

WOMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of discrimination Against Women is an international treaty that commits governments to removing barriers to women's equality. Adopted by the United Nations in 1979, this "Treaty for the Rights of Women", is also known as "CEDAW" and addresses the areas of legal rights, education, employment, health care, violence against women, politics and finance. CEDAW does not impose any laws on governments that ratify the treaty. It does require governments to examine their policies and practices in relation to women and girls and to report periodically to an international committee on the status of CEDAW implementation.

At the present time 185 countries out of 193 have ratified CEDAW. While only a few of these countries have incorporated CEDAW into domestic policy it is being used by women around the world to advocate for legislation that protects and improves their basic human rights. Some countries have used CEDAW to pass new laws to stop sexual trafficking; in others literacy rates increased after CEDAW improved access to education of women and children.

The US remains the only industrialized country that has not ratified CEDAW. It was active in drafting CEDAW in 1979 and President Carter signed the treaty in 1980. For the treaty to be ratified, the Senate Foreign Relations committee must approve it, two-thirds of the Senate must vote to ratify it and the current president must sign it. It was stalled for many years by Chairman Senator Jesse Helms but under the current chair, Senator Joseph Biden the committee passed it. However, the Bush Administration has delayed any further action by ordering an additional review by the Justice Department.

If the US is to be seen as a global leader in human rights it is essential that it be passed. The United States failure to ratify this treaty places it in the company of such countries as Iran, Sudan and Somalia.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND FALACIES: The Treaty encourages abortion by promoting access to "family planning"; it will interfere in the proper role of parents in child-rearing; it is unnecessary because it defines "discrimination" too broadly and would lead to unwise laws and frivolous lawsuits; it will destroy traditional families by redefining "family" and the roles of women and men.

Who supports CEDAW in the US? Over 190 religious, civic and community organization **including** the League of Women Voters. Another reason to write to your congresswomen and men.

References:

www.womenstreaty.org/facts

www.un.org/womenwatch

Added Note: To write to your Congressmembers please find contact numbers at:
http://www.lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org/files/webtry_for_2007.pdf