

Jadyn Kuenzel

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Mandatory Military Service

“The land of the free and the home of the brave,” these words penetrate hearts every time the United States national anthem is sung. Lady Liberty welcomes in every foreigner to her land, proclaiming to the world that the essence of America is freedom itself. In our country’s beginnings, it was considered the highest honor to fight and protect our sacred liberty. Today, the same freedom is taken for granted, and the U.S. military is losing the esteem it once held in the eyes of the nation’s youth. This must change; liberty must be revered again. To restore respect and responsibility in our nation, every male citizen should be required to serve in the military for at least one year before the age of twenty-two, because the military instills discipline, promotes unity, and prepares individuals to become the most vested defenders of our freedom. By mandating military service, our complacent youth will learn to appreciate their freedom and their country.

Discipline is a fundamental aspect of the military. Basic training for the military is “designed to 'break an individual down' and then train them back up. [It] includes intense physical training, academic and skills training” (“Positive Outcomes of Military Service”). It is crucial to establish discipline in every aspect of life; a current value taught in most homes. For example, a father will train his child to learn the consequences of their actions in order to better them. The military is the perfect place to mold young individuals into respectable human beings through consistent, orderly expectations in a controlled training environment with consequences for disobedience and or disunity. In certain cases, criminals might have the chance to serve their time in the military instead of in jail. Upon their departure from the service, these ex-convicts

have a whole new outlook on life and respect for the law that they infringed. One who goes into the military is taught not only physical but also mental and social discipline. He will leave with an improved sense of responsibility and an arsenal of leadership skills. This refinement of man will certainly improve our country and, at the same time, increase unity amongst our nation.

National unity is critically needed in America, and mandatory military service is a solution for developing a team mentality in our young men. There is a special bond that is formed between soldiers in the army, a sense of unity unlike any other. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs states that military service creates deep friendships and profound understanding of teamwork and cooperation. Military personnel are taught to look out for the welfare of the team. When one suffers, all suffer. When one succeeds, all succeed. Enforced enlistment promotes unity among soldiers and citizens, providing hope for the future of the individual and the country.

My grandfather, Mark Sevin, is one of my favorite people in the world. Fresh out of high school in 1969, he enlisted into the military. About a year later, his brother was drafted and sent to Vietnam. Upon asking for his thoughts on mandatory military service, he explained to me that the military is an institution that matures kids into adults. It was the Marines that “helped [him] determine what [he] should do in life.” The military prepares a future for all those who enter it.

A concern of mandatory enlistment is that military service puts a hold on promising careers or the furthering of education. While this may be true, the army accounts for this by paying for college tuition and providing experiences needed for a variety of career paths. My grandfather personally experienced this; the military shifted his future mindset towards going to college. The military prepares individuals for their careers by strengthening their character. The United States Department of Veteran Affairs says, “Military service instills strong values, selfless

service, and loyalty – desirable attributes in an employee.” Mandatory service will leave military men prepared for their next steps in life.

Still, another argument remains—enforced enlistment goes against our freedom and basic rights as United States citizens. According to my other dear grandfather, Al Kuenzel, “when the draft was law, many Americans moved to Canada to escape its reach” because they felt as though losing their citizenship was better than “surrendering” their freedom and fighting in Vietnam. In reality, the very reason that they had “rights” was because somebody fought and even died for their freedom. There cannot be liberty unless the boundaries of our country are protected. Instead of infringement, mandatory service should be viewed as an honor, an opportunity to serve our beloved land and preserve our sacred freedom. As former President John F. Kennedy preached, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.” Mandatory military service is the duty, not destruction, of American freedom.

In essence, freedom is the foundation the United States was built on. Henceforth, it must be revered and protected as it once was. Mandatory military service will discipline, unify, and prepare American males before the age of twenty-two to become mature, productive citizens of society resulting in the continuation of our prized national liberty. As the former U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy once said, “Since the days of Greece and Rome, when the word ‘citizen’ was a title of honor, we have often seen more emphasis put on the rights of citizenship than on its responsibilities.” Modern Americans have mistaken the right to freedom to be inalienable. Instead, our right to freedom is our responsibility. By enforcing enlistment, we are ensuring that the United States will forever be “the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

Works Cited

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