

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Statement by Senate Majority Leader Reid for the Senate Record

August 02, 2012

--- Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Disabilities Convention enjoys strong bipartisan support in the Senate, with Senators McCAIN, DURBIN, KERRY, BARRASSO, COONS, Tom Udall, MORAN, and HARKIN leading the charge to ratify the Convention. With their help, I hope we will be able to move this treaty forward in the future.

Twenty-two years ago, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act to lift the barriers Americans with disabilities faced in everyday life. And ever since the passage of that law, the United States has been a leader in expanding disability rights across the globe.

We have led, other countries have followed, and persons with disabilities have found ever greater opportunities to succeed. Now we are presented with an opportunity to strengthen our leadership on disability rights around the world by joining the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This convention is another step towards ensuring that all people with a disability, in any country, are treated with dignity and given the right to achieve to their full potential.

Let me read part of a recent statement to the Foreign Relations Committee from one of my esteemed predecessors, former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, recipient of two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for heroic achievement, who was wounded fighting for our country in World War II.

U.S. ratification of the [Convention] will improve physical, technological and communication access outside the U.S., thereby helping to ensure that Americans--particularly, many thousands of disabled American veterans--have equal opportunities to live, work, and travel abroad. An active U.S. presence in implementation of global disability rights will promote the market for devices such as wheelchairs, smart phones, and other new technologies engineered, made, and sold by U.S. corporations.

This convention will help U.S. citizens and veterans abroad, and U.S. businesses here at home. And it won't cost us anything. It won't require any changes to existing U.S. law and or new contributions to the United Nations.

As we watch the Olympics this week and admire the incredible feats of all of the athletes, we are reminded of what each of us can achieve.

Just look at Oscar Pistorius from South Africa--also known as the-- ``Blade Runner," who this Saturday will run the 400-meter sprint in the Olympics on carbon-fiber legs.

Or watch Jessica Long, an American gold-medal bilateral amputee swimmer, participate in her third Paralympics Games at the age of 20.

This convention will help make the path smoother for Olympians such as Oscar and Jessica.

It has the support of veterans group and disability groups from around the Nation. It has the strong backing of a bipartisan group of Senators as well as leading Republicans such as President George H.W. Bush and Senator Dole.

Just like passing the Americans with Disabilities Act, ratifying this Convention is, quite simply, the right thing to do.
