Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Approves Ratification of the Convention
on the Elimination of All Forms of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Chairman of the Senate Foreign
Relations Committee: Senator Joseph
R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE)

On July 30, 2002, the Senate Foreign
Relations Committee, under the current
chairman, Senator Joseph R. Biden,
voted 12-7 to approve U.S. ratification
of the United Nations’ CEDAW, drafted in
1979 and entered into force on Sep-
tember 3, 1981. Although the United
States signed CEDAW in 1980, and the
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
approved it in 1994 by a vote of 13-5,
efforts to ratify the treaty have been
repeatedly stalled. With the Committee’s
approval, the full Senate will debate rat-
ification of CEDAW, and will possibly
vote on ratification in the fall. According
to Senator Biden, “The treaty is a means
to an end—a tool which strengthens
the ability of the United States as well as
women’s advocates around the world to
press nations to expand rights for
women. This vote is a good first step
toward improving women’s rights world-
wide and a victory for women every-
where.”

Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of
2002, H.R. 3994

Major Sponsor: Rep. Henry J. Hyde
(R-IL)

Status: Referred to Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations on May 21, 2002.

Substance: This bill addresses economic,
democratic, and military assistance for
Afghanistan, as well as other foreign
countries and international organiza-
tions providing support for Afghanistan.
Principles governing the provision of
economic and democratic development
assistance include: reduction of terror-
ism, narcotics control, women’s rights,
self-sufficiency, and coordination of inter-
national donors. To achieve these goals,
the bill authorizes the president to pro-
vide assistance in various areas, including
humanitarian needs; repatriation and
resettlement issues; counter-narcotics
efforts, focusing specifically on opium;
food and health conditions, emphasizing
the rehabilitation of the agricultural sec-
tor; and infrastructure reconstruction.
The bill urges the president to designate
a coordinator within the Department of
State to facilitate these programs. With
regard to military assistance, the bill calls
for the requisite assistance, support, and
training to develop a civilian-controlled
and centrally governed army and a civil-
ian police force, each operating with
respect for human rights. Additionally,
the bill calls for a multinational security
force and makes similar assistance and
training available to foreign countries
or international organizations partici-
pating in military, peacekeeping, or polici-
ing operations in Afghanistan. The multi-
national security force’s authority would
terminate on December 31, 2004.

Proposal of an Amendment to the
Constitution of the United States
Relating to Marriage, H. J. Res. 93

Major Sponsor: Rep. Ronnie Shows
(R-MS)

Status: Referred to House Committee on
the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Con-
stitution on July 18, 2002.

Substance: This legislation, also known
as the Federal Marriage Amendment,
proposes to narrow the definition of mar-
riage, recognizing only those marriages
between a man and a woman. Additionally,
this legislation seeks to prohibit the
conferral of legal marital status on
unmarried couples or groups pursuant to
state constitutions, state law, or federal
law. The resolution was initially drafted
by the Alliance for Marriage, which is
composed of religious and political
activists. If passed, the amendment would
negate existing domestic partnership
laws in eight states, including Vermont,
the only state that legalizes civil unions.

Hunger to Harvest: Decade of Support
for Sub-Saharan Africa Resolution,
H. Con. Res. 102

Major Sponsor: Rep. James A. Leach
(R-IA)

Status: Agreed to in the Senate by unan-
imous consent.

Substance: In calling on the United
States to declare a decade of support for
Sub-Saharan Africa, this legislation
appeals to President Bush to produce five-
and ten-year strategies to address
hunger and poverty in Sub-Saharan
Africa. The bill also encourages the pres-
ident to provide funding for bilateral
and multilateral poverty-focused
resources to address issues such as edu-
cation, agriculture, economic develop-
ment, democracy building, micro-finance
development, debt relief, and health,
including HIV-AIDS prevention and
treatment. To implement these strat-
egies, the legislation encourages the pres-
ident to work with other donor coun-
tries, NGOs, aid organizations, and
Sub-Saharan African countries. The res-
olution makes an additional appeal to
Congress for obtaining resources to
implement such strategies, and requests
that the Administrator of the United
States Agency for International Devel-
opment report on the implementation of
these strategies.