

September 20, 2019

Dear USICD Members, Friends & Colleagues,

**I am writing to you to urge you to take action.**

As you may know the United States International Council on Disabiltiies (USICD) wrote to the former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, twice in 2017 to propose to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee legislation making the U.S. Special Advisor for International Disability Rights in the Department of State a permanent entity with authorization for sufficient, staff, and funding to be effective. No acknowledgment or response was received. A similar letter was sent to Secretary Pompeo in 2018. This action was crucial for enabling the US State Department to more effectively respond to global disability rights issues around the world.

Instead, Secretary Tillerson chose to eliminate the position entirely and proposed relegating the current disability mission under the Office of the Secretary to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL). Secretary Pompeo also has taken no action. Copies of letters sent can be found on the USICD website: <http://usicd.org/call-to-special-advisor-at-the-dept-of-state/>

Since 2017, USICD has been meeting with members of Congress and held in January 2019 held a joint Hill briefing with USICD member, [International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The event was titled*,* ***Promoting American Interests through International Disability Rights: Recommendations for the New Congress***](http://ifes.org/). Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-NV) was the keynote speaker at the event, and she subsequently began speaking to her colleagues at the House Appropriations Committee for State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs asking them to support funding for an International Disability Rights Office at the Department of State.

On 20 June, Congresswomen Titus and co-sponsor Don Young (R-AK) introduced The Office of International Disability Rights Act, H.R. 3373. The Bill is now with the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. **We are urging you to call and write letters of support for H.R. 3373 to members of Congress, especially members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and members of the Bipartisan Disability Caucus. A sample letter and list of suggested Representatives to contact is enclosed.**

**We have to act and act today!**

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Morrissey, Ph.D.

President

The Honorable (Name of Member of Congress):

Address:

Dear Rep. :

We at the (Name of organization) urge you to support H.R. 3373, the Office of International Disability Rights Act. This much-needed legislation is a bi-partisan bill proposed by Representatives Dina Titus (D) from Nevada and Don Young (R) from Alaska.

The legislation is clear and direct. It formally creates an office that will advise on international disability rights in the State Department and for the U.S. government. It will ensure that any policies developed and adopted by the Department will reflect the commitment to integration and inclusion of people with disabilities in the full scope of Department activities. The bill also requires training for State Department personnel on disability rights, inclusion, and how to integrate both into programming, budgeting, and hiring. It represents the next step that we can take to ensure that the lofty goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other precedent-setting U.S. disability rights laws, are fully understood and implemented.

Put simply, the new office will ensure that when the United States builds a building abroad, it will be accessible; that when the U.S. sponsors a program abroad it will be held in an accessible venue; that all U.S.-sponsored programs will address the interests and needs of persons with disabilities.

There are over one billion people with disabilities across the globe, many of whom are denied schooling, health care, housing, employment, freedom of movement, personal choices, and decision-making power because of their disabilities. Maintaining this marginalized status of persons with disabilities drains families, public resources, and economies. This legislation will allow the U.S., the champion of civil and disability rights, to provide leadership and assistance as countries around the world take steps to implement the CRPD, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a UN treaty now ratified by 174 countries.

We urge you to support this important bill, to become a co-sponsor, and to vote for its passage. Those of us at the (name of organization) stand ready to assist you and your staff as you consider this bipartisan legislation.

Yours truly,

Name of Organization Officer

For phone numbers and addresses, please visit: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>

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| HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS | HOUSE BIPARTISAN DISABILITY CAUCUS |
| Eliot Engel, D- NY, Chairman  | Michael McCaul, R-TX, Ranking | [**Jim Langevin**](https://langevin.house.gov/)(D-RI) **Co-Chair** | [**Don Young**](https://donyoung.house.gov/)(R-AK) **Co-Chair** **& HR 3373 Co-Sponsor** |
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|  |  | Andy Kim, NJ | Dina Titus, NV **(HR 3373 sponsor)** |

As of 9/20/19 7:18PM – Sponsor: Dina Titus (D-NV);

Current Co-Sponsors: Rep. Don Young (R-AK); Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, D-TX; Rep. Ted Lieu, D-CA; Rep. David Cicilline, D-RI; Rep. James McGovern (D-MA); Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY)