

**TESTIMONY OF MATT NICODEMUS, CONTEMPORARY U.S. DRAFT RESISTER,
TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

June 28, 2018, Kennedy-King College, U Building, Mini Great Hall, 740 W. 63rd St., Chicago, IL

Ladies and gentleman of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, my name is Matthew Nicodemus. I was born June 9, 1960. I presently live in Boulder, Colorado. I've been a draft registration refuser since mandatory sign-up with Selective Service was revived in June of 1980.

It has now been about six months since I first learned of your existence, stated goals, and activities. On April 19, I spoke at the public hearing you held in Denver, Colorado, where I related my own history of opposition and resistance to the conscription system in this country and advised you that, if the U.S. government attempted to bring back the draft, it would be met with noncompliance that is already massive and would only grow larger and stronger.

Today, having studied your informational materials, followed your series of public "conversations" across the country, communicated personally with your staff, and heard from a number of individuals and organizations that have communicated with you, I must state that you are not being open and honest with Americans about your intentions and plans, and that you are almost certainly intending to recommend to Congress in 2020 that the nation once again have a military draft, this time through a compulsory national service program. I believe you are doing this because the United States' requirements for personnel to maintain global military dominance and wage continuous, permanent war around the world are not being met.

Our armed forces are unable to recruit and retain enough volunteers, so you envision solving that problem under the guise of a program of forced public 'service' which promotes a variety of different compulsory 'service' options but makes the military 'service' option especially attractive to conscripts, likely by requiring a shorter term of 'service' and/or offering higher salaries and benefits to those choosing the military option.

The news release about this hearing which I wrote and disseminated yesterday to Chicago-area news media – I've brought copies for each of you -- describes some of the evidence upon which I base my claims about the direction in which the Commission is heading. Two specific pieces of that evidence which I'll note here:

- 1) Bill Galvin of the Center on Conscience and War in Washington, DC communicated to me on June 25, "We have talked to the staff of the Commission at length, and one thing the commission seems interested in is some sort of mandatory national service program. Military service would be a part of it, but it would not be military conscription per se."

- 2) Edward Hasbrouck, the founder of Resisters.info, responded, "That's also the impression I get from the reports on the closed-door briefings and reports the Commission has received, which I got in response to my FOIA request."

If you are indeed considering recommending a plan of compulsory national service, and if you're considering recommending to Congress special measures to obtain for the military the trained professionals it requires in mission-critical areas including health care, STEM, cyber, and foreign languages, I urge you to be honest and direct about that with the public for the duration of your mandated term, and to be responsible to them and to Congress by seeking out and paying close attention to the people who may be forced into 'service' by a national service draft or other process of conscription.

Due to the limitations of time this evening, I've only stated my points in most basic form. I will submit expanded written versions of this testimony and my April 19 statement to you before the September 30 deadline.

Thank you very much.

Note: Matt Nicodemus was born in 1960 and for the most part raised in Evanston, Illinois. In the fall of 1978, as a freshman at Stanford University, Nicodemus joined over 100 fellow students in signing a declaration to President Jimmy Carter's attorney general, Griffin Bell, stating that, aware of the potential legal consequences (maximum 5 years in federal prison and a fine up to \$25,000), they would refuse to participate in any way with U.S. military conscription if it was reinstated. From that day on, Nicodemus became an increasingly dedicated organizer of opposition to the draft. In June of 1980, with the mass compulsory draft registration of males born in and after 1960 ordered by President Carter the previous fall following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan set to begin, Nicodemus joined fellow resisters Edward Hasbrouck and Sasha Levine in a Chicago news conference, one of multiple simultaneous events across the country, where they announced their intention to refuse to sign up with Selective Service; the news conference received national media attention. Nicodemus later mailed copies of a draft resistance speech he'd made at Stanford to President Ronald Reagan and a host of elected and appointed government officials at the highest levels. His parents, *Chicago Sun-Times* investigative reporter and editor Charles Nicodemus and Virginia Nicodemus, then working for a furniture industry professional association, totally supported his resistance to war and were, with him, co-founders of Evanston Against Registration and the Draft. Virginia Nicodemus joined a delegation of peace activists who met with then-U.S. attorney Dan Webb to request that he devote his office's resources to going after criminals endangering society rather than conscientious young nonregistrants who were trying to prevent war's murders. Webb never indicted any draft law violators. Matt Nicodemus has paid a price for his noncompliance with Selective Service; he lost a year's worth of federal student aid for college and is unable to obtain future federal student assistance, federal employment, and federal job training. But he's never regretted his decision to refuse to register for the draft and remains deeply committed to aiding and abetting others who make that choice. Currently, Matt Nicodemus is involved with a number of projects and organizations working for a world without war and other forms of social-environmental destruction, including Resisters.info, the War Resisters League, the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, Global Nonviolent Revolution Now, and Sworn to Refuse. He resides in Boulder, Colorado.

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