

May 30, 2012

The Honorable John Kerry
Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Kerry:

We the undersigned veterans and military organizations are writing to urge the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to favorably report the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The CRPD is important to veterans and servicemembers with disabilities because it embodies the principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Like the ADA, the CRPD supports equal treatment and non-discrimination in access to rehabilitation, employment and educational opportunities. We support the principles of the ADA because it promotes empowerment of our nation's veterans and servicemembers with disabilities by providing the opportunity to achieve independent living and inclusion into all aspects of society.

As organizations that represent veterans and servicemembers and their families, we believe that the CRPD would remove barriers and allow American servicemembers and veterans with disabilities to work, serve, study, and live abroad. In part, barriers will be diminished due to changing attitudes around the world regarding people with disabilities. As a result of the changes occurring through the CRPD, servicemembers and veterans with disabilities will be able to continue leading active lives within the global community.

The United States must ratify the CRPD to reinforce our leadership in the promotion of opportunities for veterans and servicemembers with disabilities in the world community. Our nation established its leadership on disability rights through the passage of the ADA. In order to continue that leadership, the United States must once again act to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and urge swift ratification of the CRPD to ensure global disability rights. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, Vice President of Veterans Policy for VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association, at (202) 556-2076, ext. 7702 or by e-mail at hansley@vetsfirst.org.

Sincerely,

AMVETS
Air Force Sergeants Association
Air Force Women Officers Associated
American GI Forum
Association of the United States Navy
Blinded Veterans Association
Disabled American Veterans
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
Jewish War Veterans
Military Officers Association of America
National Association for Black Veterans
National Guard Association of the United States
National Military Family Association

Paralyzed Veterans of America
The American Legion
Veterans for Common Sense
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Veterans of Modern Warfare
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association
Vietnam Veterans of America
Wounded Warrior Project