

CCD International Task Force Annual Report 2012

2012 Activities

The CCD International Task Force spent the early part of 2012 preparing for the transmittal of the treaty package for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to the U.S. Senate. These activities included preparing a media release, brainstorming witnesses for Committee hearings, drafting strategy for Hill outreach following transmittal, and involving the broader CCD community in education and advocacy efforts.

On May 17, 2012 the Administration transferred the treaty package to the Senate. The CCD International Task Force immediately issued a press release urging the Senate to ratify the treaty. CCD Task Force members were among the first to analyze the contents of the treaty package including the reservations, understandings, and declarations (“RUDs”). The Task Force confirmed that the RUDs met their expectations from an oral briefing given by the Administration to the disability community in 2011.

The task force reissued a new sign-on letter in support of ratification and actively pressed for a hearing on the treaty in July. A CCD letter with 63 sign-on organizations supporting the treaty was submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and entered into the official record of the July 12th hearing. Task force members were also active participants during weekly coalition meetings lead by USICD and DREDF to coordinate Hill and grassroots outreach efforts for the treaty held throughout late summer and fall until the vote on the treaty on December 4th.

The International Task Force partnered with the Education Task Force to address opposition by the Home School Legal Defense Association who asserted that the CRPD would harm their parental rights. The Education Task Force created a letter specifically addressing the concerns of the homeschooler group, citing that no changes in education laws for children with disabilities would be required, and citing the RUD package’s protections of existing U.S. laws.

Following a successful vote of the CRPD out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the International Task Force focused on specific states where it could provide education and support for the CRPD effort. The task force created state-specific sign-on letters for CCD organization’s in-state affiliates. A number of these state letters had tremendous success with up to 60 in-state organizational sign-ons. Community leaders within the state delivered copies of the letters to local Senate offices and task force co-chairs delivered them to the Washington, DC offices. CCD co-chairs also arranged meetings with Senate staff to convey the importance of the treaty to CCD’s membership.

This September, CCD co-chairs Deborah Ziegler and David Hutt attended the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD in at the United Nations in New York City where several CCD members hosted side sessions.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The 2012 focus of the task force was obtaining U.S. ratification of the CRPD. The treaty came to a vote on the Senate floor on December 4th, but did not achieve the necessary super-majority vote for ratification and failed by a vote of 61 - 38. The outpouring of media expressing public dismay over the vote caused Senate leaders to suggest they will take up the treaty again in early 2013. The task force co-

chairs have discussed reasons for the defeat of the treaty and developing a new strategy heading into 2013. The task force will continue an active role coordinating and leading CCD activity towards ratification of the CRPD. Other policy priorities will include:

- Ensure equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the U.S. foreign service.
- Inclusion of disability rights in the United States foreign programs, including physical and programmatic accessibility to comply with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- Creation of fair policies which enable individuals with disabilities to travel to and from the United States.
- Obtain United States support for a treaty on exceptions to International copyright law to allow access for publications in alternative format for blind and visually impaired persons.
- Plan for areas of concentration following CRPD ratification.

CO-CHAIRS FOR 2013

David T. Hutt, National Disability Rights Network

Deborah Ziegler, Council for Exceptional Children

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