

Attn:RFI COMMENT - Docket 05-2018-01
Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church Peace Committee
Goessel, Kansas
November 2019

To the members of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service:

We understand that your commission has been charged with making recommendations on the Selective Service and Draft Registration.

We are adding our support to the statements, recommendations, and requests submitted on September 19, 2019 to your committee by representatives of 13 Mennonite and related denominations.

We are also writing to express our own opinions, strongly held beliefs, and recommendations for your consideration. Below are several reasons for our recommendation that the Selective Service Registration should be ended. If it is continued, we ask for continued consideration for people of conscience who object to military participation.

Costly

The full cost of Selective Service registration exceeds the \$25 million Selective Service budget. Schools have the burden of verifying registration compliance for students. Various state laws requiring registration compliance for state benefits add costs to a state's budget with no return on the investment. Extending the registration to women would increase those costs.

Unreasonably and Inequitably Punitive

The current system is unreasonably punitive to men, who fail to register unintentionally or intentionally. Gil Coronado, the former director of Selective Service said in the 1999 annual report,

"If we are not successful in reminding men in the inner cities about their registration obligation, especially minority and immigrant men, they will miss out on opportunities to achieve the American dream. They will lose eligibility for college loans and grants, government jobs, job training and for registration-age immigrants, citizenship. Unless we are successful in achieving high registration compliance, America may be on the verge of creating a permanent underclass."[i]

Failed System

Selective Service registration is a failure. When given a choice, most men don't register. The SSS reports only 88% compliance with registration meaning millions of men are permanently burdened and punished by failing to register.

Unnecessary

Registration is unnecessary. In times of "emergency," such as after 9-11, the military had more than enough volunteers. Activating the draft was never seriously considered.

Alternatives

In the event of a true national emergency requiring more military personnel, it would not be a challenge, with today's technology, to generate a pool of names for a potential draft. It would certainly be less costly than maintaining the current registration.

Provisions for People of Conscience

We as members of a historic peace church have strong conviction that would apply to any implementation of a Selective Service registration.

We believe that there is always a better way to solve disputes than to resort to violence. In particular we believe that killing violates the teachings of Jesus and is fundamentally immoral.

Any selective service system must provide a pathway for people to register as Conscientious Objectors. Doing so would enable people of conscience to both be in compliance with the law and true to their conscience. If a draft were ever implemented those registered as conscientious objectors could be assigned to alternative service for the peaceful benefit of others.

Though failure to register is a felony, the government has not prosecuted anyone since 1986. Almost all who had been prosecuted were conscientious objectors who publicly asserted their non-compliance as a religious, moral, or political statement. As a result of this public witness, non-compliance with registration actually increased. By allowing people to register as conscientious objectors, the government may come closer to reaching its goal of increased compliance.

Because of the selective prosecution of people of conscience who have chosen not to register in the past, we believe that their lifetime punishments should be overturned and all other penalties eliminated.

In Peace,

Karen Unruh
 Kristine Schmucker
 Renae Schmidt
 Hans Harder
 Jason Peters
 Carl Yoder
 Myra Peters
 Rosemary Reimer
 Df Jensen
 Cindy Hastings
 Gene Hastings
 Mary Schmidt
 Janine Peters
 Maria Brubaker

John Jay
 Judy Goutzen
 Carol Reimer Duerksen
 Gae E. Jan
 Ed
 Paula Benner
 Pary Alicia Hertzler
 Jim Jay
 K. Jay
 Gretchen Schrag
 B. J. ...

Signatures – continued

Dwight M Fleming
A Dennis D. Benson
Justin Umek
John L. Holt
Kyle Umek
Deane Umek
Jenny Fast
Timothy Joseph
Meghan Umek
Miyun Schmidt
Patricia D. Schmidt
Joan Mikkil
Jo M
Ann Hilbert
David Esau
Shawn Boese
Vint P
Reed Seaton
Marilyn Umek Fleming
Rose Fleming
MAD Voth
Erwin P Goossen
Scott Erb

Chris Baker
Marlette Buller
Dwight J. Fleming
Leona Schroeder
Justin Umek
Marvin Voth
Arlene Esau
Delton Voth
Patrick Phung
Anthony Esau
Christiana Miller
Bryant Miller
Amy Fleming
Marjorie Shoemaker
Velma Hebert