

Warning Letters are Junk Mail

You might get letters from the Selective Service System telling you to register, or saying your name has been sent to the Justice Department for “investigation and, if appropriate, prosecution.” Don't believe them. These letters look official, but they're only junk mail. The SSS has sent millions of these letters to lists of people it gets from the IRS, drivers' licenses, and other mailing lists.

In 2017, for example, the SSS sent more than 180,000 names and addresses of suspected nonregistrants to the Justice Department. Nothing was done to investigate or prosecute any of them.

According to public statements by current and former Selective Service officials, since 1988 the Justice Department has "rebuffed" SSS requests to prosecute more nonregistrants, and has refused to waste time investigating any of them.

Everybody who was prosecuted in the early 1980s was sent at least two certified letters offering them another “last chance” to register late. The return receipts they signed for these letters were used as evidence against them in court. The government must prove you knew you were supposed to register, which isn't as easy as it sounds. Make them work: don't register unless they track you down and order you to register in person.

Don't sign for any certified letters or open any email messages from the SSS or the Department of Justice, and don't talk to the FBI if they come looking for you (not that any of these things are likely – they haven't happened to anyone in 30 years). Refuse to sign for the letter, and see a draft counselor or a lawyer immediately if you receive a certified letter or are contacted by the FBI.

Think about this before you register: Since the start of registration in 1980, a soldier's chances of being killed in combat have been many times higher than a nonregistrant's chances of going to prison.

But What If I Already Registered?

If you've already registered, you have fewer choices, but you can still choose to resist. If you don't tell the SSS where you live, or if you ignore an induction notice, the same legal risks we talked about for nonregistrants would apply. In order to prosecute you, they would have to prove that you actually knew you were breaking the law. That will be very difficult without proof that you got their notices.

What Do You Believe?

Deciding whether to register or to resist isn't easy.

This may be one of the most difficult and important decisions you have faced, and it's not a choice anybody else can make for you. Talk to a draft counselor, your parents, family, friends, and other people whom you respect.

Get as much information as you can before you decide. Don't be pressured into making a hasty decision. Remember: you have until you are 26 to make up your mind whether to register.

It's your life.

Don't sign it away.

www.Resisters.info

Visit our Web site for more information on:

- What's happening with the draft in Congress and the Supreme Court
- Women and draft registration
- What to do if you don't want to be drafted
- Health Care Workers and the draft

(Updated March 2021. See Web site for latest info.)



Draft Registration Is No Joke!

Selective Service registration is a tough decision that could cost you your life.

We've chosen not to register with the Selective Service System for a possible military draft.

We wrote this leaflet to share some of our reasons for not registering, and to give you some information about draft registration that the government won't tell you.

Will the Draft Come Back?

Politicians like those who started registration in 1980 still want the draft. They could try to use any “crisis” as an excuse. If Congress approves a draft, people who are registered with the Selective Service System (SSS) could get only 10 days notice to report for induction into the military.

You probably wouldn't be reading this if you believed that “It's only registration.” The reason we “only” have registration, and not a draft, is that so many of us have resisted registration. We have made the government afraid to draft us.

Many people who registered have told us they regret it, and wish they could “un-register” themselves. Many of these people will resist the draft if they are ordered to report for induction. But resistance is harder if you've already registered or gone into the military.

Whether or not there will be a draft depends on whether we continue to resist registration. As you decide whether or not to register, you and your friends are helping decide whether Congress will dare to bring back the draft.

What will you do if you register and there is a draft?

Many people think they won't have to go to war because they are conscientious objectors (COs). A CO is someone who registers with the SSS, convinces their draft board that they “oppose war in any form,” and does unarmed military duty or poorly-paid civilian alternative work assigned by the government instead of fighting.

If you're planning to try for CO status, and you want to help prevent a draft or a war from happening, you might want to think twice about registering. A conservative think-tank reported that the SSS wants to “accommodate with minimum divisiveness those who would seek CO status.” The government gives COs special status within the system to keep them busy, quiet, and helpless to resist a war.

COs have to register first, and then take their chances with a draft board. Many genuine COs won't get CO status, or will “conscientiously object” to their alternative service jobs. You can't “un-register” if your CO claim is denied. But if you don't register now, you can always change your mind, register late, and try for CO status if you get an induction notice.

Conscientious Objection is not an easy way to beat the draft.

You should talk to a draft counselor if you have questions about conscientious objection or resistance. Whatever you do, you won't be alone. All over the country, people are finding ways to oppose registration and the draft.

What About the Law?

Since the current Selective service registration system started in 1980, **millions** of people have refused to register. Millions more have broken the draft laws in other ways (including by not reporting address changes or encouraging others to refuse to register).

The government tried to enforce registration and failed. Nobody has been indicted for refusing to register since 1986.

The government couldn't prosecute a million people anyway. Instead, they used a few token trials to try to intimidate us. But in cities where these “show trials” were held, the registration rates went down, not up.

People who are quiet about resistance have been safe. 19 of the 20 nonregistrants who were prosecuted in the 1980s were outspoken public advocates of resistance. Most of them wrote letters to the SSS saying they wouldn't register. The 20th man indicted didn't know he was supposed to register, and was indicted by mistake. The government dropped the charges against him in embarrassment. Even for those of us who speak out publicly, the risk is small. Thousands of people publicized their resistance, but only 19 of them were indicted.

Most people do register eventually. But often they register several years late, when they are too old to be drafted anyway. People who register are supposed to notify the SSS whenever they move, but most people don't. If the SSS can't find you, they can't draft you. In one test, the SSS could find fewer than 1 out of every 4 registrants!

Financial Aid and Drivers' Licenses

In late 2020, Congress voted to eliminate the requirement to register with the SSS to be eligible for Federal student aid. That change will take effect as soon as the FAFSA student aid form is revised, and not later than 2023.

In some states, the motor vehicle bureau registers you with the SS if you apply for a driver's license. It's up to you to decide if being able to drive is worth the risk of being drafted.