Introduction to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

Presentation to the Association of Military Colleges & Schools of the United States
Today’s discussion

Commission overview

Interim Report

Discussion

Closing Remarks
About the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

With all combat roles opened to women in 2015, question arose over requiring all Americans to register with Selective Service System

- Idea of extending military conscription in a time of crisis led to broader questions around service
- Senators McCain and Reed saw the need to promote the notion of service above self

Commission created through the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act to:

- The first holistic and comprehensive review of the Selective Service System along with military, national, and public service

Our Mission
This Commission will listen to the public, learn from those who serve, and recommend to the President, Congress, and the American people ideas to foster a greater ethos of military, national, and public service to strengthen American democracy.
After careful consideration, the Commission defined “service” to guide its work

The Commission defines service as “a personal commitment of time, energy, and talent to a mission that contributes to the public good by protecting the nation and its citizens, strengthening communities, or promoting the general social welfare.”

**Military Service**

Nearly 1.3 million service members on active duty and 1.1 million serving in the National Guard and Reserves

**National Service**

75,000 AmeriCorps members, 220,000 serving in Senior Corps, and 7,000 Peace Corps volunteers

**Public Service**

Nearly 2 million federal employees, 5 million state government employees and 14 million serving in local & tribal government

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In 2018, the Commission embarked on a listening tour, visiting 24 cities and towns around the country...

The Commission selected urban and rural communities in each of the nine Census divisions, factoring in population, geography, economics, and racial and ethnic diversity.
January 23rd - Release of Interim Report

You can see the full report at www.inspire2serve.gov.
The Selective Service is a mystery to many Americans

Many Americans don’t understand the Selective Service System
- Don’t distinguish between registration and “the draft”
- Don’t understand the implications of registration
- And some don’t know that young men must register when they turn 18

Today, the U.S. requires men ages 18 to 25 to register with the SSS
- Some register online or through the mail
- Most young men now register incidentally – when they receive a driver’s license or apply for federal student aid
- Registration has become a passive process, with many unaware of the obligation for which they’ve registered
We are considering significant changes to the Selective Service registration system

Expanding registration to all Americans, to include women

- Commissioners have solicited opinions from the American public through public meetings, submission of written comments, and individual conversations
- We’re carefully considering this crucial question and will continue to actively seek input

Modernizing the Selective Service System

- The Commission is tasked with better identifying critical skills and with whom those skills reside
- We are examining ways in which individuals could share updates about their education and skill sets
- We are studying ways to leverage the current SSS system to call upon volunteers for national emergencies
Military service is a responsibility borne by few Americans’ connections to the military are limited

Geography plays a strong role in recruiting

- 45 years ago, about 56% of enlisted recruits came from the American South and West; today that number is nearly 70%¹
- A survey of first-term Army soldiers indicated that 55% come from small towns or rural areas²

Family ties and exposure to military service play a strong role in recruitment

- Family members of current or former service members are more likely to show an interest in joining the military
- 88% of surveyed first-term soldiers identified a relative who served²

A lack of awareness regarding military service opportunities impacts recruitment.

Many are concerned that as the gap between the military and the American public widens, awareness about military opportunities decreases:

- Opinion shared by both military members and those who haven’t served
- Limits otherwise qualified young Americans from gaining the experiences and benefits of military service

Military members are concerned by false narratives and perceptions from TV, movies, the internet, and video games:

- Focus on the most dangerous jobs
- Depictions often inaccurate

Compounded by inability of recruiters to engage students:

- We heard from recruiters who are blocked from schools
- Many students know little about the military’s college opportunities
Eligibility for military service continues to be a significant barrier to recruitment

Under current standards 71% of Americans ages 17-24 do not meet the qualifications for military service

- Disqualifications include medical issues, weight, body art, a history of drug use, educational attainment, and a criminal record

These barriers reflect:
- Major societal challenges (e.g., nutritional choice, physical activity)
- Changing attitudes (e.g., tattoos, legalized marijuana)
- Increased rates of diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues

Number of Youth Interested in and Eligible for Military Service


Source: U.S. Army
We’ve heard many suggestions for addressing these barriers to military service:

- Formally ask all young Americans to consider military service.
- Invest in education for parents, teachers, and counselors on military service opportunities.
- Increase the number of high school students who take a version of the military entrance exam that identifies strengths and career interests.
- Reinforce laws that ensure recruiters receive equal access to high schools, colleges, and other postsecondary opportunities.
- Create new pipelines to military service (e.g., financial support for studying toward technical certifications in exchange for a military service commitment).
- Develop new pathways in areas of critical need to access and develop those with the affinity, interest, training, education, and/or certification in exchange for a military service commitment.
- Encourage more mid-career civilians to enter the military at a rank appropriate to their experience.