



**STATEMENT OF**

**THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE  
FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

**ON**

**RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN,  
THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

**JUNE 13, 2002**

Chairman Biden and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of ratification of the Treaty for the Rights of Women, the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

NEA believes that all nations must respect and protect the basic human and civil rights of every individual, and that all persons, regardless of gender, must have equal opportunity for employment, promotion, compensation and leadership. Our 2.7 million members – the majority of whom are women – know first hand the difference that access to education makes in building a strong, tolerant society, and in allowing individuals to fulfill their potential.

Women with access to education can ensure a better future for themselves and their children, while girls who do not go to school have little chance to escape poverty and oppression. According to the World Bank, UNICEF, and the United Nations Development Program, investment in girls' education is the most cost-efficient route to economic development and stability. Yet, two-thirds of the 125 million children worldwide who have never attended primary school are girls, and women and girls experience discrimination in education around the globe.

The Treaty for the Rights of Women, CEDAW, requires nations that have ratified it to take action to end discrimination in education, including in professional and vocational training, access to curricula, and other means of receiving an equal education. Where ratified, the Treaty has already made significant inroads in improving access to education for women and girls. For example:

- Following its ratification of the Treaty, Slovenia changed its school admission policies to benefit girls.
- Pakistan introduced co-education in primary schools following its ratification of the Treaty, and saw sharp increases in female enrollment, especially in rural areas.

- India has made increasing girls' educational opportunities a key priority, creating the universal Integrated Child Development Services program. Girls now account for nearly half of all pre-schoolers in India.

Ratification of the Treaty would enable the United States to play a stronger role internationally in advocating for women's rights, including in the area of education. The Treaty would offer an important tool to advance U.S. foreign policy priorities such as increasing access to education for women and girls in Afghanistan. Ratification would also promote and improve education for women and girls in the United States by, for example, opening doors to non-traditional careers and expanding school sexual harassment prevention programs.

Nearly 170 nations have ratified CEDAW, the Treaty for the Rights of Women, including all Latin American/Caribbean nations, the overwhelming majority of European and African nations, and a large number of Asian and Middle Eastern nations. The United States' continued failure to ratify the Treaty jeopardizes our foreign policy objectives and reinforces the message that our nation is inconsistent in the human rights standards we set for other countries and ourselves.

We urge the Senate to take immediate action to ratify this important human rights Treaty.

Thank you.