



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0542-2015, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 542

Resolution calling upon the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

By Council Members Cumbo, Johnson, Ferreras-Copeland, Chin, Espinal, Eugene, Lander, Mendez, Richards, Rose, Rosenthal, Rodriguez, Menchaca, Levin and Dromm

Whereas, The United States, along with its allies during the Second World War, helped to create the United Nations (“UN”); and

Whereas, The United States is one of the original founding members of the UN and one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council; and

Whereas, In addition to its offices in Geneva and Vienna, the UN is headquartered in New York City; and

Whereas, The UN engages in humanitarian work, international conflict prevention and peacekeeping, and seeks to expose and address human rights atrocities around the world; and

Whereas, The preamble to the UN Charter states that it seeks “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small;” and

Whereas, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights further states, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, [color,] sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”; and

Whereas, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) expands upon these human rights goals with a recognition of and a particular focus on the

challenges that confront gender equality; and

Whereas, CEDAW commits ratifying states to incorporate the principle of gender equality in law, abolish laws that interfere with gender equity, create gender equality enforcement mechanisms, and pursue the elimination of discrimination against women by “persons, organizations and enterprises;” and

Whereas, According to the UN, CEDAW “... is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations;” and

Whereas, At the Copenhagen Conference on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1980, 64 countries signed onto CEDAW, including the United States; and

Whereas, The United States has yet to ratify CEDAW, and remains the only nation besides Palau, a country that is a Free Associated State with the United States, to sign CEDAW and not ratify it; and

Whereas, CEDAW had the support of President Carter who signed onto the Convention in July of 1980, but subsequently lacked presidential support until President Clinton submitted CEDAW to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for review with a recommendation of support; and

Whereas, Nevertheless, President Clinton recommended the ratification of CEDAW with reservation, and suggested ratification with the understanding that the United States would not apply CEDAW to private conduct or women in combat, or accept the CEDAW definition of “comparable worth” as applied to equal pay for equal work or paid maternity leave, among other items, unless mandated by the US Constitution; and

Whereas, CEDAW was not ratified under President Clinton and did not enjoy presidential support again until the Obama Administration, which supports ratification without exception: and

Whereas, The unfortunate decision not to ratify CEDAW runs contrary to the United States’ progress and leadership with respect to human rights, particularly the rights of women; and

Whereas, For example, The United States was the first of the industrialized nations to recognize universal suffrage for women and full political rights, including the right to run for office; and

Whereas, Today there are 20 women in the United States Senate and 80 women in the House of Representatives; and

Whereas, While the United States has made great progress with respect to recognizing the personhood of women and the inalienable rights of women, challenges faced by American women remain and further progress is necessary on issues such as, equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights and family medical leave; and

Whereas, Many nations that cannot boast of the gender equality accomplishments achieved within the United States have completed their countries' required governmental processes and formally adopted CEDAW, yet the United States has not, failing to lend support to the improvement of women's lives around the world; and

Whereas, The failure to ratify CEDAW is incompatible with United States' domestic and international interests; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

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