

# What's happening with women and Selective Service registration?

As a result of a Federal court decision that it is unconstitutional to require men, but not women, to register with the Selective Service System for a possible military draft, Congress will soon have to decide either to extend draft registration to young women as well as young men, or to end it entirely.

A "National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service" (NCMNPS) has been appointed to study and make recommendations to Congress and the President on this issue. The NCMNPS is taking written comments from the public through the end of 2019, and is holding two days of public hearings (livestreamed and televised on C-SPAN) on April 24-25, 2019, in Washington, DC.

Women have played key roles in resistance to military conscription, even when only men were being drafted. There's a long tradition of anti-war and anti-draft feminism. (See the other side of this leaflet for some past and present statements by feminists and allies against a draft of men or women.)

Trying to salvage draft registration by expanding it to young women as well as young men would mean doubling down on decades of failure of draft registration in the face of widespread noncompliance.

Until the law was found unconstitutional, all male U.S. residents were required to register with the Selective Service System when they turned 18, and notify Selective Service every time they changed their address until their 26th birthday. But few young men have ever complied fully with this law.

Almost nobody tells the Selective Service System when they move. Most draft notices sent to the addresses in Selective Service records would either be undeliverable or would go to draftees' parents, many of whom would refuse to accept these induction orders or tear them up to protect their children.

Only 20 people have been prosecuted for refusing to register since 1980, the last in 1986. All of those who were convicted were people who had spoken out publicly and/or had told the government they refused to register, so that their own statements could be used against them. Show trials of activists called attention to the resistance and showed that those who quietly ignored registration could not be prosecuted. The government abandoned criminal enforcement of draft registration in 1988. Resistance made registration unenforceable, and made the registration list useless for a fair or inclusive draft.

Both feminist and anti-feminist women will be even more likely to oppose and resist being forced into the military than men have been, and more people will support them in their resistance.

But the chair of the NCMNPS, Brigadier General Joe Heck, has said that he thinks women and young people support expanding draft registration to women as well as men, rather than ending it for all.

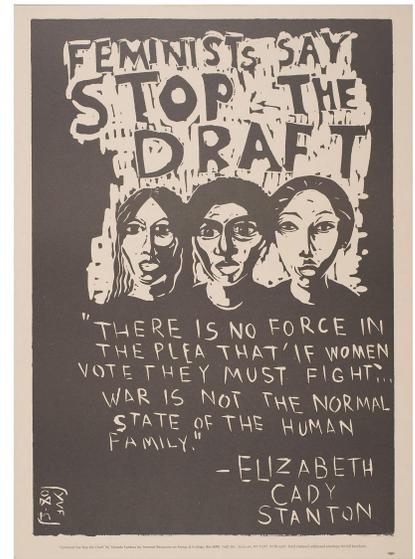
The NCMNPS and Congress need to hear from anti-war and anti-draft feminists and from young people who oppose forcing *anyone* into the military. Any draft serves war, militarism, and patriarchy, and enhances the ability of the US to fight unlimited, endless wars in more places around the world. They need to hear from the resistance: women who will resist signing up to go anywhere and fight and kill (or be killed by) anyone Commander-In-Chief Trump orders them to consider his enemies. They need to hear from allies, men and women, young and old, who will support those who resist.

Equality can best be achieved through freeing both men and women from any threat of a draft.

## See "[www.resisters.info](http://www.resisters.info)" for links to:

- **Submit comments to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (you can do it online). Tell them to recommend that Congress end draft registration entirely rather than trying to expand it to women as well as men. Tell them that you will resist if you are ordered to register or to be drafted, and that you will support others who resist.**
- **Sign the petition to end draft registration and repeal all penalties for nonregistration.**
- **Tell your anti-war friends in DC to attend and speak at the public hearings on April 24-25.**

“The argument that extending the registration requirement to women is a way to help reduce gender-based discrimination is specious. It does not represent a move forward for women; it represents a move backward, imposing on young women a burden that young men have had to bear unjustly for many decades – a burden that no young person should have to bear at all. Even more disturbing, this argument fails to acknowledge or address the pervasive climate of sexism and sexual violence that is the reality of military life for many women who serve. If the argument for requiring registration of women as well as men, often framed erroneously as an argument for ‘equal rights,’ prevails, our society’s already swift move toward normalizing military violence for youth and young adults in general, will gain a particular focus on women’s participation in military violence. We believe that ... the push to extend the registration requirement to women is made – at least in part – because it will become a facilitating factor for recruiting more people to fight our current endless wars.” (Joint statement by the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth, AFSC, Jewish Peace Fellowship, War Resisters League, and other organizations, 2016)



Poster by Yolanda V. Fundara, 1980

“Some have argued that since conscription affects more people than today’s wars fought by a small number of Americans, bringing it back might paradoxically make the U.S. more cautious about engaging in conflicts. When taking this stance, people will point to Vietnam. And yep, anger with the draft did help end the war.... after 60,000 Americans and two million Vietnamese died. You don’t stop the runaway truck of U.S. foreign policy by throwing a man in front of it, and you definitely don’t stop it by throwing a man and a woman, just to make things equal.” (Lucy Steigerwald, Antiwar.com, 2016)

“There are important issues women continue to battle to achieve real, tangible equality. But finally giving them the right to fight and die under a policy they and most Americans disagree with is hardly a win.” (Kaitlyn Buss, editorial columnist, Detroit News, 2016)

“Women: do not register for the draft. No one – man or woman – should register, or be required to register, for the draft. The draft should be completely eliminated.... Did Congress think that ‘women’s equality’ meant sending us off to war? Women’s equality is peace, democracy, economic justice, racial justice, environmental sustainability, restorative justice, ending mass incarceration, providing for all children of this country, caring for our elders, affordable healthcare and housing, and debt-free student education. Women’s equality does not – and never will – include forcing us to kill our fellow human beings in order to protect the patriarchal, oligarchic, racist, imperialistic interests of the greedy, war-profiteering few.” (Rivera Sun, 2016)

“Tell Congress: Don’t Force Women to Register for the Draft, Dump the Draft Entirely.” (Petition initiated by Julie Mastrine of San Francisco, presented with more than 25,000 signatures to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service at one of its public events in Los Angeles, 2018)

“Selective Service System registration is ageist, in that it only targets youth; sexist, in that it only targets those identified male at birth; undemocratic, as it takes away the right to religious freedom; and immoral, since it takes away the choice to follow one’s conscience.” (Kate Connell, TruthInRecruitment.org, letter to the editor, Los Angeles Times, 2019)

“I wouldn’t mind the privilege of being among the first women to burn their draft cards.” (Karen Lindsey, speech at anti-draft rally during Congressional debate on whether to include women in draft registration, 1980)

“We do not want to be drafted into the army. We do not want our young brothers to be drafted. We want them equal with us.” (Women’s Pentagon Action unity statement, 1980)

“The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom strenuously opposes the conscription of men or women for war and we oppose registration as the first step toward conscription.... Sisterhood is international – it does not stop at international borders. If we embrace militarism and conscription as part of equality we will be declaring our sisters as enemies.... Say NO to registration; say NO to the draft!” (1980)

“I will not register for conscription, if conscription comes for women.... Instead, I publish my statement here, and if it encourages other women not to register, I shall be glad.... I shall not register because I believe modern war to be murder.... I shall not register because registration is the first step towards conscription, and the only way to do away with war is to do away with conscription.” (Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker, 1943)