

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women - CEDAW

...because Women's Rights are Human Rights

About CEDAW: The Treaty for Women's Equality

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world.

To date, 187 out of 193 United Nations member states have ratified CEDAW. The United States is one of only six countries—along with Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Palau and Tonga—that have not ratified CEDAW.

CEDAW defines discrimination and provides a practical blueprint to promote human rights and open opportunities for women and girls in all areas of society. The treaty calls on each ratifying country to overcome barriers to discrimination in the political, social, economic, and cultural fields. This includes addressing issues of domestic violence, trafficking, affordable health care and child care, economic security, pay inequities, paid family leave, and educational and vocational opportunities.

The United States and CEDAW

American women enjoy opportunities and status not available to most of the world's women, yet few would dispute that more progress is needed. CEDAW provides an opportunity for dialogue on how to address persistent gaps in women's full equality, particularly regarding closing the pay gap, reducing domestic violence, and stopping trafficking.

National Action: While the United States signed CEDAW in 1980, the ratification of CEDAW has never been brought to the Senate floor for a vote. To ratify the treaty, CEDAW needs to be voted on by the full Senate, where it requires a two-thirds majority of support, or 67 votes. The House of Representatives has no formal role.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights convenes a CEDAW Task Force of almost 200 national organizations that continues to engage in educating policy makers and the public on the benefits of U.S. ratification of CEDAW.

Local Action: With CEDAW ratification efforts stalled in the U.S. Senate, local activists and public officials around the country have been joining together in the *Cities for CEDAW* campaign to adopt local measures reflecting CEDAW and human rights principles as a way to address barriers to full equality for women and girls. Such measures generally require a gender analysis of city operations (e.g., workforce, programs, budget); an oversight body to monitor the implementation of a local CEDAW ordinance, (e.g., Commission on the Status of Women, Human Rights Commission, etc.); and funding to support the implementation of CEDAW principles.

In 1998, San Francisco became the first city in the United States to adopt an ordinance reflecting the

CEDAW strengthens the United States as a global leader in standing up for equality for women and girls around the world. Under the leadership of Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton, the U.S. ratified similar treaties on genocide, torture, and race.

Ratification requires two-thirds of the Senate to stand together for women's equality and has no additional financial cost.

principles of CEDAW to improve the lives of women and girls. Since its adoption, San Francisco has developed new initiatives on domestic violence homicide, human trafficking, family friendly workplaces, and expanded language access for responders to domestic violence.

Los Angeles, California was next to adopt a CEDAW ordinance in 2003. Its current Mayor Eric Garcetti has made implementation of CEDAW a priority for his administration. In 2015, he issued a Gender Equity Directive requiring city departments to collect and analyze data on sex and gender in recruitment, employment, contracting, and city services. The goal is to integrate gender equity into all aspects of city operations and thereby to better meet the needs of all city residents.

In addition to San Francisco and Los Angeles, six other jurisdictions have more recently adopted CEDAW ordinances, including Berkley and San Jose County, California; Cincinnati, Ohio; Miami-Dade County, Florida; Honolulu, Hawaii; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. And as of January 2018, 24 additional cities and counties have made commitments to use CEDAW principles in local law and policy by adopting resolutions and proclamations, including cities as diverse as; Durham County, North Carolina, Eugene, Oregon; Louisville, Kentucky; New Orleans, Louisiana, Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Salt Lake City, Utah, among others. Many other cities are in the process of building coalitions and developing local approaches to implementing CEDAW principles. The U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a resolution in 2014 in support of the *Cities for CEDAW* campaign. The International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies (IAOHRA) also adopted a resolution on CEDAW in 2017.

The Leadership Conference, a national coalition of diverse civil and human rights organizations, and The Women's Intercultural Network (WIN) in San Francisco are working together to assist activists in communities around the country interested in the *Cities for CEDAW* campaign.

For more information, go to citiesforcedaw.org or contact June Zeitlin, Director of Human Rights Policy, The Leadership Conference Education Fund and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, at zeitlin@civilrights.org.