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Subject Area - Military

Mandatory Military Service

Is mandatory military service a good thing for the country?

Both World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War have one thing in common most who served were drafted through a mandatory system. Recently, high ranking Democratic Congressman, Charles Rangel, proposed reinstating the draft. Is mandatory military service a good thing for the country? I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a military draft, as well as different types of compulsory military service.

When people hear about a military draft the first thing that comes to mind is the Vietnam War. The Vietnam draft system was flawed to say the least. Class played a major role in the draft. It was quite easy for those with general knowledge of the Selective Service system to avoid being drafted. Many believe some of the wealthy used their connections to get into the safer branches of the military. President Bush's political opponents have accused him of using his father's connections during the Vietnam War to get into the relatively safe Texas Air National Guard.

College students could apply for student deferment, and at the time most college students were upper class. Student deferment would last until the student finished their studies and earned a degree. If a draft was instituted today college students would only be deferred until the end of their semester.

During the Vietnam War, medical deferments were common. Physical problems were legitimate reasons to be exempt from active duty service, but the lower class was at a disadvantage because of fewer medical records. For example, former presidential candidate Howard Dean was exempt from serving in the military during the Vietnam War because of a back problem for which he had medical records of from a prominent New York doctor. Some of the poor didn't have the medical records to support their ailments, and were forced to serve.

According to draft supporters, a draft would unite the country. Today, most young people aren't actively engaged in their government. A draft would get everyone invested in our foreign policy. Congressman Rangel believes instituting the draft would lead to fewer wars. It's one thing supporting a pre-emptive strike on a country when others in the volunteer military will be performing the mission - but would you support it if you were on the front lines of that pre-emptive strike?

Another question that must be asked is-- Should those who don't want any part of the military be forced to serve their country in the event of a draft? Our military's objective is to defend freedom in our own country and in the world. So, a draft, in some ways, sacrifices the very values we are supposed to be defending. The Supreme Court has ruled that conscientious objection can be from religious or non-religious beliefs but can not be because of a particular war. Many objectors have served in a weapons free branch of the military, or in some form of community service.

According to the Selective Service System, they can evaluate and induct everyone drafted within 193 days of an emergency. With such rapid progress, is mandatory military service now necessary? The job of the Selective Service is to provide manpower to the armed forces. Therefore, the 193 days does not include the rigorous training that is standard with the

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U.S. military. With such great technology at its disposal, the U.S. military makes sure its members are knowledgeable about all its weapons systems.

There are many issues that must be addressed to avoid mass problems if a draft were held today. Today, homosexuals are barred from serving in the military. What would stop any person who doesn't want to serve from claiming to be a homosexual? Also, would women be drafted? Today, only men have to register for the Selective Service.

If the situation in the Middle East continues to worsen and spread, our government may have no other choice but to place more boots on the ground. The only way to solve troop shortages would be to re-instate the draft. We must hope that our government would only send us in harms way when this country is truly in danger.

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