

Emily Prothero

A Case For Mandatory Service In The Military

“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.” This quote from Robert F. Kennedy, a former US attorney General means much to our President. The citizens of the United States have a responsibility to serve our country with honor. I believe that every male citizen of the United States must serve in the U.S military for one year before the age of 22. One argument for this position is the general public will be more engaged and intelligent on the matters of the government and the military because most people will have a loved one who is, has, or will be serving in the military. Another reason is that when young men are required to serve in the military there is an equal opportunity for all citizens. Every male will have to serve in the military regardless of their wealth or social status. Someone may argue that mandatory military service infringes on a person's religious rights or freedom of conscience but there are many positions in the military one could take that don't involve direct combat. Another counter argument is that one may lose one's freedom temporarily but we are a government “by the people” and so it is only right that more people groups should be represented in the military. Support of mandatory service would be consistent with several countries, such as Israel and Switzerland who already have this requirement.

With every male that has to serve in the military comes supporting families, friends, and communities.. When every young man knows he will have to serve in the military he will be more aware of the government's decision and more involved in what the military is doing. The families and friends of the male serving will be more involved in the government and military because they have a loved one serving. This leads to a more engaged public who will become a more intelligent public on each decision in government and the military. In other words everyone will have “skin in the game” because no community will be immune to military service.

Requiring every male to serve in the military promotes equal opportunities for citizens. No matter how wealthy or poor or religious or what background he comes from every young man will have to serve in the military. From the words of Tom Homan from Ambler PA, a man who could have been drafted for the military in 1972, “A voluntary military is unfair to poor and minorities because they may be in a situation where they need to access the military in order to make money to survive in the world but they also have to bear the very real fear of dying in war while the wealthy don't have to rely on the military for those opportunities and don't have to have the fear of dying in war.” When serving in the military is not mandatory it is unfair to those who are poor and need the benefits of the military. The wealthy don't need the benefits of the military so the outcome is that the military is full of poor and minority people. If a war actually does start, many of the poor people will be fighting for our country while the wealthy and educated can choose no involvement or obligation. However, if serving in the military is mandatory then the

demographic will be more equal and the wealthy will have to fight for our country as well as the poor.

A counter argument one could make is that a mandatory military service violates the person's free will by the 1st amendment which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." This argument is invalid because although killing in war might be against someone's conscience or religion they don't have to kill in the military. A pacifist could sign up for a different position in the military such as a nurse or engineer. A quote from David Crow, a Pennsylvania resident who was eligible to be picked for draft in 1973, is "There is a fairness in it that everyone is equal when you are forced to go to the military. If you live in this country you have to serve. If you don't want to, you can leave." He points out that every male is equal since every male has to serve so if you really don't want to you don't have to stay in this country. Another counter argument is that you lose your freedom temporarily when you have mandatory service, however we are a government by the people and part of our government is our military and it's not by the people if many people groups are not represented such as the wealthy or educated.

In conclusion, I believe that every male citizen must serve in the U.S military for one year before the age of 22. The reasons are first that the general public will be more engaged and informed on the matters of the government and the military because many people will have a loved one who is, has, or will be serving in the military at some point. Second, when young men serve in the military there is an equal opportunity for citizens. Also, someone could say that mandatory military service infringes on a person's religious rights but there are many positions in the military you could take that don't involve killing people. A final counter argument is that you lose your freedom temporarily but we are a government by the people and so more people groups should be represented in the military. I believe that our President has made the right decision on mandatory service in the military.