

Bob Dole

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



NEWS
FROM:

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U.N. CONVENTION ON RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONVENTION LEAVES MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED;
DOLE SUGGESTS CAREFUL EXAMINATION

WASHINGTON - Kansas Senator Bob Dole today issued the following statement on the U.N. Convention on Rights of the Child:

On February 16, Ambassador Madeleine Albright signed the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. The U.S. joined 175 other countries that have signed and/or ratified the Convention. The next step would be for the Administration to send the Convention -- and a statement of any reservations and understandings -- to the Senate for our advice and consent.

In the past several days, I have received thousands of calls from all over the country in opposition to this Convention. My office has not received one call for it. These contacts have raised many serious problems that need to be examined. They have raised questions about Articles 13, 14, and 15, which grant children the freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion, association, and assembly. Could these Articles be interpreted to limit the ability of parents to decide for themselves how best to raise their children? Should U.S. citizens be subject to some sort of international committee that enforces compliance with Article 28 (2) which states: "State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention"?

Under Article VI of the Constitution, Senate ratification of this treaty would make it the supreme law of the land. Would the Convention then supersede federal and state laws? What would the effect of the Convention be on the Tenth Amendment? Is the Convention merely a symbolic exercise, or will it actually require the United States to take actions? These are sincere questions from sincere people. They deserve answers.

I realize the original intent of the Convention was to protect children from such abuses as forced labor and to improve the situation for those children in many parts of the world. No doubt about it, many children around the world face unbearable and unacceptable conditions every day. And for these children, a properly crafted document could provide some much needed relief.

However, I also believe we in the U.S. have made significant progress in protecting the rights of the child through federal, state, and local laws. These laws are better equipped to deal with the varying challenges posed by the issue of child rights. If there is one thing this election taught us, it is the need to get excessive government out of people's lives. This applies to the Federal government, and it certainly applies to the multilateral, quasi-government that is the U.N.

I don't know the Administration's timetable for sending the Convention to the Senate for advice and consent. When submitted, it will be referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations -- where I am certain it will receive the careful review it deserves. However, until all the questions that thousands of Americans have about the Convention are satisfactorily answered, I will not support ratification of this Convention.

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