



## Senate Should Ratify Disabilities Treaty Immediately

By Mel Boynton

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has for a second time taken up the United Nations Disability Treaty in support of equality for all people with disabilities around the world. This treaty is consistent with our nation's interests and values, and the Senate should ratify it immediately. I am grateful that our Senators, Diane Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, support the Treaty.

The Disability Treaty is an international framework for countries to embrace the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities. Non-controversial as that may be, the treaty actually fell victim to political posturing in the Senate last December –failing to be ratified by five votes.

The Treaty has the support of more than 700 groups advocating for people with disabilities and 20 veterans' groups. It's embarrassing that the U.S. has failed to join 126 other countries in ratifying it. In fact, the UN Disability Treaty was modeled after The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which values independence and respect for disabled people by promoting reasonable accommodations –things as basic as wheelchair ramps.

This treaty would not in any way impede U.S. sovereignty or change America's domestic laws. Further, as with all treaties, it would hand no power to the United Nations or any other international body to change America's laws. Rather, it would advance America's high standards for the treatment of people with disabilities to other nations around the globe.

For the nearly 58 million Americans—including more than 5 million veterans—who have one or more disabilities, global accessibility standards will help improve safety in travel, study and work abroad. That's to say nothing of the impact for 1 billion people who live with a disability worldwide.

The time is now for the Senate to pass this common sense global framework on behalf of equality for all people.

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