



Support legislation to end draft registration

- **End draft registration – Don’t extend it to women.**
- Abolish the Selective Service System.
- End contingency planning for a draft of health care workers.
- Restore Federal student aid for people who didn’t register for the draft.

Congress is having its most serious debate about draft registration in decades – but so far, the debate has ignored the peace movement and the history of the draft, draft registration, and draft resistance.

If we don’t speak up, we will miss our best chance to put an end to preparations to reinstate the draft, and to put an end to the fantasy of military planners that the draft is always available as a fallback if the military runs short of troops. Even when the “poverty draft” and the outsourcing of war to civilian contractors obviate the need for a draft, draft registration indoctrinates young people that they have a “duty” to fight.

All male U.S. residents, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, are required to register with the Selective Service System when they turn 18, and notify Selective Service every time they change their address until their 26th birthday. Draft registration is one of the ways that all young men (and possibly soon young women as well) have to interact with the military and think about their relationship to military “service”.

The Selective Service System maintains contingency plans for a general "cannon fodder" draft of young men (based on the current list of registrants) and/or a separate “Health Care Personnel Delivery System” for men and women up to age 44 (based on professional licensing lists in 57 medical and related occupations). These plans could be activated at any time that Congress decides to reinstate either or both forms of a draft. Congress has also ordered a national commission to study drafting tech workers of all ages, men and women.

Few young men comply fully with the draft registration law. In May 2016, Selective Service officials finally admitted publicly, in interviews with US News & World Report, what has long been obvious: The government abandoned enforcement of draft registration in 1988. Men are supposed to notify the Selective Service System every time they change addresses until they turn 26, but almost nobody does. Most draft notices sent to the addresses in Selective Service records would wind up in the dead letter office. Passive resistance made registration unenforceable, and has made the registration list all but useless for a fair or inclusive draft.

Most men who register for the draft do so only if it is required for some other government program. Men who haven’t registered for the draft are ineligible for Federal student aid, naturalization as U.S. citizens, and some other Federal programs. In some states (although not in California), men of draft age are required to register in order to obtain a driver's license, or are automatically registered when they get a driver's license.

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Will women be required to register for the draft?

In June 2016, the U.S. Senate approved a “defense” bill that would have required young women to register for the draft on the same terms as young men. After the November 2016 elections a House-Senate conference committee removed this provision from the final version of the bill. That means men, but not women, are still required to register, and male-only registration is still vulnerable to Constitutional challenges.

Instead, Congress voted to appoint a commission to study the issue and report back in 2020. A separate bill, H.R. 4523, which would have ended draft registration, abolished the Selective Service System, and restored the eligibility of nonregistrants for Federal student aid and all other Federal programs, never made it to a vote. H.R. 4523 died at the end of the session of Congress. But this or a similar bill could and should be reintroduced.

Why are Congress and a National Commission talking about this now? In 1981, the Supreme Court upheld requiring men but not women to register for the draft. The court based its decision on "deference" to the military policy which, at that time, excluded women from combat assignments. Now that this policy has changed, it's likely that continued registration of men but not women will be found unconstitutional.

Most members of Congress would prefer to avoid the issue of the draft. President Trump has not yet announced any position on draft registration. But if Congress does nothing, court rulings are likely to invalidate the current male-only draft registration law. Congress will soon have to decide whether to expand draft registration to women as well as men, or to end draft registration entirely. Congress can longer avoid this issue.

This is our best chance in decades to put an end to plans and preparations for one or another type of draft, and to restore the eligibility of men who didn't register for the draft for student aid, government jobs and training, naturalized citizenship, and other government programs from which they are currently excluded.

- **Don't register for the draft. Oppose both the draft and draft registration, for women or for men.**
- **Support continued resistance to draft registration as long as it remains the law. Support resistance by young women to the expansion of draft registration to women. Tell Congress that resistance will make draft registration of women unenforceable, as it has for men.**
- **Support Federal legislation to end draft registration, abolish the Selective Service System, and restore eligibility for Federal student aid and other programs for men who didn't register for the draft. Urge U.S. Senators and Representatives to reintroduce H.R. 4523 or a similar bill.**
- **Testify at public hearings or submit a written statement against the draft, draft registration, and compulsory “service” to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. Ask the National Commission to recommend that Congress adopt legislation similar to H.R. 4523.**
- **Oppose continued contingency planning for a draft of health care or tech workers.**
- **Oppose any attempt to reinstate the draft or compulsory national service.**

For more about the draft, draft registration, and draft resistance, see:

www.resisters.info