

**Minnesota State Bar Association**

**General Policy Committee Minutes**

**November 18, 2015**

**3:30 p.m.**

**MSBA Honors Room**

**Present:** Chair John Dornik, Leigh Frost, Lousene Hoppe, Mark Jacobson, Elizabeth Luoma, Dan Steinhagen, Robert Vischer, Nancy Mischel – MSBA Staff, **By phone:** Matthew Rust, David Schultz, Aaron Street, David Torgelson, Wendy Watson. **Guests:** Liz Meske, Human Rights Committee member, and Dr. Ellen Kennedy from World Without Genocide.

**Discussion and vote on recommendation and report from the Human Rights Committee regarding CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women):** Dr. Kennedy and Ms. Meske presented information to the Committee regarding CEDAW, which has been ratified by 187 of 193 countries. The United States is one of the five countries that have not ratified it. The American Bar Association’s House of Delegates passed a resolution in support of CEDAW, as have many other national organizations.

67 senators need to affirm CEDAW in order to ratify it, and there is no cost to doing so. The U.S. rankings for women in some areas are poor for an industrialized country. A few examples are our maternal death rate, the number of domestic abuse cases, and equal pay for equal work discrepancies. Although CEDAW itself contains no enforcement mechanism, countries that ratify CEDAW submit periodic reports to the CEDAW Commission as to how they are progressing.

State and city level organizations are now being asked to support the document in the hope of demonstrating a groundswell of support for it.

Dean Vischer commented that although the CEDAW text regarding abortion is neutral, the CEDAW Commission has not been neutral on the issue. The guest speakers responded that the CEDAW document itself does not reference abortion, and that is what the MSBA is being asked to support. In addition, they reminded members the CEDAW Commission has no enforcement powers.

Mr. Jacobson moved the Committee recommend the resolution and report regarding CEDAW to the Assembly. Mr. Schultz seconded the motion. The motion passed with Dean Vischer abstaining.

There being no other business, the Committee adjourned.