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The United States International Council on Disabilities mourns the death of its long-time friend Senator Bob Dole.

Senator Bob Dole was a man with unwavering spirit and sense of right and wrong. Helping the United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD) for over 10 years, after he retired from the Senate. He worked effortlessly to secure the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Bob was a man not tempted by nuance but offered clarity in moments of disagreement. He sought compromise based on principle in moments of division. And especially for us, he sought disability rights as an integral part of human rights. He gave unlimited hours of attention and support to ratification in 2012-2014 among his former Senate colleagues, both Republican and Democrat, urging them to see the wide range of benefits that would be derived if the US ratified the UN disability treaty.

He did not operate under illusions but in contexts with which he was very familiar. He used facts and projected consequences of both action and inaction to highlight the value of joining the rest of the world in ratification of the CRPD. He did this up until his last days. Some said to him “Now is not the time for a ratification effort.” His response was, “Time is all we have until we don’t have it.”

Just last week, Bob sent a letter to congratulate the recipients of the Dole-Harkin Award at USICD’s annual gala to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. We would like to share an excerpt from his letter:

“America has always seen its best days when its citizens work together towards a common goal. And the disability rights movement is no exception. This is—and always should remain—a unifying, bipartisan cause.

During my lifetime, I have seen tremendous change for the good in the lives of the disabled. I am confident this momentum will continue, bringing new opportunities and greater accessibility to countless individuals all over the world...God Bless America, Bob Dole.”

Our thoughts and prayers are with Bob Dole’s family. May they have many memories that bring them comfort in this very sad time for all of us.

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