

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SJM 8012

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As of February 24, 2009

**Brief Description:** Urging adoption of a treaty fighting discrimination against women.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fraser, Kohl-Welles, Prentice, Fairley, Berkey, Franklin, Regala, Marr, Shin, Eide, Kastama, Murray, Haugen, Oemig, McDermott and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Labor, Commerce & Consumer Protection: 2/23/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Staff:** Ingrid Mungia (786-7423)

**Background:** The Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 18, 1979. The Convention became an international treaty on September 3, 1981. One hundred and eighty-five nations, including all of the industrialized world except the United States, had agreed by May 2001 to be bound by the Convention's provisions.

**Summary of Bill:** President Obama and the Secretary of State are respectfully urged to place the Convention in the highest category of priority in order to accelerate the treaty's passage through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and full United States Senate with the goal of ratification by the United States. The Washington State Legislature urges the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to pass this treaty favorably out of Committee and urge it be approved by the full Senate.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The Joint Memorial calls on the U.S. Senate to achieve ratification of the CEDAW. This is a U.N. convention. The United States should be a moral beacon in the world. The rights and protections and opportunity for women have steadily grown in the U.S. We should be thinking about the kind of message we are sending to people around the world. In many areas of the world there are serious double standards.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

In some countries woman are seriously persecuted. We should send a message around the world about what we believe. The guiding principal of the treaty is that women's rights are human rights. It is the only comprehensive treaty for women's rights. It was signed by President Carter in 1980, but it was never ratified by the full United States Senate. We are the only industrial nation that have not ratified CEDAW. One hundred and eighty-five nations have signed this treaty. If we see ourselves as global leaders, we will gain credibility by ratifying CEDAW. There is no CEDAW police, there is only reports, dialogue, education, and recommendations. This treaty is the most complete international agreement on human rights for women. This treaty is a useful tool to reduce violence and discrimination against women and girls. Since adoption, this treaty has been used to fight against sex slavery, trafficking of women, and domestic violence. U.S. ratification would lend credence to this treaty. Other governments may ignore their ratifications if the United States does not ratify this treaty.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Fraser, prime sponsor; Linda Malanchuk-Finnan, National Organization of Women; Judy Norton, Zonia International District 8; Leanne Smith, Amnesty International.