
Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference

121 Krumstown Rd Myerstown Pa 17067

12/3/2019

The Honorable Dr. Joseph Heck, Chairman

National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

2530 Crystal Drive

Suite 1000, Box #63

Arlington VA 22202

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference, a historic peace church, we are writing in response to your invitation for public comment.

A brief history of Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference. Our roots lie in the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland over 500 years ago. More recently, in 1893, the Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference developed from a withdrawal of conservative minded leaders and laity from the Lancaster Mennonite Conference. In the present day, our Conference has members and churches in various states, including Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa and Kentucky.

Our beliefs, based on the Bible, are that God clearly intended and made provisions for two kingdoms, [KJV John 18:36] one kingdom as earthly rulers and one kingdom of Heaven, a spiritual God centered kingdom. The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible are clear that as citizens of this country, we are responsible to honor the government, be law abiding and upbuilding citizens [KJV 1st Peter 2:13-17]. Jesus' teachings, as related to government matters, also clearly in-

dedicate that his followers are to be non-resistant [KJV Matthew 5:38-48]. Non-resistance being not only opposed to being involved in the military but also to be practiced as a daily way of life. Because of this we cannot conscientiously participate in the military or many government affairs, we cannot conscientiously bring a lawsuit against our fellow man.

We believe, through the teachings of the Bible, that God understands the fallen nature of man and has made provision through the governments of the earth to bear the sword, to be the keepers of law and order [KJV Romans 13:1-7].

Within this framework of beliefs, we find that service does have inherent value. Its value lies in Jesus' teaching his followers to daily serve him by serving their fellowman [KJV Luke 6:27-36]. According to the Bible and our beliefs [KJV Romans 12:1-21], a life of service is one area Christians will be judged by God as being worthy or unworthy of eternal life in Heaven [KJV Matthew 25:31-46]. Would it benefit the people of our country to focus on service as defined by the Bible? Absolutely. However, this is a work for the churches and not for the government.

If we can be clear, our understanding of service is different than promoted by the government.

Concerning the military draft, our desire would be that women cannot be drafted. Whatever the result of the Commission's recommendations to Congress, we plead that a mechanism would be in place for those who are conscientiously opposed to service as defined by the government, to be able through proof of their beliefs to be exempt from said service. A current example would be the draft boards as administered by the Selective Service System. Currently the Selective Service System administers an Alternative Service Program. Through our mutual understanding of this program, Weaverland Conference has established Weaverland Disaster Service, a program for our youth to serve in areas that have suffered natural disasters, doing cleanup and rebuilding work. This organization was established in 2005 to be an acceptable form of alternative service. Our plea is that the Weaverland Disaster Service would continue to be an acceptable form of alternative service.

Another area of concern is the Interim Report's recommendation of service promoting curriculum for the schools. We do not have a clear understanding of the Commission's recommendations concerning this matter. Whatever the outcome of this recommendation, we plead that our private schools would be exempted from a requirement to implement service promoting curriculum.

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment. We thank God that our earthly government has allowed us to practice our religious beliefs. May God continue to bless the government of this country.

Sincerely,

Melvin Sauder, Representative for Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference

Melvin Sauder 12/3/19

Elvin Martin, Representative for Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference

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James Burkholder, Representative for Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Conference

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