

SERVICE

650-700 Words

Scratch That- We No Longer Need the Selective Service

If you're a young American in high school or college, the idea of the military 'draft' is, shall we say, *old school*. The use of the United States draft hasn't been used for over four decades, but the Selective Service is still in effect. The Selective Service (SS) is a U.S. consensus made "To register men and maintain a system that...rapidly provides personnel in a fair and equitable manner while managing an alternative service program..." (Selective Service System). Recently, some lawmakers have made proposals to expand the SS to women while others want to end the program altogether. The SS currently requires men ages 18-26 to register, and the system spends nearly \$23 million every year to uphold its registration services (Congressional Research Service Reports). The question begs an answer, then- if the U.S. has not used this draft system in over four decades, why do we continue to need to know where military aged men are? It is time to end the outdated SS because the U.S. has better avenues for military protection.

The United States possesses enough service members for military protection; if we didn't have the numbers that we need, the SS would be called into effect. One could use this to argue that volunteerism in protecting the U.S. is a strong point in American culture. The four branches of the U.S. military had 1.29 million men and women serving last year (Council on Foreign Relations). There are already cut offs for enlistment in our branches- Marines, 28, Navy, 34, Army, 35, and Air Force, 39- (CFR), so the control for men ages 18-25 in the SS actually *limits* accurate numbers of those who could serve, especially in times of dire need of military protection. "The all-volunteer force has surpassed expectations. After more than a decade of sustaining combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan while meeting other global obligations, our force has been successful by virtually every measure," Melvin Laird, secretary of defense from 1969 to 1973 and counselor to the president for domestic affairs in 1973 and 1974, stated in an article with The Washington Post. "If the objective is to maintain at reasonable costs an effective military force, the draft fails this test. If the objective is to require all young people to serve their country, there are numerous possible alternatives beyond making the military the only outlet."

Caitlin Brennan, a 21 year old college student at UNC agreed, stating, “I don’t think that anyone should be ‘selected’ for service. They must choose to fight for their country in times of hardship or not at all.”

The numbers of volunteers for service has dropped slowly overtime, but this is to no disadvantage to the U.S. military. Advances in science and technology have and will continue to further the skills, tools and power of the military, meaning the need for manpower is actually dropping, and purposefully. Military personnel can fly drones, bombs, cameras and other combat gear without setting foot in active and dangerous areas. “Rapid growth in ground robotics has occurred... Zero unmanned ground vehicles took part in the 2003 invasion of Iraq; a year later, 150 were in use. By 2008 the inventory in Iraq had approached the 12,000 mark, with the first generation of armed ground robots arriving that same year” (Peter Singer, *Brookings*). This growth of technology has saved thousands of lives and allowed for more advanced detection of threats, making the need for a SS draft less and less likely. 27 year old Joshua Schermerhorn, a veteran who served in Afghanistan in 2013 stated, “We [the military] have different abilities now. Drones, other technologies....our fighting is more developed. Fire fights are now seven people tops instead of fields of people taking over a city. We have robots, drones and other tools now. We really don’t need that many people anymore.”

The proposals for adjusting or canceling the SS altogether highlights problems within the service itself. Currently, the SS does not require women to register. The CRS wrote, “Some believe...registration requirements are inequitable, arguing that it is unfair to men that women can voluntarily serve in all military occupations but are exempt from the registration requirement and the prospect of being drafted.” Schermerhorn, though opposed to the SS continuing, agreed with this statement, saying, “A bullet shot by a woman and a bullet shot by a man is...I don’t know, equal. It’s just learning how to use a tool.” If the SS is adjusted and not scratched, legislation could require women to register just as men do. This, however, does not solve the issue of the SS remaining in use, a waste of money that could be allocated towards more technological and volunteer-based assets. Volunteerism and technological advances are enough to support our military and the protection of our country without a database of “military-aged men.” The requirement to sign up for service is outdated, unnecessary, and unwelcome in

today's military standards. Brennan stated, "I believe that if a person is willing to sacrifice their time here on earth, provide their services to a greater cause, and be willing to put themselves at risk then they are an asset to any profession, especially the military."

Sources:

<https://www.sss.gov/>

<https://www.cfr.org/article/demographics-us-military>

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44452>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/we-dont-need-a-military-draft/2013/02/21/fa23acde-76dd-11e2-aa12-e6cf1d31106b_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c7389033af85

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/tactical-generals-leaders-technology-and-the-perils/>