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6/28 Chicago public hearing/"meeting" of national commission likely scene of controversy, say anti-draft activists

-- **Anti-draft proponents claim commission has sought to keep attention away from one of its core mission goals: getting public input on issues re: military conscription**

-- **Testimony opposing conscription to be presented by Chicago-area residents and '80s-era draft registration refusers coming from other parts of the country**

-- **Commission interested in compulsory national service, including military service option, according to sources who've conversed with them**

Anti-draft activists preparing to testify at a south Chicago public hearing of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (NCMNPS) this Thursday, June 28, expect that there will likely be controversy at the event due to the commission's continuing efforts to avoid public discussion of the military draft topics it's charged with addressing. The activists and their colleagues in other parts of the country (e.g. Bill Galvin, Center on Conscience and War, bill@centeronconscience.org) have also found, through conversations with commission staff, that the congressionally mandated body is interested in proposals for compulsory national service including a military service option, which, in their words, is just another form of military conscription.

The NCMNPS announcement of its 6/28 hearing at Kennedy-King College, U Building, Mini Great Hall, 740 W. 63rd St., Chicago, 6:30 - 8:00 pm: <http://inspire2serve.gov/news-events/please-join-us-june-28-our-public-meeting-chicago-illinois>

News of the hearing has been circulating within the Chicago-area peace and social justice community over the past couple of weeks, and interest in participating has been expressed by members of groups including Iraq Veterans Against the War, Afghanistan Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, and the National Lawyers Guild. Resisters.info believes the Chicago hearing will draw one of the largest anti-draft turnouts of the ten put on by the NCMNPS.

In addition to its examination and clear promotion of what it terms "national service," which includes military service, the NCMNPS was assigned by Congress to solicit public input on questions including whether young women should along with their male counterparts be draftable into the armed forces, and whether professionals already working in military mission-critical fields including health care, STEM, cyber, and

foreign languages should similarly become liable to be forced into the military, irregardless of age, says Matt Nicodemus of Resisters.info, a website devoted to making available information on the draft and the long history of mass public resistance to it.

Nicodemus adds, "**The commission also was ordered to request public input on whether all existing aspects of the U.S. draft system should be dismantled and abolished, including the entire Selective Service System.**"

But thanks to a variety of conscious actions and inactions on the part of the NCMNPS, the commission, in its announcements of hearing around the country (see below: **Relevant details on first seven of ten scheduled NCMNPS hearings of 2018, 2/23 - 6/28**), its choice of topics of primary focus for the hearings, its design of the hearing proceedings, and its discussion of the different aspects of its mission and request for input by hearing attendees, **has managed to cover up the numerous realities of the existing and proposed conscription policies and practices that have for so long led so many Americans to oppose and fail to comply with draft laws that it would be impossible, at this point, for the U.S. government to successfully conduct conscription to supply the military's needs.**

Matt Nicodemus and Edward Hasbrouck, both public nonregistrants for the draft, have personally experienced the limitations the NCMNPS has exercised on the public at its hearings. Hasbrouck, convicted and imprisoned during the mid-1980s for his resistance, has attended and spoken at hearing in Harrisburg, PA, Denver, CO, Boston, MA, and Nashua, NH, while Nicodemus testified at the Denver hearing (see hearing dates below). In each instance, the great majority of hearing time was taken up by introductory speeches by commission members and scheduled presentations by 'expert' witnesses, most of whom had either served in the military or done and/or coordinated others doing non-military public service. **There has not so far, to the knowledge of Resisters.info, been a single expert witness who has testified on matters relating to conscription at any of the six NCMNPS hearings held so far.** Typically, only 30 minutes out of 90 or 120 minutes were allotted for statements by members of the public, with those 30 minutes being divided into two-minute segments for such statements.

Dan Rutt, another 1980s draft resister who served time in federal detention for his noncompliance with compulsory draft registration, is traveling from his home in Toledo, Ohio to speak to the commission, "because I think these hearings offer the public its best opportunity to express to Congress, through the NCMNPS, its strong opposition to the draft and call for an end to existing conscription laws and the Selective Service System."

The cases of Rutt, Edward Hasbrouck, and Matt Nicodemus demonstrate how impossible it is for the government to enforce draft laws and successfully manage active conscription in the face of massive noncompliance. Out of literally millions of young men born after 1959 who failed to sign up, only twenty, all of whom had been very public about their refusal, including Rutt and Hasbrouck, were prosecuted (Hasbrouck, coincidentally, by a young, new U.S. attorney, Robert Mueller). The number of names of alleged nonregistrants referred by Selective Service to the Justice Department for investigation and possible prosecution became so enormous during the 1980s that the DoJ told Selective Service they wouldn't take on any more such cases.

In Chicago, where Matt Nicodemus, Edward Hasbrouck, and another public nonregistrant, Sasha Levine, received national news coverage for a press conference they held to announce their resistance to registration, U.S. attorney Dan Webb received a visit from a delegation of local citizens including Nicodemus' mother, Virginia; the group urged Webb to spend his office's valuable, limited resources in going after real, dangerous criminals, not young men who were refusing to do violence to others. Webb never did prosecute any nonregistrants. Neither

did the U.S. attorney in the federal district including Silver Springs, Maryland, where Levine had grown up.

In addition to nonregistration, Selective Service faces an insurmountable additional form of noncompliance: registrant failure to update address information following moves. The fact that no one has legal responsibility to forward mail from the agency, e.g. a draft notice, to a registrant who has moved renders any attempt to carry out a fair system of conscription worthless and would result in the filing of enormous numbers of lawsuits against Selective Service by registrants who have complied with all of the agency's rules and thereby increased their chances of getting drafted.

Relevant details on first seven of ten scheduled NCMNPS hearings of 2018, 2/23 - 6/28:

Harrisburg, PA (2/23, 2 hours) Advertised as a "public conversation" on the NCMNPS website: "Come share your thoughts and ideas on the future of military, national, and public service in the United States." No mention of public testimony that did occur in PENNLIVE news coverage of the event featured on the NCMNPS website:

https://www.pennlive.com/news/2018/02/america_reaches_crossroads_it.html

Denver, CO (4/18, 2 hours) Advertised as a "public conversation" on the NCMNPS website: "Come share your thoughts and ideas on the future of military, national, and public service in the United States." A significant number of people, ~20, testified; ~1/3 against conscription, ~1/3 veterans re: military service (none pro-draft), and ~1/3 re: non-military public service (none in favor of compulsory national service). News coverage by The Nation Report featured testimony against conscription and the Selective Service System and additional coverage (<http://www.thenationreport.org/public-comment-at-national-commission-hearings-renounces-draft/>, <http://www.thenationreport.org/commentary-what-should-be-done-about-selective-service/>).

Boston, MA (5/9, 2 hours) From the NCMNPS website: "At the end of the forum, participants will have an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas on encouraging and inspiring more Americans to serve."

Nashua, NH (5/10, 2 hours) From the NCMNPS website: "... time will be reserved for participants to address the Commissioners, directly, with their thoughts and ideas on ways increase participation and foster a greater ethos of military, national, and public service in the United States."

Jacksonville, FL (5/17, 1.5 hours) From the NCMNPS website: "...time will be reserved for participants to address the Commissioners, directly, with their thoughts and ideas on ways increase participation and foster a greater ethos of military, national, and public service in the United States."

Vinton, IA (6/26, 1.5 hours) From the NCMNPS website: "...a conversation on how community needs can be addressed through national, public, and military service. The meeting will include a panel discussion with community leaders who will discuss needs and opportunities of small towns and rural communities, and how service helps Iowans meet critical agricultural/rural needs. The public meeting will conclude with a Q&A session. The audience will be able to react to the panel and discuss how they can utilize and benefit from service to advance their respective communities." Full announcement on the NCMNPS website: <http://inspire2serve.gov/news-events/please-join-us-june-26-our-public-meeting-vinton-iowa>

Chicago, IL (6/28, 1.5 hours) "public meeting" See announcement on NCMNPS website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/public-meeting-pathways-to-employment-in-service-tickets-47200481912> "This session will explore different models for job readiness training programs that would prime individuals for a career in public, national, or military service. The public meeting will conclude with a Q&A session where the audience will be able to address the panel on how they can start, continue, or change paths in their career in service."

Waco, TX (7/19 or 20) No details available on NCMNPS website.

Memphis, TN (8/16 or 17) No details available on NCMNPS website.

Los Angeles, CA (9/19 or 21) No details available on NCMNPS website.

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