



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

## **International Task Force Annual Report for 2014**

### **2014 ACTIVITIES**

This year, the CCD International Task Force has worked on a variety of issues including passage of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), collaborating with the State Department on international disability rights, and driving forward equal access for immigrants with disabilities in all U.S. policies and procedures. Individual member organizations have also worked on issues related to USAID and trainings on civil rights of persons with disabilities globally.

#### **DISABILITY TREATY**

The Task Force committed to focusing on the passage of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the 2014 session. Though a series of positive hearings were held in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, passage of the CRPD in 2014 was immediately complicated by Ranking Member Corker's announcement in December 2013 that he would not support the treaty.

In response to this announcement, the Task Force worked with CCD leadership to issue a response in January 2014 expressing disappointment in the Ranking Member's decision and clarifying once more the unfortunate myths about the dangers of the treaty. International Task Force Co-chair David Hutt stated in the release, "For years, if not decades, the United States has been part of a number of human rights treaties without any constitutional impact, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and treaties protecting against the selling of children and child military conscription. The Disability Rights Treaty is the same type of human rights treaties as those the United States has already joined. Individuals with disabilities are again treated as second class citizens."



Throughout the remainder of 2014, the International Task Force continued to work with the Senate to move forward ratification of the CRPD by the end of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. One of the main efforts began in March when members of the Task Force met with Senator Harkin's staff and worked on a plan to have the disability champion assist with both his fellow senators as well as grassroots to express support for the treaty. Within weeks, Senator Harkin and his staff worked with the Task Force to gather national disability leaders for a strategy meeting on the treaty. In a quick response to their first brainstorming meeting, Senator Harkin released [this video to the grassroots](#) seeking their stories and launched a slew of statewide calls.

Unfortunately despite incredible efforts made in 2014, Senator Harkin announced on December 3, 2014 that the treaty would not be on the Senate floor calendar for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress as it lacked the final votes to pass. In 2015 and beyond, the Task Force plans to continue work on the treaty, and examine when and how to effectively bring the treaty back to the Senate floor for final passage. More immediately as we work with the new Congress, the Task Force plans to seek opportunities towards utilizing and enforcing the principles of the CRPD in other ways both domestically and in U.S. foreign policy.

## **STATE DEPARTMENT**

The Task Force met this year with the State Department's Special Advisor on International Disability Rights, Judy Heumann, and they have agreed to keep regular meetings into 2015 to discuss how stakeholders can work with the State Department to advance international disability rights. The topics the Task Force and Ms. Heumann will continue to meet on include the State Department exemption from disability discrimination for foreign service personnel, accessibility of embassies, Section 508 compliance, visas for personal care attendants, immigration, and human trafficking.

## **IMMIGRATION**

One of the International Task Force's main goals during the latter part of 2014 was to form a work group to create a Task Force position statement on disability and immigration. This November, members of the Task Force work group met with White House officials to discuss specific issues related to immigration and people with disabilities. The day after this meeting, [the President issued his Executive Action](#) on immigration, and the Task Force has remained included on discussions with the White House as executive actions around immigration are being implemented. The Task Force has now shared its final position statement on immigration and disability with leaders on the Hill who are working on immigration reform in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. At the end of 2014, the Task Force was contacted by policy staff of the Department of Homeland Security who would like to discuss the Task Force's position and other stakeholder input.

## **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

The Task Force plans to spend 2015 on the following issues:

- Examining past Task Force advocacy efforts for the CRPD, strategizing for passage in a future session, and exploring where else the Task Force can be effective in securing the aims of the CRPD in other areas of domestic and U.S. foreign policy.
- Working with Congress and the Administration to advance inclusion of disability throughout all immigration policies and eradicate immigration policies and practices that discriminate against people with disabilities.
- Regular meetings with the State Department with a focus on accessibility of embassies.
- Collaboration with international disability policy organizations (ABILA, ASIL, etc.)
- Obtaining United States ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled negotiated through the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) dealing with exceptions to international copyright law to

allow access for publications in alternative format for blind and visually impaired persons.

### **CO-CHAIRS IN 2014**

Esmé Grant  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
Phone: (202) 506-5813  
Fax: (202) 506-5846  
[egrant@nacdd.org](mailto:egrant@nacdd.org)

David Hutt  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
Phone: (202) 408-9514  
Fax: (202) 408-9520  
[david.hutt@ndrn.org](mailto:david.hutt@ndrn.org)

Rhonda Neuhaus  
Policy Analyst for Government Affairs  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)  
202-725-5523  
[rneuhaus@dredf.org](mailto:rneuhaus@dredf.org)

Deborah Ziegler  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Phone: (703) 264-9406  
Fax: (703) 243-0410  
[debz@cec.sped.org](mailto:debz@cec.sped.org)