meeting to share your opinion in person, at the Senator’s office.
- In-person meetings can be powerful. Your willingness to come to the office in person sends a strong message that this issue is very important to you.

## ***How to Schedule a Meeting with Your Senators (or with their Aides)***

- Every U.S. voter has the right to meet with their Senators, or with the Senators' legislative aides.
- During a meeting with a Senator or legislative aide, you can share your opinions on legislative issues. You can explain to them why you want the Senator to support U.S. ratification of the CRPD.
- These meetings are usually held at the Senator's office. Every Senator has two or more offices. One office is in Washington, DC, on Capitol Hill. The other office is in the Senator's home state. Some Senators have multiple offices in different parts of their home state. Many Senators spend part of Senate recess at one of their home offices meeting with constituents.
- Each state is represented by two Senators. You can find the two Senators for your state by visiting <http://senate.gov>. Each Senator will have his or her own website with contact information.
- Each Senator's office has a "scheduler". The scheduler is a person who arranges the Senator's schedule. If the Senator is not available, the scheduler can refer you to the most appropriate legislative aide.
- You can call or email your Senator's office and ask to communicate with the scheduler. Tell the scheduler that you want to schedule a meeting with the Senator. Or you can ask for a meeting with the Senator's legislative aide on foreign relations.
- If you will need a sign language interpreter for your meeting, ask the scheduler to arrange the interpreter. Some schedulers may not be familiar with policies or logistics for providing sign language interpreters. You can ask them to visit this web link for more details:  
[http://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/sign\\_language\\_interpreters.htm](http://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/sign_language_interpreters.htm)

## ***What to Say in Your Meeting***

- Introduce yourself. Say where you are from. Are you a member in an organization? Tell them which ones.
- Explain why you are there. Say you want to learn where the Senator stands on U.S. ratification of the CRPD.
  - If the Senator supports it, thank the Senator or staffer.
  - If not, ask what concerns the Senator has. Take notes.
- Be polite. Even if you disagree with the Senator or staffer, you want to be calm and positive. But also be clear about what you want. Say that you hope the Senator will consider voting to support the CRPD.
- Speak from your heart. Explain why U.S. ratification of the CRPD matters to you, personally.

## ***Preparing for Your Meeting***

- If you are well-informed about the CRPD, you may be able to counter any concerns a Senator or staffer may have. The following resources can help you learn more about the CRPD:
  - <http://disabilitytreaty.org> (CRPD Action Center and materials.)
  - <http://www.usicd.org/index.cfm/crpdupdates> (Action alerts and other CRPD news.)
  - <http://facebook.com/RatifyCRPD> (Facebook page for grassroots CRPD advocates)
  - <http://bit.ly/Resources4CRPD> (More CRPD links and resources)

## ***After your Meeting***

- Report back to the U.S. International Council on Disabilities (USICD) with a summary of what happened at your meeting. This can be done in the body of an email.
- USICD is interested in learning any detail you can provide about what concerns the Senator has about the CRPD. Your information can be very helpful for USICD's advocacy work.
- You can send your email to Eileen Magan at [emagan@usicd.org](mailto:emagan@usicd.org).