

# SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INTERNATIONALLY



## DISABILITY RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS



Become a member of  
the US International  
Council on Disabilities  
(USICD) today!

Annual Membership  
Fees:

\$25/Individuals

\$300/Organizations

<http://usicd.org>



CONTACT INFORMATION TO LEARN  
MORE :

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### ASK MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO:

#### State Department:

- ! Establish a Permanent State Department Office of International Disability Rights
- ! Mandate an Ambassador-level Special Advisor on International Disability Rights
- ! Increase staff and provide appropriate funding

#### USAID:

- ! Appoint a Disability Coordinator
- ! Significantly increase funding for the USAID Disability Fund and Leahy War Victims Fund.
- ! Revise the 1997 Disability Policy and mandate all USAID programming be disability inclusive!
- ! AGREE that NO tax-payer's dollars will be spent in ANY WAY that segregates people with disabilities



# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

USICD wrote to 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 standing (e.g. ambassadorship for the director), 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://uscd.org>

In March 2019, Congresswoman Dina Titus (D-NV) sent a Dear Colleague letter to members of 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 as well as for USAID's Disability Fund.

## **Currently at the Department of State**

The International Disability Rights team at the State Department helps make democracy and human rights activities more inclusive of people with disabilities; encourages foreign governments to combat discrimination; promotes disability-inclusive practices and training for State Department staff; advises our Embassies to ensure disability NGOs and advocates included in their outreach; and ensures emergency planning and humanitarian aid are accessible to people with disabilities. The team also represents the U.S. in multilateral engagements on international disability issues and has been instrumental in gathering information and producing statistics on international disability rights in the State Department's annual country reports on human rights and human trafficking.

In order to be more effective, this office must have sufficient authority, staffing, and funding. Currently, the team relies on contributions from other units in the State Department and staff lent to them temporarily, which hinders their ability to integrate international disability rights policy throughout State Department activities. Additional funding would empower the team to better advise U.S. Embassies to ensure disability NGOs and advocates are included in their outreach, support governments and disabled peoples' organizations around the world to develop legislation modeled after the standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act, advocate for the implementation of disability legislation, and foster collaboration between U.S. multinational corporations and disability organizations to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

## **Currently at USAID**

USAID's Disability Fund supports rights-based programming for people with disabilities. Recent programming has included a youth with disabilities course in the Dominican Republic and research on barriers to political participation for Armenian women with disabilities.

While USAID set a Disability Policy in 1997, there is currently no mandate that all USAID programming be disability-inclusive. According to the National Council on Disability's 2017 report, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Disability 2017: Progress and Promise*, "in spite of disabilities link to poverty, and evidence of disproportionate marginalization and exclusion, people with disabilities remain "invisible" in the global development agenda. Unfortunately, despite the agency's reported commitment to improving disability inclusive development, its financial investments tell a different contradictory story." Increased funding in the Disability Fund will allow it to cover multiple topical areas, improve monitoring, and increase the geographic reach of programming. Read USICD's White Paper titled, *Inclusion of Disability in USAID Solicitations for Funding* (under the Resources section): <http://uscd.org>

*More than one billion people around the world have a disability; 80 percent live in developing countries and 60 percent are women. A majority of people with disabilities live in poverty, but U.S. government programs do not require inclusion of people with disabilities, the poorest of the poor. To advance U.S. foreign policy priorities, particularly democracy and human rights, inclusion and access for persons with disabilities must be prioritized.*



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**Please stop by and thank the following Representatives for Signing on to Congresswoman Dina Titus' letter to the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee:**

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Steven Horsford, D-NV (submitted a separate letter)



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Please note that when the Fiscal Year 2020 State Authorities Act goes to the Senate for approval then we need their support.

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