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National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service  
2530 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000, Room 1029  
Arlington, VA 22202

Attn: RFI COMMENT—Docket 05-2018-01

Dear Commissioners,

I presume I am well-known to you, from my first submission on February 23, from my book received by each of you, *Free Radicals: War Resisters in Prison*, and from my several phone calls to the Commission's offices.

You have been demonstrating exemplary consideration of public views, really talking to Americans. You're paying attention to the people which most politicians fail at miserably.

As the Commission's hearing progress, I have been doing some serious thinking about the nature of compulsion. If service is genuinely worth doing, there is no need to force anyone. This makes registration for any sort of public service unnecessary.

We all need to think about service in broader terms. What does service to country mean? It certainly does not mean being a mindless drone in service of the government of the day.

Service to one's fellows, one's neighbors, one's community, is something quite different. Most of us do these little human services every day in many ways without ever thinking about it. This service comes from being a good person.

Perhaps we have not done enough to promote volunteerism. Selfless service for those in need. This service can occur at home or abroad simply to make the world safer, more secure, a better place for everyone.

We need to think long and hard about whether we're teaching our children the true value and meaning of serving others, how that service creates positive benefits in ripples throughout society, how that service creates a country at peace with itself and a peaceful world.

Right about now, if you've read this far, you're probably thinking I might be a dangerous idealist, or worse! However, my long life has taught me that we're only as good as we aspire to be, so aim high.

I think the human benefits of service are lost when a top-down, hierarchical system is imposed. 'Selective' Service is one such system. There's never been much "selective" about selective service. Those who are convinced of the rightness of war sign up, the uneducated poor with few opportunities are drafted, and the rest of us refuse!

If you are seriously considering continuing compulsory registration, whether for military or civilian service, I can't accept that, nor should any American. The next inevitable step is

punishment for failure or refusal to register or to serve. When a government compels service through criminal penalties, such service is still called slavery.

I've written a list, appended below, on alternative service for you to think about.

Thank you for your consideration, and your work.

peace&freedom,  
CJ Hinke



**CO: Eight questions on alternative service**

CJ Hinke

- 1) Is alternative service mandatory for a CO? (Many COs object to the compulsory nature of alternative service.)
- 2) Is a CO's sincerity determined by a country's military? (Obviously, military authority has no qualifications to judge COs.)
- 3) Are all beliefs against war accepted, such as political and social convictions, rather than just religion? (If even the most extreme antiwar views are not fully and equally accepted, the alternative service system doesn't work for everyone.)
- 4) Must a potential draftee decide his or her conscience from the outset of the conscription process? And what opportunities are offered for changing one's mind and becoming a CO later on?
- 5) Are active duty and reserve soldiers given the opportunity to declare CO?
- 6) Does any aspect of alternative service enable a functioning military or support it in any way?
- 7) Is the length of alternative service equal to, i.e., not longer than, military service?
- 8) The purpose of conscientious objection is to remove one's body from the war machine. This is called substitute service. It removes one soldier from the military ranks and drafts another in their place.

However, if one's country employs exactly the same number of soldiers, not minus one—you—alternative service is an ineffective means for stopping war.

These considerations are vitally important for COs considering alternative service rather than prison.