

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON
SELECTIVE SERVICE

EXECUTIVE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20506

May, 1967

Dear Friend:

President Johnson's Message to the Congress on Selective Service and the Report which appears in the first 63 pages of this document are of urgent concern to the young people in all the neighborhoods of America, and, in fact, to every citizen. The back-up material is also of importance to every interested American.

Accordingly, we thought you would like to have a copy of the President's Message and our recent Report on Selective Service. If additional copies of the Report are desired, they can be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 20402.

The National Advisory
Commission on Selective Service

HOLD FOR RELEASE FOR MONDAY MARCH 6, 1967

NOTICE FOR CORRESPONDENTS:

There must be no premature release of this Message. Nor should any of its contents be paraphrased, alluded to or hinted at in earlier stories. There is a TOTAL EMBARGO on this Message until 12 Noon, EST; March 6, 1967.

Office of the White House Press Secretary
San Antonio, Texas

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

MESSAGE ON SELECTIVE SERVICE

The Background

The knowledge that military service must sometimes be borne by -- and imposed on -- free men so their freedom may be preserved is woven deeply into the fabric of the American experience.

Americans have been obliged to take up arms in the cause of liberty since our earliest days on these shores. From the militiaman who shouldered his musket to protect his community in the wilderness, to the young recruit of today who serves the common defense and then returns to civilian life, we have known the price of freedom as well as its glory.

In 1940, the mounting threat of Axis aggression was poised against us. The 76th Congress responded by making compulsory military service a legal obligation in peacetime as well as war. Although this was the first peacetime draft in our history, it was an action consistent with our evolving traditions and responsibilities. As President Roosevelt said on that occasion:

America has adopted selective service in time of peace, and, in doing so, has broadened and enriched our basic concepts of citizenship. Beside the clear democratic ideals of equal rights, equal privileges and equal opportunities, we have set forth the underlying other duties, obligations and responsibilities of equal service.

Americans ever since then have come to know well those "broadened concepts of citizenship" of which Franklin Roosevelt spoke. Little more than a year later, war began. The Selective Service System established by that foresighted 76th Congress mustered the greatest military force in the history of the world.

After the end of World War II, in the face of new hostile threats, the 80th Congress met its obligation by enacting new selective service legislation. Six times since then, succeeding Congresses -- the 81st, the 82nd, the 84th, the 86th, and the 88th -- have kept it alive as an indispensable part of our defense against an aggression which has taken different shapes but has never disappeared. Twice -- in Korea, and today in Vietnam -- we have borne arms in the field of battle to counter that aggression.

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Thus, for more than a quarter of a century, through total war and cold war and limited war, selective service has provided the nation with the ability to respond quickly and appropriately to the varied challenges confronting our democracy.

The Problem Today

The Selective Service Act under which men today are drafted into our Armed Forces is now almost two decades old, about the age of many of the men who stand watch on the frontiers of freedom throughout the world.

That generation, whose lifetime coincides with our draft law, has grown to maturity in a period of sweeping change. We are in many ways a different nation -- more urban, more mobile, more populous.

The youth of the country themselves have added most heavily to our growth in numbers. In 1948, when the present Act was passed, less than 1.2 million male Americans were 18 years old. Today that number has increased about 60% to almost 1.9 million, and will exceed 2 million in the 1970's.

Because of this population increase, many more men of their generation are available for military duty than are required.

-- A decade ago, about 70 percent of the group eligible for duty had to serve with the Armed Forces to meet our military manpower needs.

-- Today, the need is for less than 50 percent, and only about a third or less of this number must be involuntarily inducted -- even under the conditions of war. When the firing stops, as we all fervently hope it will soon, the requirements will be for fewer still.

The danger of inequity is imbedded in these statistics. It arises when not every eligible man must be called upon to serve. It is intensified when the numbers of men needed are relatively small in relation to the numbers available.

Fairness has always been one of the goals of the Selective Service System. When the present Act was passed in 1948, one of its underlying assumptions was that the obligation and benefits of military service would be equitably borne.

The changing conditions which have come to our society since that Act was established have prompted concern -- in the Executive Branch, in the Congress, in the Nation generally -- with whether the System might have drifted from the original concept of equity.

That concern deepened as young men were called to the field of combat.

A Selective Service System, of course, must operate well and fairly in peace as well as in times of conflict. But it is in the glare of conflict that the minds of all of us are focused most urgently on the need to review the procedures by which some men are selected and some are not.

Last July, by Executive Order, I appointed a National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, composed of 20 citizens, distinguished and diverse in their representation of important elements of our national life.

I asked that Commission, headed by Mr. Burke Marshall, to study these questions, and indeed whether the need for the draft itself was ended or soon might be.

I instructed the Commission to consider the past, present and prospective functioning of selective service and other systems of national service in the light of the following factors:

- Fairness to all citizens;
- Military manpower requirements;
- The objective of minimizing uncertainty and interference with individual careers and education;
- Social, economic and employment conditions and goals;
- Budgetary and administrative considerations; and
- Any other factors the Commission might deem relevant.

The Commission undertook this responsibility with seriousness of purpose, and a clear recognition of the abiding importance these issues hold in American life today. It consulted with or sought the opinions of national leaders, governors, mayors and officials of the Federal government; educators and students; business groups and labor unions; veterans organizations, religious leaders and others broadly representing every sector of our society. I asked people across the land to send their thoughts to the Commission and many did.

The Commission's work is now concluded. Its report has been made available to the American public. I have studied that report carefully.

I have also had the benefit of two other recent studies relating to the same problems. Another distinguished group of leading citizens reviewed the selective service situation for the House Armed Services Committee. Its conclusions have been made available to me. Earlier, at my direction, the Secretary of Defense conducted a study of the relationship of the draft military manpower utilization policies. It was completed in June of last year.

These reports have confirmed that continuation of the draft is still essential to our national security. They have also established that inequities do result from present selection policies, that policies designed for an earlier period operate unevenly under today's conditions, creating unfairness in the lives of some, promoting uncertainty in the minds of more.

To provide the military manpower this nation needs for its security and to assure that the system of selection operates as equitably as possible, I propose that:

1. The Selective Service law under which men can be inducted into the Armed Forces be extended for a four-year period, upon its expiration on June 30, 1967.
2. Men be inducted beginning at 19 years of age, reversing the present order of calling the oldest first, so that uncertainties now generated in the lives of young men will be reduced.
3. Policies be tightened governing undergraduates college deferments so that those deferments can never become exemptions from military service, and providing for no further post-graduate deferments except for those in medical and dental schools.

4. Firm rules be formulated, to be applied uniformly throughout the country, in determining eligibility for all other types of deferment.
5. A fair and impartial random (FAIR) system of selection be established to determine the order of call for all men eligible and available for the draft.
6. Improvements in the Selective Service System be immediately effected to assure better service to the registrant both in counselling and appeals, better information to the public regarding the System's operation and broader representation on local boards of the communities they serve.
7. A study be conducted by the best management experts in the government of the effectiveness, cost and feasibility of a proposal made by the National Advisory Commission to restructure the organization of the Selective Service System.
8. The National Commission on Selective Service be continued for another year to provide a continuing review of the system that touches the lives of so many young Americans and their families.
9. Enlistment procedures for our National Guard and Reserve units be strengthened to remove inequities and to ensure a high state of readiness for those units.

Continuation of the Draft Law

The United States must meet its military commitments for the national security, for the preservation of peace and for the defense of freedom in the world. It must be able to do this under any circumstance, under any condition, under any challenge.

This fundamental necessity is the bedrock of our national policy upon which all other considerations must rest.

To maintain this ability we must continue the draft.

The volunteer tradition is strong in our Armed Forces, as it is in our national heritage. Except for the periods of major war in this century, it has been the chief source of our military manpower since the earliest days of the Republic.

It must remain so. Our Armed Forces will continue to rely mainly on those who volunteer to serve. This is not only consistent with the American tradition. It is also the best policy for the Services themselves, since it assures a highly motivated and professionally competent career force.

Improving the quality of service life and increasing the rewards for service itself encourage volunteering. We have taken a number of actions toward this end and will initiate still others:

- Four military pay raises in each of the last four year, averaging a total increase of 33 percent in basic pay. I shall shortly recommend another increase.

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- A military "Medicare" program which expands medical care for the dependents of those on active duty, as well as for retired members and their dependents.
- The Cold War GI Bill of Rights, which provides education, training, medical and home loan benefits to returning servicemen.
- The Vietnam Conflict Servicemen and Veterans Act of 1967, which I proposed last month, to provide additional benefits to members of the Armed Forces and their dependents.
- I have asked the Secretary of Defense to submit to me this year a comprehensive study of the military compensation and retirement system.
- To attract more physicians, dentists and other members of the health professions to volunteer for military service, I am directing the Secretary of Defense to develop a broad program of medical scholarships. Students taking advantage of these scholarships would commit themselves to longer terms of obligated service.

At the same time that we have been increasing the incentives for volunteer service, we have also taken steps to reduce our requirements for men who must be drafted.

- I have directed that the Services place civilians in jobs previously held by men in uniform wherever this can be done without impairing military effectiveness. During fiscal 1967, 74,000 former military jobs will be filled by civilians. During the next fiscal year, an additional 40,000 such jobs will be so filled. If these measures were not taken, our draft calls would have to be much higher.
- Starting last year, under Project 100,000, the military Services have revised mental and physical standards to admit young men who were being rejected -- more than half of whom had sought to volunteer. As a result, the Services will accept this year 40,000 men who would have been disqualified under former standards. Next year, the Defense Department's goal is to accept 100,000 such men.
- Finally, the Secretary of Defense is taking steps to expand opportunities for women in the Services, thus further reducing the number of men who must be called involuntarily for duty.

But in spite of all we can and will do in this regard, we cannot realistically expect to meet our present commitments or our future requirements with a military force relying exclusively on volunteers.

We know that vulnerability to the draft is a strong motivating factor in the decision of many young men to enlist. Studies have shown that in the relatively normal years before the build-up in Vietnam, two out of every five enlistees were so motivated. Since then, the proportion has been considerably higher.

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Research has also disclosed that volunteers alone could be expected to man a force of little more than 2 million.

Our military needs have been substantially greater than that ever since we first committed troops to combat in Korea in the summer of 1950. The average strength of our Armed Forces in the years between the end of hostilities in Korea and the build-up in Vietnam was 2.7 million. Today, we have 3.3 million men under arms, and this force will increase still further by June 1968 if the conflict is not concluded by then.

The question, whether we could increase incentives sufficiently to attract an exclusively volunteer force larger than any such force we have had in the past, has been subjected to intensive study.

That study concluded that the costs would be difficult to determine precisely, but clearly they would be very high.

Far more important is the position of weakness to which an exclusively volunteer force -- with no provision for selective service -- would expose us. The sudden need for more men than a volunteer force could supply would find the nation without the machinery to respond.

That lack of flexibility, that absence of power to expand in quick response to sudden challenge, would be totally incompatible with an effective national defense. In short, it would force us to gamble with the Nation's security.

We look to, and work for, the day the fighting will end in Vietnam. We hope -- it is the most profound hope of this Administration as it is of this generation of Americans -- that the years beyond that day will be years of diminishing tension in the world, of silent guns and smaller armies. The total efforts of this government will be constantly directed toward reaching that time.

But although we are hopeful, we are realists too, with a realism bred into us through long and lasting experience. Any responsible appraisal of world conditions leads inevitably to this conclusion: We must maintain the capability for flexible response which we have today.

The draft is one of the essential and crucial instruments which assures us of that flexibility.

I recommend legislation to extend for four years the authority, which expires on June 30, 1967, to induct men into the Armed Forces.

The Order of Call

The general procedure today for the selection of draft-eligible men is in the order of "oldest first" -- from 26 downward.

In the period prior to the Vietnam build-up, when draft calls were small, the average age for involuntary induction was between 22 and 24 years.

All three of the recent studies of the draft reveal that the current order of call is undesirable from the point of view of everyone involved -- and is actually the reverse of what it should be:

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- For the young men themselves, it increases the period of uncertainty and interferes with the planning of lives and careers.
- For employers, it causes hardships when employees are lost to the draft who have been trained, acquired skills and settled in their jobs.
- For the Selective Service System, it proliferates the number of deferment applications and appeals. Claims for dependency and occupational deferments are much more frequent for men over the age of 20.
- For the Armed Forces, it creates problems. The Services have found that older recruits are generally less adaptable than are younger ones to the rigors of military training.

The time has clearly come to correct these conditions and remove the uncertainties which the present order of call promotes.

I will issue an Executive Order directing that in the future, as other measures I am proposing are put into effect, men be drafted beginning at age 19.

Deferment Inequities

Almost 2 million young men -- and soon many more -- reach age 19 each year. The foreseeable requirement is to draft only 100,000 to 300,000 of them annually. We must ask: How shall those relatively few be selected? As the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service phrased it, "Who serves when not all serve?"

Past procedures have, in effect, reduced the size of the available manpower pool by deferring men out of it.

This has resulted in inequities.

Two separate groups of men have been selected out of consideration for military service:

1. Rejectees

In the past, many thousands of men were rejected -- and put into deferred categories -- who could have performed satisfactorily, sharing the burdens as well as the benefits of service. Most of these were disadvantaged youths with limited educational backgrounds or in some cases, curable physical defects.

We are taking action to correct this inequity. I referred earlier to Project 100,000 established by the Secretary of Defense. Under this program, the Services are taking in men who would previously have been disqualified because of educational deficiencies or minor medical ailments.

With intensive instructions, practical on-the-job training and corrective medical measures, these young men can become good soldiers. Moreover, the remedial training they receive can enable them to live fuller and more productive lives. It is estimated that about half the men who enter the Armed Forces under this program will come as volunteers, the other half as draftees.

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This will be a continuing program. The nation can never again afford to deny to men who can effectively serve their country, the obligation -- and the right -- to share in a basic responsibility of citizenship.

2. College Students

The National Advisory Commission on Selective Service found the issue of college student deferments to be the most difficult problem for its consideration. The Commission could not reach unanimity. This is not surprising, for it was sufficiently representative of the nation itself to reflect the healthy diversity of opinion which centers on this subject.

Student deferments have resulted in inequities because many of those deferments have pyramided into exemptions from military service.

Deferred for undergraduate work, deferred further to pursue graduate study and then deferred even beyond that for fatherhood or occupational reasons, some young men have managed to pile deferment on deferment until they passed the normal cut-off point for induction.

In this regard, a recent survey revealed that only 27 percent of one age group of graduate school students past the age of 26 had served in the Armed Forces -- contrasted with approximately 70 percent of men of the same ages with educational backgrounds varying from college degrees to some high school training.

There is one group of post-graduate students to whom this condition does not apply -- men who are studying to be doctors and dentists. About half of them later serve as medical officers in the Armed Forces.

Their service is vital. Because their studies are essential to military manpower needs, students engaged in such programs must continue to be deferred until their education is completed.

I have concluded, however, that there is no justification for granting further deferments to other graduate school students.

To correct the inequities on the deferments of post-graduate students, I shall issue an Executive Order specifying that no deferments for post-graduate study be granted in the future, except for those men pursuing medical and dental courses.

Undergraduate students present a different problem for consideration.

Many citizens -- including a majority of the members of the National Advisory Commission -- hold that student deferments are of themselves inequitable because they grant to one group of men a special privilege not generally available to all. Their concern was heightened by the belief that a student deferment in a time of conflict might be an even greater privilege.

They contend that such deferments cannot properly be justified as being in the national interest. Moreover it is their conviction that the elimination of a student deferment policy would have no harmful effect on the educational process in this country. Indeed, they believe that the nation's experience with the returning veterans of other wars indicates that interruption of college studies for military service actually results for many men in a more

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mature approach and a greater capacity for study.

Others -- including a substantial minority of the Commission -- believe just as strongly that college deferments from service are not unfair -- however manifestly unfair are the conditions of life which permit some to go to college while others cannot.

They agree that the unpredictability of world conditions could conceivably work to the advantage of students who were able to defer their service. But they point out that the same unpredictability could work just as easily to opposite effect, that men who were deferred as college freshmen in 1963 would be graduating this spring into a world in which they could face the hazards of combat. Finally, this point of view calls attention to the fact that the elimination of student deferments would unduly complicate the officer procurement problems of the Armed Forces, for almost four out of five officers who come into the Services each year come from the Nation's colleges.

An issue so deeply important, with so many compelling factors on both sides, cannot be decided until its every aspect has been thoroughly explored.

I hope and expect that the Congress will debate the questions this issue poses for the Nation's youth and the Nation's future.

I will welcome the public discussion which the Commission report will surely stimulate.

I shall await the benefits of these discussions which will themselves be a great educational process for the Nation.

I will then take that Presidential action which, I believe, will best serve the national interest.

A Fair and Impartial Random (FAIR)
System of Selection

The paramount problem remains to determine who shall be selected for induction out of the many who are available.

Assuming that all the men available are equally qualified and eligible, how can that selection be made most fairly?

No question has received more thoughtful attention or more careful analysis.

There is no perfect solution. For the unavoidable truth is that complete equity can never be achieved when only some must be selected and only some must serve.

But a decision cannot be avoided. It is due. The question will become more urgent with the passing months and years.

I have concluded that the only method which approaches complete fairness is to establish a Fair and Impartial Random (FAIR) system of selection which will determine the order of call for all equally eligible men.

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That FAIR system would operate generally as follows:

- At age 18, all men would be examined to determine their physical and mental eligibility.
- All eligible men reaching age 19 before a designated date would be placed in a selection pool.
- The FAIR system would then determine their order of call.
- They would be selected in that order of call, for induction at age 19, to fill draft calls placed by the Department of Defense.
- Those not reached during this period would drop to a less vulnerable position on the list with the entry of the next year's group of eligible men into the selection pool.
- All men would retain their vulnerability to the draft, in diminishing order by age group up to 26, in the event of a national emergency. Those who had received deferments would continue liable, as at present, until their 35th birthday.

This system, giving young men a clear indication of a likelihood of being drafted, in conjunction with the "youngest first" order of call, will further reduce uncertainty in the planning of futures and careers.

I am instructing the Director of Selective Service, working in collaboration with the Secretary of Defense, to develop a Fair And Impartial Random (FAIR) system of selection to become fully operational before January 1, 1969. This system will determine the order of call for induction of qualified and available 19-year olds and older men as their deferments expire.

Selective Service Organizational Structure

The proposals I am presenting in this message have one common objective: Insofar as it is possible to do so, to make certain that men who must be called to serve their country, and fight and die for it if necessary, will be chosen equitably and justly.

The governing concept I propose for selection is one of equal and uniform treatment for all men in like circumstances.

The National Advisory Commission has reported that in order to achieve that objective in all its dimensions, the Selective Service System itself should be re-structured.

The Commission presented its conviction that the System's decentralized operation, with more than 4,000 neighborhood boards, 56 State headquarters and 95 appeal boards -- all functioning under general and sometimes inconsistent guidelines -- is not responsive to the requirements of our Nation today. It believed that uniformity of treatment would be difficult to achieve through that System.

The Commission recommended that the Selective Service System be consolidated. It suggested a coordinated structure of eight regions,

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embracing from 300 to 500 area offices located in major population centers and staffed with full-time government employees. It proposed a System modernized by means of new management techniques, communications technology and data processing equipment.

I believe these recommendations should be exposed to further searching analysis and study by management experts building on the work the Commission has done.

The Selective Service System has done a good job for America. For a quarter of a century those who have been responsible for its operation have provided the nation with an inspiring study of patriotic citizens volunteering their time and devotion to demanding tasks vitally affecting the national welfare.

Moreover, as I have already observed, the System itself has been flexible and responsive, meeting the widely varying calls for manpower placed on it over the past twenty years.

And beyond these considerations are others more difficult to measure, but deeply important nonetheless.

The Selective Service System is a part of America, a part of the process of our democracy, a part of our commitment to a full regard for the rights of the individual in our society. Because of the large number of registrants they must classify, many local draft boards in large cities cannot fulfill completely the function intended for them. But nonetheless the draft board concept is built on a uniquely American belief -- that local citizens can perform a valuable service to the government and at the same time personalize the government's procedures to a young man fulfilling one of his earliest and most serious obligations of citizenship.

We cannot lightly discard an institution with so valuable a record of effectiveness and integrity.

Neither can we afford to preserve it, if we find that in practice it cannot adapt to the new controlling concept of equal and uniform treatment.

These counter-balancing considerations highlight the need to subject the System's organization to intensive study by experts skilled in management techniques and methods on the basis of the Commission's work.

I am instructing the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Selective Service System and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget jointly to establish a Task Force to review the recommendations for a re-structured Selective Service System made by the National Advisory Commission. This review will determine the cost, the method of implementation, and the effectiveness of the System the Commission recommends, in view of the changes in the System I am proposing in this message.

In the meantime we can make certain changes to strengthen the System.

The Commission study brought into focus areas where immediate improvement can and should be put into effect.

I am instructing the Director of the Selective Service System to:

-- Assure that advisors and appeal agents are readily available to all registrants.

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- Examine the Sytem's appeals procedures to insure that the rights of the individual are fully protected.
- Improve the System's information policies so that all registrants and the public generally will better understand the System's operations.
- In conjunction with Governor Farris Bryant, Director of the Office of Emergency Planning, work with the governors to assure that all local boards are truly representative of the communities they serve and to submit periodic reports on the progress in this area.

Reserve Policies

The National Advisory Commission focused attention on the admin istration of enlistments into Reserve and National Guard units. The Commission expressed concern over the inequities it saw in the enlistment procedures of these units.

The Reserve forces are essential to our military posture and are an integral part of it. My first concern is that these forces be maintained at their authorized strengths, and in a state of readiness for deployment, if and when they are needed.

I also believe that the Reserve components should, like the active forces, be manned primarily by volunteers.

Two steps have recently been taken by the Secretary of Defense to assure greater equity in the enlistment policies of the Reserve components:

- Men who meet qualification standards must be accepted into Reserve units in the order of their application.
- Reservists who are not satisfactorily fulfilling their obligation will be ordered to active duty for up to 24 months.

Authority to order such reservists to duty is provided in the Department of Defense 1967 Appropriations Act. I recommend that such authority be incorporated in permanent legislation.

I have concluded that two additional actions should now be taken:

First, I am directing the Secretary of Defense to give priority to Reserve enlistees who are under draft age (those young men 17-18-1/2 year of age) to encourage a maximum number of volunteers who are not immediately draft liable. Reserve deferments for men who are draft liable will be authorized only to the extent required to fill specific vacancies in reserve components.

Second, I recommend that the Congress enact standby authority to allow The Department of Defense to draft men into Reserve and National Guard units whenever the authorized strength of these unite cannot otherwise be maintained.

The National Advisory Commission on Selective Service

The work of the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service represents the most comprehensive study of this system since it began 20 years ago. Any citizen, who reads the report of the Commission and I urge all citizens to do so -- will recognize that the distinguished members have provided the most penetrating analysis of selective service in our history.

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To provide the American people with a continuing review of a system which touches every American family and to assure the diligent pursuit of the actions I have discussed and approved in this message, as well as other suggestions in the Commission report, I am extending the life of the National Advisory Commission for an additional year.

Conclusion

Service performed by the youth of our nation honors us all.

Americans have good reason to respect the long tradition of service which is manifested in every flight line and outpost where we commit our bravest men to the guardianship of freedom.

We have witnessed in our day the building of another tradition -- by men and women in the Peace Corps, in VISTA, and in other such programs which have touched, and perhaps even changed, the life of our country and our world.

This spirit is as characteristic of modern America as our advanced technology, or our scientific achievements.

I have wondered if we could establish, through these programs and others like them, a practical system of nonmilitary alternatives to the draft without harming our security.

Both the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service and the group reporting to the Congress posed this question for study.

Both found the answer to be that we cannot.

But the spirit of volunteer service in socially useful enterprises will, we hope, continue to grow until that good day when all service will be voluntary, when all young people can and will choose the kind of service best fitted to their own needs and their nation's.

We will hasten it as we can. But until it comes, because of the conditions of the world we live in now, we must continue to ask one form of service -- military duty -- of our young men. We would be an irresponsible Nation if we did not -- and perhaps even an extinct one.

The Nation's requirement that men must serve, however, imposes this obligation: that in this land of equals, men are selected as equals to serve.

A just nation must have the fairest system that can be devised for making that selection.

I believe the proposals I am making today will help give us that system.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THE WHITE HOUSE,
March 6, 1967.

