



Conservative Media Baselessly Attack UN Disabilities Treaty

***Blog** ››› 3 hours and 44 minutes ago ››› HANNAH GROCH-BEGLEY*

In anticipation of a Senate vote on a United Nations treaty that seeks to promote equal rights for people with disabilities, conservative media have revived the **debunked myth** that the treaty threatens U.S. sovereignty.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sets global standards for the treatment of people with disabilities, asking signatories to "ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability." More than 120 nations have ratified the treaty, and though the United States signed it in 2009 and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved it, the Senate has been unable to obtain the required number of votes to push it through. A Senate **vote** is scheduled to take place today.

Conservative media claim that signing the treaty would require the United States to alter its laws to meet these standards. Writing at National Review Online, the National Review Institute's Betsy Woodruff **claimed** that the treaty "could potentially undermine American sovereignty" and said it would be "self-abasing" for the U.S. "to comply with the treaty." Similarly, at the Daily Caller, Walter Olson of the Cato Institute **equated** signing the treaty with "sign[ing] away our national sovereignty on questions of how best to accommodate the disabled."

However, these claims are baseless, as U.S. law already meets the standards the treaty requests. The **Americans with Disabilities Act** (ADA) "prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications." If a law, policy, or program is found to be discriminatory, the government has the power, through the Department of Justice, to **enforce** the ADA on both a private and public level. Thus signing the treaty would merely reaffirm the U.S. commitment to equal rights.

Both the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times* threw cold water on this fearmongering.

The *Post* **noted** that the treaty "would not require the United States to change its laws."

The *Times* further **reported**:

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved [the treaty] last July in a bipartisan vote, 13-6, while also passing a resolution to clarify, in case anybody was worried, that the United States would surrender none of its sovereign authority by joining the convention. The treaty would have no power to alter or overrule United States law, and any recommendations that emerge from it would not be binding on state or federal governments or in any state or federal court.

The baseless argument that the treaty threatens U.S. sovereignty is not new. In

September, *The Washington Times* published an **editorial** warning that the "United States could soon find itself taking orders from international bureaucrats on how to treat people with disabilities."