

Factsheet on CEDAW

In the U.S. and around the globe, women continue to be targets of sexual and domestic violence. Women are discriminated against in the workplace, and disproportionately suffer from poverty, less access to health care, less access to a livable wage, and barriers to higher education.

The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, the women's rights treaty) is a valuable instrument for combating these wrongs. CEDAW embodies the basic democratic values of fairness and equal opportunity. Women (and men) across the political spectrum support CEDAW's ratification.

Why It's Important

- CEDAW is the most comprehensive international agreement on the basic human rights of women and girls
- U.S. ratification would lend weight to the treaty and the principle that human rights of women are universal across all cultures, nations and religions and worthy of being guaranteed through international human rights standards
- Until the U.S. ratifies CEDAW, it can neither credibly demand that others live up to their obligations under the treaty, nor that it is a leader in the global human rights community

What CEDAW Has Helped Achieve in Other Countries

- Reducing the sexual enslavement and trafficking of women and girls
- Securing basic legal recourse to women and girls against violence and abuses of their human rights
- Freeing access to primary education and health care where it had previously been denied
- Saving lives during pregnancy and childbirth
- Acknowledging the basic right to own and inherit property, including helping to secure essential development loans to poor women

Ratifying CEDAW is a Pledge to Respect Women's Right to Equality

As a state party to CEDAW, the U.S. would pledge to join other countries in:

- Taking concrete action to improve the status of women at home and around the world
- Taking measures to ensure that women enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Establishing judicial procedures to ensure the effective protection of the rights of women

- Taking appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by individuals, organizations and enterprises
- Submitting national reports every four years on actions taken to comply with the treaty's pledge to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in the U.S.