



*The International Association of  
Conservative / Masorti Rabbis,  
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Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

The Rabbinical Assembly, the international organization of Conservative rabbis with 1600 members representing over a million Jews is writing to you as a member of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) and in cooperation with the Jewish Disabilities Network. We urge you as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to hold hearings this month on the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Book of Leviticus states, "You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind." Jewish tradition sees this verse as teaching us that the disabled should not be put at a disadvantage. One of the hallmarks of Jewish law is *k'vod ha'briyot*, the dignity of all of God's creatures. Access and independence should be afforded to all of God's creations. The Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards has worked diligently over the past several decades to ensure that our members with disabilities have full access to ritual participation in Jewish life.

As Conservative rabbis, we are deeply committed to the U.N. Convention which realizes an international effort to achieve global goals of economic self-sufficiency, equality of opportunity, full participation, and independent living for people with disabilities. These goals are enshrined in our own Americans with Disabilities Act, a model for the Convention. The Convention will enable Americans with disabilities working or traveling abroad, such as veterans or members of military families with disabilities, to access the same protections abroad as they enjoy in America.



No new legislation will be required by U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, nor does the Convention impose any new costs. In fact, as noted, much of the treaty is grounded in American laws already on the books.

We must move quickly to ratify the treaty. We urge you to hold hearings this month to build on the momentum created by the announcement of bipartisan support of Senators Durbin, McCain, Barrasso, Udall, Coons, and Moran. Ratifying the treaty during this Congress will enable the US to participate in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee. This advisory group is a forum for idea sharing related to disability policy, and represents a valuable opportunity for continued American leadership and influence on this issue. Only those countries that have ratified the Convention can serve on this committee, and American leadership in this arena is critical to the ultimate success of the treaty.

The American disability rights community has united behind ratification of the Convention. We know you stand with us in wanting to ensure full participation and access for people with disabilities the world over. We urge you and your Senate colleagues to hold hearings this month on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and move toward its ratification with all due speed.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Gerald Skolnik  
President

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld  
Executive Vice President