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## Idaho lawmakers aim at Rights of Child pact

By **Jessie L. Bonner**

Associated Press

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BOISE — Idaho's Republican-dominated Legislature is taking aim at a global children's rights treaty the United States has yet to ratify, backing an amendment to the Constitution to protect parental rights as a buffer against it.

The 20-year-old treaty has been ratified by every United Nations member except the U.S. and Somalia. But Idaho lawmakers are among American critics who are so worried they are supporting an amendment to the Constitution that says parents have a "fundamental right" to raise their children without government interference.

"I think it's necessary to send a message," said House Majority Leader Mike Moyle, R-Star. "We want them to know that we're concerned about it."

Moyle is co-sponsoring a resolution with House Education Committee Chairman Bob Nonini to support the parental rights amendment to the Constitution. The resolution says the children's right treaty "would drastically alter this fundamental right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children."

Nonini introduced the resolution in the House Education Committee, where it passed on a 14-3 vote on Wednesday. It now goes to the full House for consideration.

"This presents an opportunity for us to do something tangible to support the families of Idaho," Nonini said.

Opponents of the treaty contend it would enable the government and U.N. officials to interfere with parental authority. Supporters view the treaty as a valuable guidepost for children's basic rights, such as education, health care and protection from abuse, saying the goals are undermined by the refusal of the world's lone superpower to ratify it.

U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, a Republican from Michigan, introduced the parental rights amendment last spring and it now has more than 140 co-sponsors in the House, including Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. Sen. Jim DeMint, a South Carolina Republican, has introduced it in the Senate, where Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is among a handful of co-sponsors.

They are still far short of the needed two-thirds support in both chambers of Congress to forward the amendment to the states.

Republican sponsors of the Idaho resolution said it was a pre-emptive move to protect parent's rights should Congress ratify the treaty. But Minority Caucus Chair Brian Cronin countered that parental rights were already protected under the Constitution and ratification of the treaty in Congress was a long shot.

"We're reacting to something that might never happen," said Cronin, D-Boise.

Some Republicans suggested that Idaho should push back even more, saying a constitutional amendment might not be enough to stop the government-led "erosion" of the rights of parents to oversee the upbringing and education of their children.

"I'm telling you there's interference like you can't believe from the state government and the

federal government," said Rep. Pete Nielsen, R-Mountain Home. "I don't see where a constitutional amendment takes care of the problem."

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