

Why CEDAW Has Not Been Ratified by the United States ... Yet

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Agenda

- Why am I here?
- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
 - What is it?
 - History in the United States
 - Why is it important to ratify in the US?
 - Common misconceptions

Why I am Here

- My mother
- Majoring in a field dominated by men
- Help younger generations of women to be empowered
- Be an example
- To learn

CEDAW – What is it?

- Most complete international agreement on basic human rights for women



CEDAW – What is it?

- Seeks to:
 - Stop violence against women
 - Promote education for girls
 - Improve health care
 - Ensure legal rights for women
 - Improve women's lives at work



History

- CEDAW drafted as a treaty
 - United States played a large role in the drafting process
- December 18, 1979
 - United Nations approval
- July 17, 1980
 - Signed by President Jimmy Carter
- 1991 - Iowa and Massachusetts are first states to pass resolutions in support of the treaty
- 1999 – North Carolina House of Representatives passes a resolution in support of CEDAW
- San Francisco has changed its laws in accordance with the ordinance to CEDAW



History

- President Bill Clinton unsuccessfully requests ratification by Senate
- 1995 - At Beijing World Conference on Women, the United States commits to ratification by 2000
- Senators call for new hearings on CEDAW but are stopped by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for many years



History



- 2002 – Previous presidential administration (George W. Bush) declared CEDAW “generally desirable and [it] should be ratified”
- July 2002 – Senate FRC approves the treaty 12-7 with chair, Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE), but died on senate floor

History

■ Current Situation

- President Barack Obama moves to strengthen White House support for women and names the treaty as one of three treaties for top ratification priority
- Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) plans to hold Senate FRC Subcommittee hearings on ratification
- Secretary of State Department
 - “We are committed to U.S. ratification of the Convention and look forward to joining the countries that have adopted it as a central part of their efforts to ensure that human rights are enjoyed fully and equally by all people.”

History

- Ratified by 186 nations
- Only 7 nations have not ratified the treaty:
 - Iran, Nauru, Palau, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga and the United States
- US is the only industrialized democracy



Why is it Important to Ratify in the US?

- At a country level, the persistence of discriminatory laws, policies, patriarchal customs, traditions and attitudes in various countries are still blocking women from enjoying their rights
- Though the US has many laws in place to protect women, they are still discriminated against
- The US lacks the authority to talk about women internationally
- US needs to be accountable for the improvement of the lives of women
- If the US had ratified CEDAW, fifteen years after Beijing we would have implemented the Beijing Platform for Action better
- Though many other countries believe that the status of women in the US is very advanced, we still have a long way to go for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
 - Domestic Violence
 - Women and Economy
 - Women and Health
 - Women and Decision Making
 - Ratification of CEDAW which is the Constitution of Women's Rights

Common Misconceptions

- Abortion
- Prohibition of Mother's Day
- Have a legal obligation to follow every article
- US already follows the treaty without ratification



What Can We Do?

- Grassroots organizations
- Inform US senators
- Educate our local communities
- Educate and form coalitions with other organizations for women
- Collect signed petitions to influence lawmakers

WomenNC - About

- WomenNC was formed to seek CEDAW ratification, to educate and inform North Carolinians on women related International issues and to empower women in becoming more active in societal issues which directly impact their health, welfare, and quality of life.

WomenNC – About

■ Goals

- 1. To sponsor college students to attend and give a presentation at the United Nations' annual CSW meetings in their New York headquarters
- 2. To prevail upon current North Carolina Senators (Kay Hagan and Richard Burr) to fully support the ratification of CEDAW
- 3. Educate and inform North Carolinians on women related international issues

WomenNC - Work with CEDAW



- Meetings with both Senators
 - Kay Hagan
 - Richard Burr
- Education
 - Petition
 - Peace Booth
 - Online (www.womennc.org)
 - CSW Student Fellowship
 - Three Student Panels at CSW
 - Preview presentation to our local community



UN Student Preview Registration Table



UN Student Preview Reception



The UN Student Preview had high attendance. Members of the community and elected officials attended the event.



Dr. Dan Figgins, the CSW Fellowship Recipients, and Prof. Joanne Hershfield who is the chair of the Women's Studies Department at UNC Chapel Hill and a WomenNC board member.



Schree Greene, Anita Sivakumar, Dr. Dan Figgins, Lindy Brown (Wake County Commissioner), Beth Dehghan (Founder of WomenNC), and Prof. Joanne Hershfield