Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United State Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United State Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Minority Leader McConnell,

We understand that efforts may be underway to once again move forward the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and we write to register our concerns and opposition. We respectfully urge you to consider the impact that the CRPD would have on U.S. sovereignty, and we ask that you oppose any efforts toward ratification.

As you know, the CRPD established a body of unaccountable "experts," the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which evaluates the compliance of state parties to the treaty every four years and issues recommendations for how they might improve in fulfilling their obligations. We are concerned that joining the CRPD will allow foreign experts to interfere with U.S. policymaking and violate the principles of U.S. sovereignty. Too often U.N. treaty bodies seek to broaden the scope of the treaties that created them through treaty monitoring bodies, which expand language in original agreements and disregard national sovereignty.

Additionally, we find the language in the CRPD especially concerning because the CRPD lacks concise definitions of very important terms. For example, CRPD lacks a clear definition of "disability," which it defines as "an evolving concept." This ambiguity invites abuse by persons or groups that do not suffer from a recognized medical disability but seek resources and protection under the authority of the CRPD. This could also result in complicating the implementation of the CRPD in the United States.

Although the treaty's main purpose seeks to ensure the rights and protections of the disabled, the CRPD includes the issue of "sexual and reproductive health," which some U.N. staff have interpreted as meaning "abortion rights." While the nations who negotiated CRPD expressly rejected that interpretation, there is reason to believe the treaty monitoring body will read a right to abortion into the treaty just as other treaty monitoring bodies have done for treaties that do not even include the controversial phrase. Indeed, proponents of the CRPD have claimed that the inclusion of the phrase "sexual and reproductive health" is not intended to include abortion, but abortion advocates and U.N. staff have already pointed to the CRPD as a means to further build their case in favor of abortion as a human right. We strongly oppose this.

We are also concerned that Article 7 of the CRPD would give the federal government the ability to override the decisions of parents of disabled children if the government believes its

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views are "in the best interest of the child." This could strip parents of fundamental rights, including the ability to home school their children with disabilities if they believe it is in the best interests of their child.

We support the rights of the disabled within the U.S., and the U.S. already holds itself to a high standard of human rights. We believe that the rights of Americans with disabilities are well protected under existing law and are enforced by a range of state and federal agencies.

Any modification or expansion of protections to Americans with disabilities should be achieved through the legislative process – not through an international treaty. Allowing an international panel of disability "experts" to scrutinize the U.S record every four years could result in many unintended consequences for U.S. interests, yielding little or no benefit in realizing disability rights for Americans.

All in all, we believe that U.S. membership in the CRPD would not advance U.S. national interests abroad or the rights of Americans with disabilities here at home. This treaty would subject the U.S. to further intrusion by U.N. officials into policies that are sensitive domestic and social issues, and we remain convinced that the risks to the U.S. posed by this treaty far outweigh any potential benefits that could be realized by U.S. ratification.

In December 2012, the U.S. Senate wisely rejected ratification of the CRPD, and we respectfully urge that you oppose any new efforts to ratify this treaty.

Sincerely,

Doug Lamborn (CO-05)
Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan (SC-03)
Member of Congress

Alan Nunnelee (MS-01)
Member of Congress

Andy Harris (MD-01)
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson (OH-06)
Member of Congress

Charles Boustany, Jr. (LA-03)
Member of Congress

Dennis Ross (FL-15)
Member of Congress

Howard Coble (NC-06)
Member of Congress

Renee Ellmers (NC-02)
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop (UT-01)
Member of Congress

Ted Yoho (FL-03)
Member of Congress

Stephen Fincher (TN-08)
Member of Congress

Steve Stockman (TX-36)
Member of Congress

Tom Latham (IA-03)
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson (NC-08)
Member of Congress

Thomas Massie (KY-04)
Member of Congress

Tom Marino (PA-10)
Member of Congress

Randy Neugebauer (TX-19)
Member of Congress

Steve Scalise (LA-01)
Member of Congress

Robert Pittenger (NC-09)
Member of Congress

Steve Southerland (FL-02)
Member of Congress

Tim Huelskamp (KS-01)
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock (CA-04)
Member of Congress

Steve Daines (MT-At Large)
Member of Congress

John Carter (TX-31)
Member of Congress

John Fleming (LA-04)
Member of Congress

Jeff Miller (FL-01)
Member of Congress

Jim Bridenstine (OK-01)
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson (SC-02)
Member of Congress

Kenny Marchant (TX-24)
Member of Congress

Kerry Bentivolio (MI-11)
Member of Congress

Kevin Cramer (ND-At Large)
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert (TX-01)
Member of Congress

Lynn Westmoreland (GA-03)
Member of Congress

Mark Meadows (NC-11)
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin (OK-02)
Member of Congress

Matt Salmon (AZ-05)
Member of Congress

Michele Bachmann (MN-06)
Member of Congress

Mike Pompeo (KS-04)
Member of Congress

Patrick McHenry (NC-10)
Member of Congress

Paul Broun (GA-10)
Member of Congress

Phil Gingrey (GA-11)
Member of Congress

Richard Nugent (FL-11)
Member of Congress

Randy Weber (TX-14)
Member of Congress

John Kline (MN-02)
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly (PA-03)
Member of Congress

Joseph Pitts (PA-16)
Member of Congress

Trent Franks (AZ-08)
Member of Congress

Ralph Hall (TX-04)
Member of Congress

James Lankford (OK-05)
Member of Congress

Kevin Brady (TX-08)
Member of Congress

Robert Latta (OH-05)
Member of Congress

Walter Jones (NC-03)
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg (MI-07)
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis (IL-13)
Member of Congress

Billy Long (MO-07)
Member of Congress

John Culberson (TX-07)
Member of Congress

Scott Perry (PA-04)
Member of Congress

Jack Kingston (GA-01)
Member of Congress

Mark Sanford (SC-01)
Member of Congress