

A CALL TO SERVICE FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2011

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 24-03-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A Call to Service for America's Youth				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Coates				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Oliver L. Norrell III Department of Command, Leadership, & Management				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Should the United States government implement a policy for mandatory national service in the Armed Forces? The United States has a rich history of its citizens, noncitizens and other US nationals serving in its Armed Forces within a voluntary status and under conscription. Mandatory national service in the military is not a new concept; it has been a means utilized to fill and resource formations well before the establishment of the government of the United States. Although not having any formal requirement to muster, to this day, in many of the states' constitutions, all able-bodied men are identified as being members of the militia. This is not to be confused with the states' National Guard. Based on available resources and external threats, mandatory service has been required and suspended from time to time. This paper discusses the introduction of a national service program designed to promote nationalism, support diversity, and provide for the common defense all while providing an opportunity for millions of disengaged young people the chance to be more productive members of society.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Conscription, the Draft and National Service					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 26	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

A CALL TO SERVICE FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Charles J. Coates
TITLE: A Call to Service for America's Youth
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 24 March 2011 WORD COUNT: 5,162 PAGES: 26
KEY TERMS: Conscription, the Draft and National Service
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Should the United States government implement a policy for mandatory national service in the Armed Forces? The United States has a rich history of its citizens, noncitizens and other US nationals serving in its Armed Forces within a voluntary status and under conscription. Mandatory national service in the military is not a new concept; it has been a means utilized to fill and resource formations well before the establishment of the government of the United States. Although not having any formal requirement to muster, to this day, in many of the states' constitutions, all able-bodied men are identified as being members of the militia. This is not to be confused with the states' National Guard. Based on available resources and external threats, mandatory service has been required and suspended from time to time. This paper discusses the introduction of a national service program designed to promote nationalism, support diversity, and provide for the common defense all while providing an opportunity for millions of disengaged young people the chance to be more productive members of society.

A CALL TO SERVICE FOR AMERICA'S YOUTH

It may be laid down, as a primary position, and the basis of our system, that every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government, owes not only a proportion of his property, but even of his personal services to the defense of it, and consequently that the Citizens of America (with a few legal and official exceptions) from 18 to 50 Years of Age should be borne on the Militia Rolls, provided with uniform Arms, and so far accustomed to the use of them, that the Total strength of the Country might be called forth at Short Notice on any very interesting Emergency.¹

—George Washington

Should the United States Government implement a policy for mandatory national service in the Armed Forces? If it is determined that national service would be in the best interest of the country's national interest, what processes should be utilized and implemented to manage and mitigate predictable objections? Also, how can a policy ensure that the process is equitable and fair while achieving prescribed goals of producing leaders and productive members of society, prepared to lead and contribute to the nation and society as a whole?

Prior to the founding of the United States as an independent and sovereign nation state, involuntary service in the military had been a hallmark of the American tradition within the 13 original colonies. Upon the arrival of the earliest settlers, all able-bodied men were required to serve in their local militia. Service was required for the common defense. The early colonists were encroaching on the Native Americans' land. Needless to say, the Indians were not very enthusiastic about losing their property to an uninvited guest. As such, throughout the early history of America, there was a period of persistent conflict between the newly arrived settlers and the indigenous Native Americans. Although not having any formal requirement to muster, to this day, in many of the states' constitutions, all able-bodied men are identified as being members of the

militia. This paper examines the feasibility of implementing a national service program in order to promote nationalism, support diversity, provide for the common defense and most importantly, re-energize a diverse and challenged youth.

The condition of the nation's young people is a major concern to policy makers, the military and the nation's allies. According to a report from the New York Post, the White House and its allies are also making the case that the obesity epidemic affects national security; obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service.² On another occasion, while on a visit to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, First Lady Michelle Obama said that the military's push to turn recruits into health-conscious warriors could be a model for encouraging people across the U.S. to become more focused on fitness and nutrition.³

Because of this apparent trend it appears that the youth of America, to include both its native born and its immigrants, are facing a crisis of monumental proportions. There is overwhelming data that today's youth is obese, predisposed to using illegal drugs, and have an alarmingly high rate of engaging in criminal activity.⁴ It can be argued that the basis for this disturbing information is based on single-parent head of households, an ineffective public education system and to a lesser extent, having both parents working and unable to supervise their children.⁵ If this trend continues, the United States will be led by a generation that is ill-prepared for the tasks at hand and who may actually become a burden on society. Because of these conditions, this crisis demands attention and a comprehensive remedy in order to avoid a potential disaster with catastrophic repercussions.

There is a great deal of controversy associated with reinstating or implementing a program that leads to mandatory national service in the Armed Forces of the United States. This has been clearly demonstrated throughout our history. More recently, this debate should be at the forefront as the nation is engaged in 2 wars and countless military missions across the globe. However since 1973, during the last days of the Vietnam Conflict, the United States government eliminated the requirement for compulsory service in the Armed Forces, when it suspended the draft. Ironically, it did not concurrently eliminate the Selective Service System, which was established under Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1940, in anticipation of the United States' participation and involvement in World War II.⁶ During that time, the purpose of the draft was to fill the ranks, primarily of the Army, with personnel to meet anticipated manpower requirements which could not be met through recruiting volunteers for enlistment in the Armed Forces.

The debate centers on whether the burden of defending our national interest is being borne by a warrior class or even the lower classes. Because of this, there is concern that the upper echelons of society are impervious to the demands of securing the home land. However the intent of this paper is to leverage the resources of the Armed Forces to assist with the integration of the varied demographics which represent American society.

Needless to say, the United States is one of the most diverse societies in the world. However, with the proliferation of information, transportation and other activities associated with globalization, the integration of new immigrants into American society has been dramatically reduced. On arrival in the United States, newly-arrived

immigrants, in many cases have near instantaneous and continued contact with their families and friends from their homeland. In the past, as immigrants arrived in America most connections to the homeland had been severed by distance and a lack of technology. These new arrivals often migrated toward her fellow countrymen in neighborhoods and towns throughout the country.⁷ However, there seemed to be a sense that these new arrivals wanted to prove themselves worthy to their new countrymen.

As a new nation grew it often found itself in a constant state of war or conflict. This included a host of adversaries, such as the great European powers, the neighbors to the north and the south, (Canada and Mexico), internally during the Civil War and with the Native Americans during the protracted Indian Wars. For whatever the reason, there always seemed to be an opportunity for immigrants to prove their loyalty to their new homeland with service in the military. Some would argue that the nation's natural love of fighting is what gave it the competitive edge when taming the continent and in dealing with older and more established nation-states. One of the primary reasons that service in the military was so universally accepted is because it was expected and encouraged.

One of the main concerns facing the nation's political leadership and its citizens are the long-term effects associated with a generation of citizens who will grow up to be in a less advantageous position than their parents or grandparents. Current trends seem to indicate that this generation will be at a disadvantage from the several previous generations.⁸ It is a duty and obligation for the nation's leadership to identify and determine a strategy that would produce a productive, self-disciplined, ambitious and

educated youth, regardless of national origin, who are prepared to lead and contribute to the management and leadership of the homeland. Based on a brief historical review, current political analysis, economic trends and a national consensus, the youth of the United States will be facing immense challenges based on a disintegration of the family unit and an overwhelmed education system.⁹

It is highly desirable and in the national interest to develop and provide a means to refocus our youth, provide employment that inherently will reduce crime, and promote diversity and acceptance of other cultures during periods of training while participating in an activity that is greater than the individual.¹⁰ The young people of America need a program or process to assist them with overcoming the hurdles which have become very evident in the past 20 years.

Without aggressive action this country faces the possibility of losing a generation of producers, leaders and workers.¹¹ This is a national security issue. In the short term this option employs the nation's youth and provides trained soldiers for the Armed Forces. In the long term, if implemented this may produce the next "Greatest Generation."

A Brief History of National Service

National Service has been identified as a key component of a successful democracy. Thomas Jefferson contributed to the conversation by stating the following:

The Greeks by their laws, and the Romans by the spirit of their people, took care to put into the hands of their rulers no such engine of oppression as a standing army. Their system was to make every man [sic] a soldier, and oblige him to repair to the standard of his country whenever that was reared. This made them invincible; and the same remedy will make us so.¹²

A great deal of controversy surrounds any policy that would require mandatory national service. Unfortunately it appears that the reality is most people that weigh in on the debate do not have an understanding of the historical precedent associated with the nation's long tradition of requiring mandatory participation in the common security and defense. The history of America is a story of service. Since the early days, immediately after discovery of the Western Hemisphere by European explorers, security had been a paramount concern of the earliest colonists. Prior to the official establishment of colonies, early settlers recognized the need for collective security and protection from hostile Indians. In March 1631, The Massachusetts Bay settlement established laws that made it mandatory that all able bodied men were required to join the militia with their own weapon. Soon after this the Puritans established five militia companies;¹³ this is regarded as the birth of the National Guard. The practice of requiring all able bodied men to participate with their own musket was a challenge. This sometimes became a problem since weapons were expensive. However, the local governing body would often provide a musket, with the stipulation that the militia member would make good on the loan as they were able.¹⁴ Similar laws were enacted in Virginia, with the added condition that anyone caught selling or trading muskets to the Indians are subject to hanging.¹⁵ This practice was not exclusive to the English, early Dutch settlers employed similar policy supported by law in their colonies in New York, at the time known as New Amsterdam.¹⁶ The colonial policy was consistent, all able bodied men were required to serve in the militia, with the exception of judges and clergy.

This tradition continued for many years. Unfortunately, disruptions in the practice appeared during American Revolution. At that time the colonies were a loose

confederation. Each colony had a distinct government and all the people were not in complete support of breaking away from the Crown.¹⁷ However, each colony still had a militia and its members were expected to support the revolution. Eventually, in February 1778, after several of the states were unable to meet recruiting goals, the Continental Congress called on 11 of the States to formally institute a draft to pull men from the militias into the Continental Army.¹⁸ The Continental Congress could only request support because it really didn't have any power itself. The strength of the revolution rested with the states.

At that time, the challenge was that each state had a different enlistment policy for its militia.¹⁹ This included the length of periods of enlistment, and the status of the states inhabitants. Prior to the introduction of slavery and other less oppressive means of impression, such as the practice of indentured servitude,²⁰ the only requirement was that the individual was able-bodied. Later this requirement was changed to any able-bodied freemen. Also, the enlistments in the state militias varied from just a few months to a year.²¹

The intent and the purpose of drafting troops from the militias into the Continental Army was to provide the commander, specifically General Washington, with a force that he could more effectively manage and utilize without the distraction of having units, organizations and troops dropping out of the fight due to rolling enlistments. Since there was not a federal government, the states drafted men into their militias, even though technically they were already in the militia as required by law. These units were turned over to the control of the Continental Army. This was because the central government did not have the authority to conscript. Years later, President James Madison and his

Secretary of War James Monroe unsuccessfully attempted to create a national draft of 40,000 men during the War of 1812.²² This proposal was fiercely criticized on the Senate floor by Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster who opposed the creation of a federal force while ignoring the utility of utilizing the militia.²³

The administration asserts the right to fill the ranks of the regular army by compulsion.... Is this, sir, consistent with the character of a free government? Is this civil liberty? Is this the real character of our Constitution? No, sir, indeed it is not.... Where is it written in the Constitution, in what article or section is it contained, that you may take children from their parents, and parents from their children, and compel them to fight the battles of any war, in which the folly or the wickedness of government may engage it? Under what concealment has this power lain hidden, which now for the first time comes forth, with a tremendous and baleful aspect, to trample down and destroy the dearest rights of personal liberty?²⁴

There is no evidence that Senator Webster was against national service, but was in fact concerned with the president's attempt to raise an army independent of the militia and without the control of the states or congress. The act passed but the war ended prior to it being implemented.

The main point to be drawn here is that there was no opposition to national service during the war of 1812, but attention was raised concerning the means by which forces were to be employed and how they were to contribute to the national effort in defense of the young country. Congress explicitly believed that it was the responsibility of the states to raise forces through their respective militias and the utilization was to be executed in accordance with the constitution.²⁵ The United States, in its early history, was more like a confederation; each state had a responsibility and duty to contribute for the national defense. Congress is tasked to raise armies. By the time of the Mexican War, waged from 1846–1848, mandatory militia service had been replaced by “voluntary membership in local military companies, which Congress allowed to be

organized under the militia clause of the Constitution.”²⁶ During the period between the Revolutionary War and the early stages of Civil War, the needs of a small standing army were met with volunteers.²⁷ However as the war dragged on it became more difficult for the states to fill their depleted ranks within their militias, with volunteers. After very heated debates on both sides of the Mason Dixon line, during the Civil War, passed and implement national conscription acts.²⁸

In the North, exemptions from the draft could be bought for \$300 or by finding a substitute draftee. This clause in the act, led to bloody draft riots in New York City, where protesters were outraged that exemptions were effectively granted only to the wealthiest U.S. citizens.²⁹ Union troops fresh from the fighting at Gettysburg we sent to put down the riots. The Confederacy resorted to national conscription before the Union, passing a “Draft Law” on 16 April 1862.³⁰ Bernard Rostker noted that this was “ironic”:

[I]n 1814, those [states] who now made up the Confederacy had argued that it was the right of the states to raise the militia and had blocked President Madison’s proposal for a national—federal—draft. Now, in 1862, it was the “Confederate Congress [that] threw the theory of states’ rights to the winds and enacted the first ‘Conscription Law’.”³¹

As the American Civil War came to an end, a paradigm shift was taking place unnoticed; the United States was slowly evolving into a federal republic with a strong central government. This change began during the American Civil War. Although the United States may not have been aware that it was becoming a world power, the Europeans were taking notice of the American innovations on the battle field. As a result, most of the major European powers sent observers to witness and record the American Civil War.³² New York Times correspondent Poultney Bigelow asked Kaiser Wilhelm about a quote attributed to Field Marshal von Moltke which alleged he said it

was a waste of time to study the American Civil War because it was simply two mobs slaughtering each other. To clarify this obscenity the Kaiser stated the following:

Gen. von Moltke never said any such thing, nor had he any such opinion," said the Emperor. "On the contrary, he had the highest respect for your generals, as everyone acquainted with his administration of the general staff must know. Even to this day, every German officer is obliged to study carefully the history and tactics of your war. We Germans are thoroughly acquainted with the campaigns of Grant, Sheridan, Sherman, and Lee, and your other generals. Gen. von Moltke has repeatedly expressed his admiration of them to me. You taught us the art of entrenchments, transportation, military telegraphing, and forced marches; in fact, the whole science of military warfare was illustrated in your war. Gen. von Moltke always recognized this and that we had much to learn from your generals. Nothing could be further from the truth than that silly story.³³

With a more visible and predominate role in world affairs it was inevitable that the US military would be engaged again in conflict. The next major military affair was the Spanish American War. During the Spanish American War the United States did not need to implement a draft. After the suspicious sinking of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor on February 15 1898, public support for the war was overwhelming.³⁴ At the time the United States had only 28,000 regular army Soldiers but it raised an impressive volunteer force.³⁵ Also the United States' casualties were relatively few, the war was over fairly quickly and the end result was that the United States was now a world power, as it defeated the declining Spanish Empire.³⁶ This was a prelude to the National Army, raised during the First World War that was an unorganized combination of several different components.

After the assassination of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the Great Powers were positioning themselves for war. Europe was a continent that was bound by treaties and alliances. Franz Ferdinand was the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Austria was a German speaking country with strong ties with Germany. The

Arch Duke was killed by a Serbian Nationalist; the Serbians were historically aligned with Russia, another Slavic Country. France and Russia were in an alliance as was England and France. This all made for a very complicated situation. After the first shots were fired, Europe was at war and it spread globally because each of the major European powers has extensive colonies abroad, especially in Africa and Asia.

The mood in the United States was to remain neutral and avoid getting involved in the pending disaster.³⁷ However, Calvin Coolidge stated "After all, the chief business of the American people is business."³⁸ The United States saw an opportunity to supply both sides during the early days of the War. Unfortunately, while supply both sides during the war, United States ships became targets and were eventually sank. Once again the United States was about to enter the War. Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt were political adversaries. Roosevelt proposed raising Volunteer Divisions; no doubt based on his personal experience in the Spanish American War.³⁹ However, Wilson took the initiative and proposed the Selective Service Act of 1917. This act took into consideration the problems associated with the Civil War Draft.⁴⁰ It was designed to be as equitable as possible and avoided, for the most part, the appearance of favoritism for the more affluent. It was generally perceived as being relatively fair, in that all were considered for service but only those selected by random lottery were required to serve.⁴¹

The Selective Service Act of 1917 did not produce the negative reaction that the Civil War draft had caused. Interestingly, the army suspended accepting volunteers and relied primarily on conscripts to fill 70% of the ranks.⁴² The conscript Army grew to approximately 4 million men. After the conclusion of the war, the Regular Army was

reduced to 200,000 men.⁴³ Likewise conscription was utilized for both World War Two and the Korean Wars. The lessons learned from World War One were again utilized and produced a system that was instrumental to the successful raising of the Army of the United States that was composed of the Regular Army, the Army National Guard and the United States Army Reserve. Shortfalls in manning were filled with conscripts. The process appeared to be a success. Prior to World War Two, On 30 June 1939, the Regular Army numbered 187,893 men. On the same date the National Guard totaled 199,491 men. The major combat units included nine infantry divisions, two cavalry divisions, one mechanized cavalry (armor) brigade in the Regular Army and eighteen infantry divisions in the National Guard.⁴⁴ Modern equipment was for the most part nonexistent and training in the National Guard units varied from fair to poor.⁴⁵

As discussed previously, the United States Government developed and implemented a process for national mandatory service that was extremely efficient while successfully filling manpower procurement requirements for three major conflicts. It appears that the nation had a process that was designed to meet an external threat while utilizing a system and process that spread the sacrifice relatively evenly. Unfortunately the lessons learned and the practices that were so effective were discarded. During the Viet Nam War, there was a conscious decision not to utilize the Reserve Components of the Army as they had been used in past conflicts. This decision had long term negative effects. Both Reserve Components still had manpower procurement requirements that were intended to meet the nation's strategic military reserve needs. The United States was knee deep in the Cold War and the Soviet threat in Europe was perceived as very real and eminent. There was a justified concern to

resource a force to meet its obligation. Because of the policy not to use the Reserve Components in Viet Nam it became apparent that these two components offered a sanctuary for those that did not want to serve in Viet Nam. Enlistment in the Reserve Components became a preferred option for many, especially for those who had the influence to get their children enlisted in the Guard and Reserve.⁴⁶

The issue of enlisting in the Guard and Reserve and the granting of educational deferments, created the perception that only the lower and disadvantaged classes and those who did not have political connections were being drafted into service in Viet Nam. Although it can be argued that the draft was necessary and well intended, the Military Selective Service Act of 1967 resulted in disaster. There was unprecedented protest and resistance to the draft. Eventually in 1975, President Ford eliminated the draft; even though it has been determined that conscription is legal, despite arguments citing the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment.⁴⁷ The challenge is not the legality but the manner in which the process is executed.

The Current State and Future with Mandatory National Service

According to many senior military leaders, The United States military today is the most professional it has ever been. It is the most educated, best trained and best equipped in world history.⁴⁸ Many military leaders contend that a draft would be counterproductive to the gains made since the end of the draft after the Viet Nam War. Senior military leaders also state that a draft is not needed because the military has been able, for the most part, to meet its recruiting goals.⁴⁹ Because service is voluntary, it is better prepared to perform its mission than Soldier drafted against their will.⁵⁰ The volunteer force provides intangible benefits that are not evident with conscription.⁵¹

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that the draft had positive social aspects but was not needed to support military requirements.

Compulsory induction was "powerful" in bringing citizens together from every class and ethnic group, through the "depth and breadth" of the nation, helping create a microcosm of society and a sense of shared sacrifice, Mullen told an audience in Chambersburg last week, when someone suggested bringing the draft back. But the nation's highest ranking military officer doesn't want it. "I would not trade the military I have now."⁵²

History has shown since 1973 when the draft was eliminated that the all volunteer force has successfully met the needs and requirements associated with the nation's national military strategy. There have been numerous studies and publications that support this claim.⁵³ However the argument presented in this paper is not whether or not the United States military and, in particular the United States Army, needs a draft to support its manpower procurement needs, but whether the country as a whole, needs a uniting activity that bonds us all together and serves as a foundation for our national identity and as a means to provide the disenfranchised, underprivileged, those with poor life style habits, to include eating and drug disorders, as well as those that are considered in the upper classes of society, the opportunity to integrate and interact. A program that requires mandatory National Service is a program that can be a tool to break down barriers and produce a more goal oriented, focused and productive generation.

How to Harness this Resource for the Good of the Nation and Its Youth

The Selective Service System currently has a pool of potential candidates and the process and procedures associated with this action are currently available. In 1980 President Carter made it mandatory for all 18 to 26 year old males to register with the Selective Service.⁵⁴ This law remains in effect today. The key to success for any

controversial initiative is that it needs to be presented in a way that stresses the positive factors and can be described as an action that is in the best interest of all the parties involved. It is important to recognize that implementing a program for a mandatory national service in the Armed Forces of the United States would be an extremely contentious issue even if presented in a clear and transparent manner

In order to avoid the controversy associated with the Nation's last draft, It would be beneficial and practical to implement a plan that would require all graduating high school seniors and those reaching the age of 18 to serve in a voluntary status for 10 months during which time those males would be exposed to a uniform regiment of instruction and a basic introduction to military service. This program would include a basic training phase followed by more advanced training in basic infantry tactics, combat medic certification, or a basic course in military engineering. The pretext for including the above listed military occupational specialties is to provide alternative training opportunities for those with conscientious objector issues and infantry training produces a general purpose Soldier at a lower cost than other specialties. Engineers and medics can easily convert to civilian jobs. Also, enlistment in this program would be for four years. This would include 10 months of basic training and the remaining time served in a reserve status. Upon completion of the training, the successful candidates would become eligible for federal school loans, regardless of their family's economic situation and a fast track program to citizenship for legal residents.

All high school graduates and those who have reached the age of 18 would be eligible, regardless of past indiscretions, excluding convictions for violent offenses. This would include those with mild weight control issues, mild drug use, and those with petty

criminal convictions. The purpose of this plan is provided a reset, for those that have made mistakes and are seeking a remedy or redemption prior to entering college or going into the workforce.

This option could provide two primary benefits. First, candidates would have an opportunity to serve with a diverse population and gain a better understanding of American values and traditions. Second, a regimented program of instruction would provide a means by which the candidate would have a better chance of overcoming the hurdles associated with a failing school system and a dysfunctional family life if that is the case.⁵⁵ If properly implemented, this program provides participating individuals with a chance to create a clean slate and prepare them for the challenges ahead and potentially for leadership positions in the civilian, government and military sectors. The only active duty requirement would be for training. However, there would be a requirement to maintain a unit regimental affiliation for the purposes of accountability. The entitlements would in effect make it universal, as it would be personally detrimental not to take advantage of the benefits.

Conclusion

Mandatory National Service should be seriously considered. If it is successfully implemented, it can serve as a means to refocus our youth, provide employment which inherently will reduce crime, and promote diversity and acceptance of other cultures. The young people of America need a program or process to assist them with overcoming the hurdles that have become very evident in the past 20 years. Without aggressive action, this country faces the possibility of losing a generation of producers, leaders and workers. This is a national security issue. Mandatory National Service provides an incentive and opportunity for the youth of America to overcome hurdles

associated with an economic downturn and youthful indiscretions. Currently there is a trend spreading across the country which local law enforcement agencies, the National Guard and other community based organizations are working to develop boot camp type programs as last resort to rescue troubled young adults. It is obvious that there is a consensus that this type of training has a beneficial effect. It is interesting to observe that programs designed to help motivate citizens to become more productive members of society are reserved for those with problems. There is a great likelihood that this type of training would be even more advantageous if it was available and required from everyone. Mandatory National Service provides options and alternatives to an at risk population while providing an opportunity for employment, education. It also serves as an investment in the future of the nation. If implemented this plan provides elements of historic remedies utilized during similar periods of uncertainty and economic challenges. This proposal has the potential to unite a diverse population with a sense of purpose and produce a motivated workforce.

Endnotes

¹ George Washington, in "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" in a letter to Alexander Hamilton (2 May 1783); published in *The Writings of George Washington* (1938), edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, Vol. 26, p. 289.

² Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Childhood Obesity Battle Is Taken Up by First Lady," *New York Times*, February 9, 2010.

³ The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/27/michelle-obamas-obesity-f_n_814711.html (accessed February 6, 2010).

⁴ Douglas Stanglin, "Pentagon: A third of U.S. youth too fat, sickly to serve," *USA Today*, November 4, 2009.

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