

Statement of Paul Jacob

National Commission on Military, National and Political Service

Universal Service Hearing: Should Service be Mandatory?

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American University, Washington, D.C.

Americans need to know that Congress is actively considering the possibility of drafting young adults — our kids — and forcing them into service against their will. Sadly, frighteningly, that is why we are here today for a hearing entitled, “Should Service be Mandatory?”

The answer to your question is emphatically NO.

No involuntary servitude.

I bet that, deep down, commissioners, you agree. Why? Your website is “inspire2serve.gov” and the emails I receive from your excellent staff bear that same “inspire2serve.gov” domain name. I get it. It has a great ring and I am sure that you do want to inspire Americans to serve.

That’s noble and good.

I suspect, however, that you would not want to use an email address or website saying “force2serve.gov” or, perhaps, “draft2serve.gov” or “conscript2serve.gov,” would you? And I guess “drag-them-out-of-their-homes-and-away-from-their-lives-and-imprison-them-to-do-routine-government-work.gov” is, no matter how accurate, simply too long.

Provided the Commission recommends to Congress that there should be no draft, “inspire2serve.gov” works perfectly. But if there is even the slightest chance you will suggest that Congress pass legislation compelling every young person to submit to the federal government for a year of forced labor, then that website address just isn’t right.

It would be a lie.

I beseech this Commission: forswear forced service of any kind. And please, before you consider recommending a program of compulsory national service, change your email and web addresses to “force2serve.gov.” For even a week or two. See how it feels to be part of a Commission that no longer “inspires to serve,” but instead, uses force to make people serve.

That “force2serve” slogan won’t be very inspiring.

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