



The Campaign for US Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Testimony to support:

**RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING THE STATE'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO
PETITION THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ADOPT THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD (Proposed Joint Resolution No. 21 –
LCO No.1181)**

*To request that the state's congressional delegation urge the United States
Congress to adopt the United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child.*

5 March 2013

**Children's Committee
Capitol Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106**

Good morning. I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Representative Kim Fawcett, Assistant Majority Leader, 133rd District in Fairfield, Connecticut for inviting me to testify before you this morning.

I am representing the Campaign for U.S. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Campaign, launched in 2003 in Washington, D.C., is a volunteer-driven network of academics, attorneys, child and human rights advocates, educators, practitioners and parents who seek to bring about the U.S. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

An impressive diverse group of organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Bar Association, Child Welfare League of America, Covenant House, the Presbyterians of the U.S.A. and the United Methodist Church support U.S. ratification of the Convention.

The Convention: an overview

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a multilateral treaty designed to promote the survival, development, protection and participation of children worldwide.

The Convention spells out the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled: the right to survival; the right to the development of their full physical and mental potential; the right to protection from influences that are harmful to their development; and the right to participation in family, cultural and social life.

The Convention protects these rights by setting minimum standards that governments must meet in providing health care, education and legal and social services to children in their countries.

The Convention has been ratified by 193 countries with the exception of Somalia, South Sudan and the United States.

The convention at work globally

During the past two decades the Convention has transformed the view and the treatment of children in many countries throughout the world.

According to UNICEF, the Convention has exerted a pervasive and profound influence on national and international legislation, policy and programs, public and private institutions, families, communities and individuals. For example, UNICEF found that 21 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas incorporated some or all of the Convention into their national constitutions.

Worldwide, the Convention has facilitated extensive reforms in civil rights, health care, education, family law, responses to abuse and neglect, sexual exploitation and refugee law. Reforms in the the area of education have included state provision of free and compulsory primary education, raising the age of compulsory schooling and increasing the opportunities for girls and children with disabilities to go to school.

In the area of family law, the Convention has promoted increased services and support for poor families and working mothers and important cutback in the use of state institutional care of children.

The convention and the U.S.

The values enshrined in the central principles of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights are reflected prominently in the Convention, thanks to the pivotal leadership role of the U.S. in drafting this historic treaty for children. The Regan and George H.W. Bush Administrations actively contributed to negotiation of the text and introduced articles on freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression; freedom of association and assembly; privacy; protection from abuse, family reunification; and periodic review of treatment.

When the UN General assembly adopted the treaty in 1989, President George H.W. Bush's representative to the United Nations noted that the U.S. Government supported the Convention because it recognized parent's rights and focused on individual rights rather than centralized government control. Let us be honest – just ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child is not going to dramatically change the situation of America's children. But the CRC would help establish a critical national framework to improve the lives of children, especially those who experience marginalization and discrimination.

The Convention's framework could help formulate clear goals which officials at all levels of government, private organizations, and individuals can use to shape and implement domestic policies and programs to better meet the needs of children, their families, and communities. It would serve as an excellent organizing principle for the Children's Report Card and a useful framework for results based accountability.

The Convention's international reporting requirements would encourage and indeed compel the US to assess the status of its children and develop action plans to ensure crucial improvements, *perhaps even learning from the experiences of other countries.*

For example, the reporting process under the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) both of which the U.S. ratified in 2002, has helped identify strengths and areas where improvement is needed with regard to U.S. efforts to address the issues of the sale and trafficking of

children child prostitution and pornography, as well as involvement of children in armed conflict.

Internationally, U.S. ratification of the CRC would help enhance this nation's role as a global leader in human rights. As a party to the Convention, the U.S. would be eligible to participate in the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the international body that monitors the CRC's implementation) and work toward strengthening and encouraging further progress for children in all countries that have ratified treaty.

Why has the US not ratified

Now, many opponents of the CRC in America have argued that ratification of the CRC would impose on this country all kinds of terrible obligations that maybe harmful to America and its children and families.

These range from how possible UN interference might compromise the Sovereignty of the US and undermine its constitution; to how the CRC might weaken American families and role of parents in bringing up their children; how it might bring about a culture of permissiveness, including abortion on demand, and unrestricted access to pornography; and how it might empower children to sue their parents and disobey their guidance.

All these fears are simply unjustified. In our website:

www.childrightscampaign.org, the US Campaign for CRC has listed some of the common myths and real truths regarding these worries about the possible negative impact on American children.

But in the eyes of the rest of the world, the United States of America also stands out as a country that has so far failed to ratify the world's most universally embraced human rights treaty dealing with children – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I do not know how many of you in this audience have actually read the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would commend it to you all. It is one of the most progressive, and one of the most balanced and thoughtful treaties that deals with both civil and political rights and social and economic rights of children.

The Campaign for US Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is urging interested grassroots supporters to visit our website: www.childrightscampaign.org and sign our petition urging President Obama to By doing this extraordinary treaty and encourage our country to join the global community so, we honor the leadership role of U.S. Presidents who helped to create to ensure universal rights for children.

The Convention protects children, preserves and strengthens families and is unquestionably improving the lives of children. U.S. ratification of the Convention will bolster the efforts of our nation and our world in safeguarding our most valuable resource – our children.

It is up to US to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child.