

Cities for CEDAW

Promoting Women's Equality

Background

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW), was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. It is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world. It is the most comprehensive international agreement on eliminating discrimination against women in every sphere—economic, political and social and addressing issues such as equal education, equal employment and training opportunities, social benefits including social security, health care, maternity benefits, child care etc. It also addresses sex trafficking and domestic abuse. Since every country is different, CEDAW provides a blueprint for the government to overcome the remaining barriers to discrimination. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

CEDAW has been ratified by 187 out of 194 UN member states. The United States is one of only seven countries in the world that has not ratified CEDAW. The other countries that have not ratified CEDAW are Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Palau and Tonga. President Carter signed CEDAW in 1980 and it was reported favorably, with bipartisan support, twice from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (in 1994 and 2002). Recently, hearings on CEDAW and discrimination against women globally have been held in the Senate. The Obama Administration has testified in support of CEDAW. However, the treaty has never been brought to the Senate floor for a vote.

In 1998 San Francisco pioneered the idea of using CEDAW to advance the status of women locally. They passed a binding ordinance integrating CEDAW into city and county governance and establishing the Department on the Status of Women. Soon after, Los Angeles did the same. In both cities, CEDAW has made a measurable difference in public safety, budgetary allocations and employment. More than ten years later, other US cities including Portland, Oregon and Berkeley, California, as well as the State of Hawaii, had enacted similar initiatives. And in November 2014, Louisville Kentucky passed a CEDAW resolution.

What these new laws offer at the municipal level is a set of guidelines already used in 187 UN member states that have ratified CEDAW. While we continue to urge the U.S. Senate to ratify CEDAW, we believe it is also important to build support locally and begin to implement its provisions by passing CEDAW ordinances in as many cities as possible and securing the endorsement of mayors for this approach. This effort will help to raise awareness of women's issues covered by CEDAW as well as build a constituency of the public and local elected officials

What is Cities for CEDAW?

Many organizations support the concept of urging municipalities to pass resolution or ordinances that encompass the principles of CEDAW. Starting in San Francisco with the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women and the Women's Intercultural Network, and building with support in March 2014 at the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of

Women, the concept of local, municipal support for this global human rights initiative has grown to include the support of the U.S. National Committee for UN WOMEN and the United National Association of the USA as well as a growing number of human rights and women's rights organizations.

Today the Cities for CEDAW Campaign has defined the following goals:

- *100 Mayors for CEDAW by June 2015;*
- *100 municipal CEDAW ordinances adopted by January 2016;*
- *Improving the lives of millions of women;*
- *Building critical mass at the grassroots for U.S. ratification;*
- *Emboldening the U.S. Senate to finally ratify CEDAW by January 2017*
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We can do this!

We can work to convince our elected officials to recognize the rights of women.

- A preparatory virtual call with breakout sessions will be convened on December 5. All interested organizations and individuals are encouraged to participate.
- There will be a national, virtual conference on January 21 with breakout sessions in major cities where Cities for CEDAW efforts are underway or will soon be initiated.