



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

**International Task Force  
Annual Report for 2013**

2013 ACTIVITIES

Given the pledge of Senate to take up the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the 2013 session, the Task Force has remained focused on the disability treaty throughout this past year. Following a failed Senate vote in December of 2012, the treaty returned to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for consideration. Senator Kerry who had been leading the treaty for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was confirmed as Secretary of State in the early part of 2013.

Senator Menendez assumed the role of Chairman for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) in Secretary Kerry's place and members of the Task Force worked diligently with Senator Menendez's staff to request that he take on the lead for the treaty. Senator Menendez announced early in his Chairmanship that the CRPD would be a priority and he held briefings with the community, including Co-Chairs of the Task Force, in preparation for hearings.

As the SFRC worked on a hearings timeline for the treaty, the Task Force revisited its 2012 letter of support and created [a new sign-on letter](#) for the CCD network which achieved an unprecedented 85 signatures. Following several Task Force meetings and as discussed during a CCD co-chairs meeting, it was determined that more effort was required to excite the disability community across the country about the treaty and to further articulate the importance of U.S. ratification. Task Force members also recognized that Senators and their staff needed additional education on how the treaty would help people with disabilities, particularly those facing the most dire situations abroad. In response to these needs, in September the Task Force issued a comprehensive report, [\*Neglected and Abused Abroad: A Look at the Severe Mistreatment of Individuals with Disabilities Around the World and How the U.S. Can Help\*](#). The Task Force asked CCD members to circulate the report widely to their affiliates, and the report was sent to every Senate Member. Accounts from the report were included in the testimony of Secretary Kerry before the SFRC in November.

The Task Force was heavily present for the two hearings on the disability treaty in October and November. A [Task Force statement](#) was issued following the first October hearing thanking the leadership of the SFRC.

Senator Corker made a statement in December that he would not support the disability treaty thus halting negotiations occurring between the SFRC and the State Department on legal conditions around the treaty. In response, the Task Force [issued a press release](#) expressing disappointment and requesting that Senator Corker return to negotiations in good faith.

## FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Task Force expects to spend 2014 on a Committee mark-up and a hoped for Senate floor vote for the CRPD. Depending on the timing of this action, the Task Force will return to its other priorities which include:

- Ensuring 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.
- Obtaining United States ratification for a treaty (WIPO) on exceptions to International copyright law to allow access for publications in alternative format for blind and visually impaired persons.

## CO-CHAIRS IN 2013

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