

September 4, 2018

To: The National Commission on Military, National and Public Service  
ATTN: RFI Comment—Docket 05-2018-01

Dear Commissioners:

I would like to have some input into your work.

First some general comments:

The violence of war is a denial of our common humanity. There are multiple nonviolent ways to resolve conflict and face oppression. We can and must live nonviolently to survive. As John F. Kennedy said before the United Nations on Sept. 25, 1961: "Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind"

The U.S. is fighting wars in multiple countries, has troops in over a hundred countries, has an ever increasing military budget (over \$700 billion for next year), and a huge national debt partly due to borrowing to pay for our wars.

Arnold J. Toynbee (1889 -1975), the British historian who wrote the 12-volume history on the rise and fall of civilizations said: "Militarism has been by far the commonest cause of the breakdown of civilizations " If Toynbee's analysis is correct, our runaway militarism threatens our future.

Some more specific comments:

A: Freedom of Religion is guaranteed in our Constitution in the First Amendment. Conscientious Objection to war is part of the religious belief of many people from many religious traditions. The United States Supreme Court in *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965) ruled that one can also be a conscientious objector without a religious belief in a Supreme Being. The current Selective Service System discriminates against the religious freedom of those who have a conscientious objection to war:

1) The primary purpose of the Selective Service registration is to be prepared for war, so the system itself discriminates against conscientious objectors.

2) Failure to register is a felony. For those with religious beliefs that prohibit them from registering with the Selective Service System there are severe punitive consequences.

3) There is no place on the current Selective Service registration form to indicate one is a Conscientious Objector .

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B. Currently the burden of fighting our wars falls disproportionately on the poor. Although we have no formal draft, our current situation is a "poverty draft".

**Recommendations:**

- 1) The Selective Service System currently in place should be eliminated. It violates the religious freedom of many since its purpose is to prepare for war.
  
- 2) If a mandatory system of service is considered, a civilian service option should be offered. This option could be modeled after the successful Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of 1932 to 1942 involving 3 million young men. Women could now be included. Benefits for any mandatory public service option should be the same for those who choose a military option. Our countries infrastructure is badly in need of repair and a modern day CCC could go a long way in remedying that. The military budget should support this work.
  
- 3) If the current system or any system of registration is maintained, the form should have a place to indicate one is a conscientious objector.
  
- 4) All discriminatory and punitive practices against conscientious objectors relative to any Selective Service System should be removed.
  
- 5) The Commission must ensure that the burden of fighting wars be equally distributed between rich and poor.

Respectfully,

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