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April 6, 2009

Dear Zonta District Governors, UN and LAA Committee Chairmen,

Those of you who have members in clubs in the United States have been wondering and asking why the annual letter writing campaign to your United States Senators and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has not yet been prioritized, especially since the Obama administration has indicated in words and deeds that CEDAW is very much on its agenda.

The answer is that I was waiting to participate in a telephone conference which took place on March 31st with the Working Group on US CEDAW Ratification with which we are associated. Despite the positive indications from the Obama administration toward CEDAW ratification, the concerted efforts of many groups will be needed to accomplish this objective.

One key factor in moving forward is the confirmation of nominees who will oversee the legal reviews of CEDAW. President Obama has nominated Harold Hongju Koh, dean of the Yale Law School, to be the legal adviser to the State Department. His confirmation process just began yesterday. In addition to a review of constitutionality issues raised by treaty ratification, there will also be a review of the domestic impact of implementing treaty obligations.

We, as advocates for US CEDAW ratification, are optimistic that the process will be accomplished before the thirtieth anniversary of CEDAW on December 18th of this year! However, we must renew our efforts to contact our Senators and each member of the Foreign Relations Committee to enlist their support for CEDAW ratification and for bringing the vote on this landmark treaty for women's rights to the Senate floor this year.

We must prioritize **national** ratification of CEDAW at this opportune moment. We applaud the efforts of our Zonta members in the states of Colorado and Washington for their outstanding work in their respective legislatures. Their work at the state level will also be part of our strategy to accomplish US ratification. In addition to writing letters to Senators and members of the Foreign Relations Committee, a complementary effort can be made to secure appointments with your US Senators when they are at home and bring the case for CEDAW ratification to them face-to-face.

Attached please find a template letter for clubs to use in writing to their own state's US Senators. The last paragraph should be omitted in writing to the members of Senate Foreign Relations Committee. To maximize rapid response, both email or fax your letters and mail them. Please send a copy to all correspondence to the ZI LAA and UN International Committee Chairmen. Please follow the advocacy process whereby members decide at a club meeting to send these letters and they are signed on behalf of the club, **not** Zonta International.

Universal ratification of the CEDAW Convention is supported through the efforts of both the Legislative Awareness and United Nations Committees, so although this letter was drafted by the UN Committee, it is signed by both Chairmen.

Thank you for your efforts.

Denise Conroy
Zonta International LAA Committee Chairman

Jackie Shapiro
Zonta International United Nations Committee Chairman