Greetings,

My adviser at the USAF Air War College encouraged me to provide the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service with a copy of my Air War College Professional Studies Paper (attached). I examined the history and challenges of current Selective Service policy, and made recommendations to expand the current "Inspire2Serve" platform to all citizens and legal residents to incentivize military, community, and public service according to skills and interests.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I'm on leave transitioning from Air War College to my next duty assignment at Headquarters U.S. Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Tampa, FL.

Thank you for increasing attention to national and public service needs. I hope the near future will bring the end of Selective Service and the dawn of a more comprehensive opportunity for all Americans to serve our national interests.

Very respectfully,
Lt Col Natalie Jolly
Cell: 307-287-4752

--- Attachments: ---

Selective Service is Ready for Retirement by Lt Col Natalie Jolly 1.1 MB
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SELECTIVE SERVICE IS READY FOR RETIREMENT:
THE CASE FOR AN ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE STRATEGY AND
PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL SERVICE INITIATIVE

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty
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Advisor: Col Ken Callahan

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Bio

Biography

Lt Col Natalie Jolly graduated from the United States Air Force Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama in May 2019 with a Master’s of Strategic Studies with Grand Strategy Concentration. She has served over 20 years as a Force Support officer, with duties which include squadron command, Headquarters Air Force, and 3 Joint duties including United States Central Command and the Joint Warfare Analysis Center, as well as a year-long deployment to train, advise, and assist the Afghanistan Air Force personnel directorate at Shindand, Afghanistan. Before joining the Air Force in 1998, Lt Col Jolly was a high school English and Math teacher at Pensacola High School, Pensacola, Florida. Lt Col Jolly has a Master’s Degree in Leadership in Teaching from Notre Dame Maryland University, Baltimore, Maryland; a Master of Operational Art and Science degree from Air Command Staff College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama; and a Bachelor of English Education degree from the University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida.
Abstract

The Selective Service Act as currently written is outdated and inadequately enforced—underpinned by a bureaucracy woefully behind in technology and processes to identify qualified twenty-first century young adults to serve during a national crisis or war. While there is distinction between Selective Service registration and an actual draft, the purpose of Selective Service registration is to select forces for a draft. American society’s reaction to the involuntary drafting of young men during the Vietnam War revealed how citizens in the modern era are not supportive of a military draft, particularly for an unpopular war. Although current U.S. military personnel are among the most respected professionals in America, society has become intolerant of forced service. The Selective Service System costs American taxpayers over 24 million dollars annually—without even gaining one employable troop! The Selective Service System is ready for its place in history—an honorable discharge for outdated policy that served well and faithfully for over 100 years, in accordance with the provisions of the United States Constitution.
Introduction

“REGISTER: It’s What a Man’s Got to Do. It’s quick, it’s easy, it’s the Law”.¹ This slogan is reminiscent of twentieth century war-time recruiting campaigns to join the Service, buy War Bonds, and support our troops. These words are not from an ad on the back of an old Saturday Evening Post or a vintage US Post Office poster from the twentieth century. Rather, this slogan appears on the Selective Service System web site in the year 2019, reminding young men between the ages of 18 and 25 to complete their legal obligation to register. A responsibility of US citizenship for young men, this outdated legislation excludes women, some homosexual and transgender citizens, and some immigrants who are eligible to volunteer for military service today.

![Figure 1. The 2019 SSS web site home page. Note the bottom banner “It’s What a Man’s Got to Do.”](https://www.sss.gov/) accessed 1 April 2019.

The following are just two examples of how the current Selective Service System falls woefully short of identifying US citizens and legal residents who are well qualified and eager to serve, gain citizenship, and fulfill intrinsic civic obligations to national service. As a female, M.J. Hegar was not required—or even permitted—to register for the Selective Service System when she turned 18 back in 1995, yet she felt a strong urge to serve and become a fighter pilot. She encountered many road blocks to combat service, eventually serving as a combat rescue helicopter pilot with three tours in Afghanistan. She was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor and Purple Heart after being shot down in Afghanistan.
In 2013, in partnership with the American Civil Liberties Union, she successfully joined sisters-in-arms in a lawsuit against Defense Secretary Panetta for discrimination after she was denied a retraining opportunity to become a Special Tactics Officer, due to the antiquated Ground Combat Exclusion policy prohibiting women from serving in most combat jobs. The Ground Combat Exclusion policy, like the Selective Service Act, was not consistent with current operations during the Global War on Terrorism.

A Canadian national, Clive Boutilier applied for naturalization and registered for Selective Service in the United States in 1963. As part of the Selective Service application process, he revealed a 1959 sodomy assault charge which had been reduced to “simple assault” and dismissed. During a Public Health Service (PHS) psychiatric exam for his citizenship, Boutilier revealed he had lived with a man whom he had occasional sexual relations. The PHS labeled him a “psychopathic personality” for what most consider normal behaviors and relationships today, resulting in the Selective Service System classifying him as “4F, unfit for military service.” The Supreme Court later ruled in Boutilier’s favor for citizenship, identifying an overly broad, negative mental health medical diagnosis of psychopathic personality unfairly characterized homosexuality as a mental abnormality where no true handicap existed, discriminating against his ability to become a productive U.S. citizen. Although at the time, a history of homosexual behavior meant disqualification from military service and Selective Service, today homosexual males and females are authorized to voluntarily and openly serve in the military. Furthermore, the Selective Service System mandates all males ages 18-25 register, regardless of sexual orientation.

Since the last drafted American entered service in 1973, the United States has operated an “all-volunteer” force (AVF), with adequate military personnel recruited and retained to meet
operational requirements. Military force and Selective Service requirements vary with political administrations and Congressional interests. President Nixon directed the repeal of Selective Service, following the recommendation of the Gates Commission—a presidential commission led by former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, which studied the viability of an AVF after the Vietnam War. Considering inputs from education institutions, veterans’ groups, industry, and civil rights groups, the Gates Commission concluded a voluntary force paid a fair wage was preferable to service “when and in the manner the government decides, regardless of his own values and talents.” The interruption in the Selective Service requirement did not last long, as President Carter asked Congress to reinstate Selective Service registration in 1980 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. During the Obama administration, Congress directed a reduction in the AVF under the rules of sequestration. Conversely, the Trump administration’s military posture calls for military force increases, to include a potential Space Force. Changing presidential administrations, ongoing combat operations, and emerging threats necessitate a strategy for providing forces to serve during a national emergency, yet existing Selective Service policy is outdated, unenforceable, and inadequate to serve national interests with urgency. Furthermore, American viral social media activity and biased commercial mass media cloud the accuracy of public opinion on Selective Service policy and the potential for a future draft. Given social resistance and exclusion, force quality concerns, and costs to sustain the current, ineffective system, the Selective Service Act should be retired as a policy, with over one hundred years of honorable service, overcome by twenty-first century events. The AVF—including members of active, reserve, and guard military forces—provides motivated, skilled, and ready military sufficient to surge to meet the National Security Strategy objectives to “preserve peace through strength” and support Constitutional military requirements.
History and Strategy

Since there have been civilizations, states have needed to field forces to defend their national interests. Military service has often been an expectation of citizenship. The Spartans institutionalized military service as a rite of passage that served the state, rearing boys from youth to serve in their forces. The ancient Roman Republic relied on a “citizen army” to defend its interests against Latin, Galic, and Italian invaders. The Roman system required its’ citizens to serve 16 years of active military service between their seventeenth and forty-sixth birthday. Soldiers would serve for a period as needed, return to their families, and these experienced soldiers would be recalled as needed, fulfilling the citizenship requirement and still allowing them to foster civilian families and responsibilities.

Both the French Revolution and the American Revolution were characterized by “citizen-soldiers,” who fought for their political and national interests. In both of these revolutions, all males had the right of political vote and the responsibility of military service. The success of Napoleon’s army was in part due to their identity as “Frenchmen,” as the Jourdan law of 1798 formalized French conscription law, establishing a registration requirement and annual quotas of men selected, providing over two million soldiers by 1815 and establishing the western model for registration and conscription.

Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution directs Congress to “provide for the common Defence (sic)” and recall militia to “execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections (sic) and repel Invasions (sic).” During the American Civil War, Congress initially directed states provide militia and enlistment bonuses and bounties. When pay incentives weren’t enough, Congress implemented the Enrollment Act in 1863 with a draft and option for paying one’s way out or identifying a substitute if a person was drafted who could not serve for some reason. The
allowance for paying one’s way caused riots, with an outcry of “a rich man’s war, a poor man’s fight,” and Congress removed the “commutation” option in 1864, although Congress retained the substitution allowance.19

The name of the Selective Service legislation has changed over the years as it moved through Congress and the President for renewal or repeal, with a repeal after President Nixon was elected in 1972 and reinstatement under President Carter in 1980 as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Congress directed establishment of the National Committee on Military, National, and Public Service as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in Fiscal Year 2017 to review the current Selective Service process and seek written input from the public on their view of military service, partially in response to the repeal of laws limiting women from combat service. This law also directs the Secretary of Defense to provide a report on the current and future need for a “central registration system” for military service.20

**Social Resistance and Exclusion**

In *On War*, Clausewitz wrote that war is a “political instrument,” and used the metaphor of “a paradoxical trinity” of violence, creativity and policy, with these aspects aligned to the people, the commander, and the government.21 He expands on that trinity regarding the relationship of the people to the cause, noting “passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people” and any theory that disregards one is unrealistic and useless.22 After significant crisis events such as Pearl Harbor and 9/11, American patriotism and passion to defend our country increased interest in military service. For both of these conflicts, there was no notable social resistance, as Americans saw these wars as necessary to counter foreign aggression. As Clausewitz had noted over 100 years earlier, the passions for war were indeed inherent in our people following attacks on American soil. However, more recent American
campaigns have not held popular American support, to include the Vietnam War and the second Iraq War. Social media and the twenty-four hour news cycle the passions of the people, whether for or against government policy and decisions, especially that impact individual liberty.

Social resistance to the draft during the Vietnam War caused presidential candidate and former Vice President Richard Nixon to recommend an end to the draft and Selective Service registration requirements as one of his campaign promises. He deemed American youth were in a “crisis of confidence,” in the U.S. government, recommending Congress support the U.S. military transition to an AVF at the end of the American involvement in the Vietnam War. Although this campaign promise did not have Department of Defense support, President Nixon gained Congressional approval to end Selective Service, with the last man drafted in December 1972, reporting for duty in 1973. Although President Carter reinstated selective service registration in 1980, there has been no draft as a forcing function to test twenty-first century social acceptance or resistance. With no draft in more than 40 years, the US has raised a generation of Americans that do not associate a national security crisis with an obligation for military or public service. In its 2019 report, The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (NCMNPS) noted a variety of barriers to military and public service following its public forums and interviews with Americans across the country, to include lack of awareness of Selective Service law. The commission also found common misperceptions of military service due to portrayal of the military in popular video games and movies. Many were also unaware of the eligibility restrictions for military service, which include arrest history, substance use and abuse (complicated by the legalization of marijuana in some areas), body art, medical conditions, and physical fitness standards. Even without a draft, the commission found 71 percent of Americans ages 17 – 24 are not eligible for military service for one or more
reasons. Figure one shows the extremely small subset of the American population interested in and eligible for military service.

Figure 3. Number of Youth Interested in and Eligible for Military Service


The Selective Service System, unlike the draft, is an administrative registration requirement for males only, with no obligation for service until a national crisis occurs. Upon execution of a draft, state and regional review boards consider men for service, exemption, or disqualification based on eligibility factors or commitments. During the American Civil War and the Vietnam War, men were often exempt due to college enrollment and family obligations.

The US Congress has a blind spot of its own in regard to military service policy, as less than eighteen percent of the current 116th Congress are military veterans, compared to nearly seventy-five percent of Congressmen at the end of the Vietnam War were military veterans. Changing Selective Service law will require legislative involvement, ratification, and Presidential approval that shows no sign of priority in the near future, while the AVF, reserve
forces and even the inactive ready reserve of former military servicemembers continues to meet current needs for a reserve force in emergency.

The Selective Service System laws do not reflect current military service eligibility policy, as they exclude women completely. Women are not permitted to register for the Selective Service, although they are eligible to volunteer for all careers in the military, to include combat duties. Secretary of Defense Panetta repealed the Ground Combat Exclusion in 2015, and all military career fields were opened to women by 2016. The US Supreme Court ruled in 1981 that women should not be subject to Selective Service registration used for a draft, based on women not qualifying to serve in combat specialties, although even at that time there were many other non-combat duties women could have been assigned. Like discriminatory policy of the early twentieth century, when drafting of blacks was limited and their service was restricted to segregated units during World War II, Selective Service limitations preventing women from registering are also antiquated and discriminatory. At the time President Carter reinstated Selective Service, Judy Goldsmith—President of the National Organization for Women—testified before the House Armed Services Committee in support of women being included in Selective Service and a draft. Goldsmith asserted restrictions on women’s military service contributed to the problem of women experiencing “second class citizenship” limiting pay and opportunities open to men.

Since the repeal of the Ground Combat Exclusion policy in 2015 and the NDAA national service commission Congress directed in 2017, the judicial system is beginning to weigh in on the discriminatory exclusion of women in Selective Service. In February 2019, US District Judge Gray Miller of Texas ruled current draft registration law is unconstitutional—a practice that discriminates against males in violation of the fifth amendment for equal protection under
the law. Judge Miller characterized his decision, “This case balances on the tension between the constitutionally enshrined power of Congress to raise armies and the constitutional mandate that no person be denied the equal protection of the law.” This judgement confirms the selective service law is an invalid requirement, obligating only men to register for military duties which both men and women are authorized to perform as volunteers as of 2015.

The NCMNPS published its Interim Report to Congress in January 2019. In the report, Chairman Heck noted “women are currently neither required no permitted to register for selective service,” which begs the question, “Why not?” The commission continues to gather inputs from public forums and volunteer agencies to develop a universal model for service that expands “pathways to service” to include community service and training programs that can leverage motivated youths’ service and talents immediately without waiting for a national crisis.

**Fielding Quality Forces for the Profession of Arms**

Military culture is a culture of good order and discipline, with adherence to rank structure, checklist discipline, and standards. While there is a difference between registering under Selective Service and the execution of an actual draft, the purpose of the registration is for future draft of military forces. Citizens drafted against their will are not motivated for effective training and job performance. During World War II, American psychiatrists attempted to screen adults who did not have a mental capacity suitable for military service, arguing “it was more important to build a strong and dependable army than to discipline the poorly adjusted.” These psychiatrists were attempting to incorporate lessons learned from the US drafts during World War I, where many troops were identified with “shell shock” following their service. Even after World War II accessions’ increased screening for mental competency, battlefield history
revealed that virtually no one in any military service or duty capacity could endure more than about 45 days of consistent combat stress. Unfortunately, many suitable candidates had been eliminated during draft-era screening based on the government psychiatrists’ bias against homosexuality as a type of mental disorder incompatible with combat service.\(^{36}\)

During a recent interview I had with a Congressman on the House Armed Services Committee (HASC), the Congressman acknowledged the outdated Selective Service System. As a veteran servicemember and former operational commander himself, he shared his recommendation endorsing the all-volunteer force as the “best” method for manning the military with “top talent.” He alluded to the expectation that personnel drafted for military service may not be willing participants and may be less compatible with military mission requirements, lacking fitness and motivation. Members of the HASC are eager to review the NCMNPS’ complete findings due in 2020 to determine the future strategy for Selective Service and other national service programs.\(^{37}\)

In modern combat operations, contracted forces provide an alternative to drafting unwilling or unfit personnel for military service. Defense contractors have served heavily in every major combat operation since 9/11, providing security, food, logistics, maintenance, and even operational support. Many deployed defense contractors have prior military service, which increases financial opportunities for veterans who seek post-military employment and desire to continue supporting US national interests overseas. Additionally, depending on how contractors’ earnings are taxed, a planned effort to incorporate and balance defense contractors with the AVF and reserve forces during contingency operations adds taxable income to our overall national budget.
Cost of the Selective Service System – Financial and Efficiency

The Selective Service System is an independent federal agency within the Executive Branch, employing over 124 full-time federal employees, 54 part-time federal employees, and 175 military Reserve officers. The agency occupies a national headquarters in Arlington, Virginia; a Data Management Center in Chicago, Illinois; and three regional operations centers in Atlanta, Denver, and Chicago. The Selective Service System also maintains a total of 11,000 uncompensated local board members across all 50 states and four US territories. The Selective Service System’s annual budget for Fiscal Year 17 and Fiscal Year 18 was 22.9 million dollars, and has been as high as 24 million dollars in recent years.

The Selective Service System is inefficient by twenty-first century standards. In Fiscal Year 2018, ninety percent of young men registered electronically--either using https://www.sss.gov/ on the internet or electronically submitted through a driver license office, Federal Application for Student Financial Aid web application, or from college or high school counselors--yet the program maintains mail postcard applications and a voice call-in system in addition to digital registration. In Fiscal Year 2017, Selective Service System received 63,007 hand-completed postcard registration forms through the United States Postal Service. Registration cards processed through the mail are difficult to accurately process due to damage during mail handling, illegible handwriting, and incomplete or inaccurate information. The most common electronic registration method is through driver’s license offices in forty states and four
territories, with the densely populated states of California and New Jersey among the states that do not offer Selective Service registration at their motor vehicle registration offices. Selective Service System employees processed 3.1 million pieces of physical outbound mail in FY17, which included Status Information Letters, letters addressing incomplete or invalid information, physical forms, reminders to non-registered youth, and returned mail. Although the Selective Service System reported they efficiently handled the postal items with 99.72 percent accuracy in their annual report, this volume of mail processing required significant manpower and postal expense. At a minimum, the Selective Service System must transition to an all-electronic or in-person application process for those applying for a driver license or federal financial aid. Eliminating mail and call-in applications in favor of digital or in-person registration is a realistic and efficient expectation for predominantly tech-savvy youth who are expected to serve in the modern US military.

**Views of Others—Responsibility of Citizenship**

Critics of repealing the Selective Service Act feel there is a disconnect, as Americans in large numbers are enjoying the benefits of citizenship without sharing any responsibility for sustaining our liberty through military service or other forms of service. Our founding fathers envisioned the United States of America as a land where all citizens who enjoyed the benefits of free democracy were obligated to serve to protect it. George Washington stated, “It may be laid down as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services, to the defense of it.”

Citizens and residents not in support of registering--let alone serving in the military--impede military efficiency, good order, and discipline. Selective Service System policy and
Department of Defense policies define “conscientious objector,” as being “ethically and morally opposed to war.”\textsuperscript{42} By the end of the Vietnam War, two of every three men drafted applied for status as a conscientious objector. Only about half of the over 170,000 men classified as objectors ever performed an alternative form of service, as the military was overwhelmed and undermanned to support such a significant population of objectors.\textsuperscript{43} Since conscientious objectors do not contribute to military mission objectives, the nation does not benefit from their registration at all. Repealing Selective Service while encouraging a voluntary national service registration initiative will increase the opportunity for all young men and women to serve national interests which align with their talent and moral compass, without wasting administrative time on personnel opposed to military service and unlikely to serve.

**Recommendations**

Due to social resistance and exclusion, force quality concerns, and costs, I recommend the Selective Service Act as written be repealed. To meet military force requirements upon a national crisis, I recommend the US focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining the AVF.

Congress should fund a new national service program, encouraging all young people ages 18-25 legally present in the US to register, alleviating the problem of excluding women and other minority categories. This should be an internet-based platform, ideally with an "app" with push notifications to inform registrants of volunteer opportunities that match their interests and talents. The NCMNPS should develop incentives for voluntary registration for national service, to include student financial aid, government career internships, tax incentives, stipends, healthcare, or other benefits rewarding national and public service. Military service already has an established package of benefits and entitlements.
It is unlikely the US will conduct a draft, but a nationwide service registration platform could serve as what President Bill Clinton briefed to Congress as an "insurance policy" for identifying qualified Americans to hedge against the risk of underestimating future threats.\textsuperscript{44} A voluntary national registration platform will provide a pool of interested citizens to military recruiters, government and public service agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency/FEMA, the American Red Cross, Americorps, and many other service organizations. Current US national service demographics from the Corporation for National and Community Service show 28.2 percent of Millennials volunteer, providing 1.5 billion hours of service per year.\textsuperscript{45} An organized, national effort to promote service will further increase these service hours, documenting potentially hundreds of thousands more volunteer hours not currently being tracked as well as opening new opportunities for Americans and legal residents to serve our country.

Incorporating marketing, social media, push notifications, gaming "badges" and other interactive engagement with a national service “app” will have more benefit reaching the millennial generation of young adults. The registration platform should include a request for foreign language skills, interests, and hobbies that complement service, which might also include first aid skills and training, nutritional programs, agriculture, marksmanship, construction, computers, environment support, journalism, child and youth mentoring, social media communications, graphic design, or any number of talents. The program should be marketed through social media and have registration be a prerequisite for federal student aid and welfare programs, as it is for Selective Service. Just as registration for Selective Service is unpaid (compared to accession into a contract with the military which earns compensation and benefits), public service volunteer opportunities would also be unpaid but could generate opportunities for scholarships, student loan forgiveness, tax credits, and future jobs when committed to extended
internships supporting disaster relief, blood drives, neighborhood watch, environmental support, and other formalized programs. In his inaugural speech, President John F. Kennedy captured the spirit of public and national service when he said, “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.” The current “inspire2serve” initiative should be the foundation for integrating Selective Service registration and citizen service volunteer opportunities.

**Conclusion**

In *Makers of Modern Strategy*, historians Craig and Gilbert assert strategy is not just preparing for armed conflict, but the modern equivalent of *raison d’état*—pursuit of a nation’s vital interests. The December 2017 National Security Strategy specifically states on page one “A strong America is in the vital interests of not only the American people, but also those around the world we want to partner with the United States in pursuit of shared interests, values, and aspirations.” A strong America is best achieved militarily with the All-Volunteer Force—generations of patriots who willingly serve in the armed forces in support of American national security interests, while earning the benefits of service such as fair pay, career training, healthcare, and family benefits, as well as college tuition assistance and post-service G.I. Bill benefits. In addition to the active duty forces, our reserve and National Guard forces continue to provide flexibility with a force prepared for expanding contingency operations or natural disasters.

The 2017 National Security Strategy Pillar IV “Advance American Influence” includes a priority to “Empower Women and Youth.” The NCMNPS’s “inspire2serve” site should become the foundation for developing a national platform for all Americans ages 18-26 to
register for some form of public service to meet the US Constitution’s requirement to “raise and support armies” if the All-Volunteer Force needs augmentation. A twenty-first century app and web site will invite Americans to explore service and citizenship opportunities. The current Selective Service System as written should be repealed, having earned its place in history with over 100 years of honorable service to this nation.


Ibid, 246-250.

https://www.sss.gov


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