

# Teacher's Guide to Selective Service System



**U.S. SELECTIVE  
SERVICE SYSTEM**

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# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide is designed to be used as a supplementary resource for educators to teach their students about the Selective Service System.

The lessons are designed to be used in both history and civics classes for students in grade 9 or higher. They can be used by public and private high schools, and homeschoolers and co-ops, as well as by anyone interested in learning more about the Selective Service.

Each lesson includes a 10-minute script along with a summary of the main points and questions for discussion, making it easy for instructors to add to new or existing lesson plans. We have also included complimentary Power Point presentations for each lesson which are available at **LINK**.

## INCREASE REGISTRATION AWARENESS IN YOUR SCHOOL

There are 17 million men currently registered with the Selective Service, but maintaining high rates of registration nationwide requires important community leaders like teachers to share the requirement of registration with their students. Registration is an important civic responsibility for all men. It keeps our nation prepared to support our All-Volunteer force for any national emergency we might face. The fairness and equality of any future draft relies on all men to fulfill their civic duty by registering.

Not only is registration important to our nation, but it's important for young men and their future. When a man registers with the Selective Service, he opens the door to Federal benefits and opportunities like job training through WIOA, millions of Federal jobs, state-specific benefits like in-state tuition and state school acceptance, and it streamlines the process of U.S. citizenship.

Teachers can help by increasing awareness about the requirement to register in your classroom and school. Here are a few ways they can do this:

- Encourage your school to share a quick note about us in the next parent newsletter.
- Print and hang one of our downloadable posters in your classroom.
- Share our Teacher's Toolkit with other teachers in your school.
- Post about Selective Service to your school's social media page.
- And lastly, use this guide to teach your students about the Selective Service.

We appreciate the hard work and dedication of educators across the country and thank you for doing your part in shaping the futures of our youth through education.

# QUICK FACTS

## HOW TO REGISTER

The quickest and easiest way to register is online at [www.sss.gov/register](http://www.sss.gov/register).

- If you do not have a social security number, you can register at any U.S. post office and request a Selective Service Registration Form 1.
- If you received a registration reminder letter, you can register via the form received.
- If you received a registration card via mail, you are eligible to register over the phone with the PIN that was provided to you.
- You may also register at any high school with assistance from a guidance counselor or teacher.
- Any U.S. Embassy or consular office.
- There are opportunities to register when applying for Federal job training programs or for a driver's license or state I.D. (specific-state legislation).

The registration process is not complete until an instant confirmation is received online or a printed acknowledgment is received in the mail. A registration acknowledgment card will include the Selective Service number and will be mailed four to six weeks after registration. This is an important document and should be retained by the registrant. Once a man has registered, his only responsibility is to notify Selective Service within ten days of any changes to his address or other information in his registration record. After January 1 of the year in which he will reach age 26, a registrant is no longer required to notify Selective Service of changes to his registration record.

Learn more about registration through state-commonwealth legislation by states, territories, and the District of Columbia at [www.sss.gov/register/state-commonwealth-legislation/](http://www.sss.gov/register/state-commonwealth-legislation/).

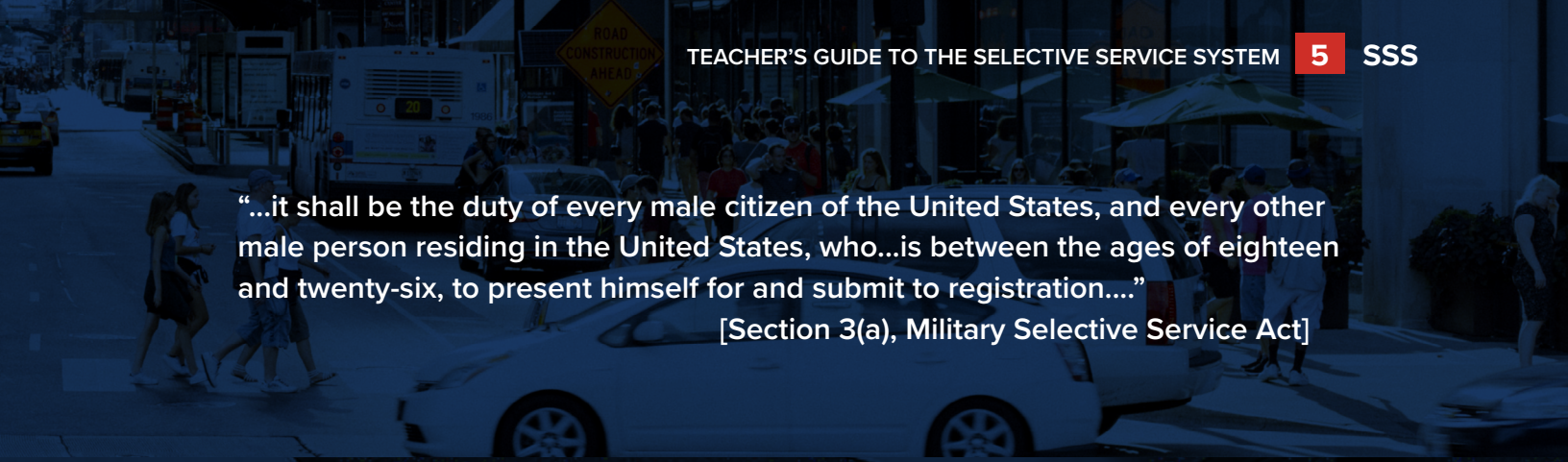
## BENEFITS OF REGISTRATION

Selective Service registration is a requirement for access to the benefits listed here.

### Student Aid

The law provides that only men who register with Selective Service are eligible to receive some types of student financial aid.

Most states have enacted legislation requiring young men to register to be eligible for state education funds. Some states also require registration to receive in-state tuition rates and entry into state colleges or universities. Learn more about state-commonwealth legislation by states, territories, and the District of Columbia at [www.sss.gov/register/state-commonwealth-legislation/](http://www.sss.gov/register/state-commonwealth-legislation/).



“...it shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States, and every other male person residing in the United States, who...is between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, to present himself for and submit to registration....”

[Section 3(a), Military Selective Service Act]

### **Federal Job Training Programs**

A man participating in training and employment programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed on July 22, 2014, must be registered with Selective Service to receive a job or training benefits.

The WIOA helps strengthen and improve our nation’s public workforce system and helps Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, providing high quality jobs, careers, and helps employers hire and retain skilled workers.

### **Federal Employment**

A man must be registered with Selective Service to be hired within many Federal and Local Government areas. Agencies requiring registration as a condition of employment eligibility include all Departments and Agencies within the Federal Government’s Executive Branch, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Postal Service.

Many states, local government agencies, police departments, and state bar examiners require applicants to register for eligible employment or state education funds. Such conditions are established by local law and policy and may vary from state to state. Learn more about federal job opportunities at [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov).

### **Citizenship**

Male immigrants seeking U.S. citizenship must be registered with Selective Service to qualify for citizenship if they first arrived in the U.S. before turning 26. Failure to register can delay a man’s citizenship process by up to 5 years.

# WHO MUST REGISTER

CATEGORY	YES	NO
All male U.S. citizens who are 18 but not yet 26 years old, except as noted below:	X	
<b>MILITARY RELATED</b>		
Members of the Armed Forces on active duty (active duty for training does not constitute “active duty” for registration purposes)		X*
Cadets and Midshipmen at Service Academies or Coast Guard Academy		X*
Cadets at the Merchant Marine Academy	X	
Students in Officer Procurement Programs at the Citadel, University of North Georgia, Norwich University, Virginia Military Institute, Texas A&M University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University		X*
ROTC Students	X	
National Guardsmen and Reservists not on active duty / Civil Air Patrol members	X	
Delayed Entry Program enlistees	X	
Separatees from Active Military Service, separated for any reason before age 26	X*	
Men rejected for enlistment for any reason before age 26	X	
<b>IMMIGRANTS**</b>		
Lawful non-immigrants on current non-immigrant visas.		X
Permanent resident immigrants (USCIS Form I-551)	X	
Seasonal agricultural workers (H-2A Visa)		X
Refugee, parolee, and asylee immigrants	X	
Undocumented immigrants	X	
Dual national U.S. citizens	X	
<b>CONFINED</b>		
Incarcerated, or hospitalized, or institutionalized for medical reasons		X*
<b>PHYSICAL OR MENTAL DISABILITY</b>		
Able to function in public with or without assistance	X	
Continually confined to a residence, hospital, or institution		X
<b>TRANSGENDER OR NON-BINARY PEOPLE</b>		
U.S. citizens or immigrants who are born male and have changed their gender to female or non-binary	X	
Individuals who are born female and have changed their gender to male or non-binary		X



\*Must register within 30 days of release unless already age 26. To be fully exempt you must have been on active duty or confined continuously from age 18 to 26.

\*\*Residents of Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, and Northern Mariana Islands are U.S. citizens. Citizens of American Samoa are nationals and must register when they are habitual residents in the United States or reside in the U.S. for at least one year. Habitual residence is presumed and registration is required whenever a national or a citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, or Palau, resides in the U.S. for more than one year in any status, except when the individual resides in the U.S. as an employee of the government of his homeland or as a student who entered the U.S. for the purpose of full-time studies, as long as such person maintains that status.

A complete list of acceptable documentation for exemption may be found at [www.sss.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/DocumentationList.pdf](http://www.sss.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/DocumentationList.pdf).

# FAQs

## **WHAT IS SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION?**

Registration is a way our government keeps a list of names of men from which to draw in case of a national emergency requiring rapid expansion of our Armed Forces. By registering all young men, Selective Service ensures that a future draft would be fair and equitable. Registering with Selective Service does not mean you are joining the military.

## **WHY IS SELECTIVE SERVICE NEEDED?**

America's leaders agree that despite the success of the All-Volunteer Force, registration with Selective Service must continue as a key component of national security strategy. As President Clinton informed Congress in 1994, "Maintaining the Selective Service System and draft registration provides a hedge against unforeseen threats and a relatively low-cost 'insurance policy' against our underestimating the maximum level of threat we expect our Armed Forces to face."

## **CAN MEN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 REGISTER?**

Yes. Selective Service accepts early registrations as young as 17 years and 3 months. If an applicant registers early, Selective Service will hold their information until 30 days before their 18th birthday. At that time, Selective Service will process their registration and the registrant will receive a registration acknowledgment card in the mail confirming their Selective Service registration.

## **WHY ARE MEN WHO MAY NOT BE FIT FOR SERVICE OR WHO ARE MORALLY OPPOSED REQUIRED TO REGISTER?**

Selective Service is responsible for availability, while the Department of Defense would be responsible for acceptability in the event of a future draft. In the event that a man is called on to serve, he would then be able to submit a claim for reclassification or exemption, or a parent or guardian could submit his claim on his behalf if he was unable to do so himself.



“...National interests are served by the Selective Service System. Registration provides a hedge against a catastrophe we do not yet anticipate. The SSS is a means to sustain this legacy by reminding our youth that public service is a valid part of American Citizenship.”

[Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defense, 2013]

### **DOES SELECTIVE SERVICE COLLECT OR SHARE IMMIGRATION STATUS’?**

The Selective Service has not now, nor in the past, collected or shared any information which would indicate a man’s immigration status, either documented or undocumented. Selective Service has no authority to collect such information.

### **HOW CAN A PERSON CHECK IF THEY ARE REGISTERED?**

If somebody is unsure of their registration status, they should go to [www.sss.gov/verify](http://www.sss.gov/verify). They will be prompted to enter their last name, social security number, and date of birth in the online form. If they are registered, this will provide their registration status with Selective Service and provides a link to immediately obtain a copy of their Registration Acknowledgment Letter from Selective Service. If they are not successful in verifying their registration status online, they can call for assistance at 1-847-688-6888.

### **WHY ARE WOMEN NOT REQUIRED TO REGISTER?**

As the Federal law is currently written, it requires that “male persons” ages 18-25 register with the Selective Service. In order for this to be changed, it would require an act of Congress or ruling by the Supreme Court. Selective Service remains ready to carry out the law as it is written.

### **IS ANYTHING ELSE REQUIRED AFTER A MAN REGISTERS?**

After a man registers, he is required to notify the Selective Service of an address change within 10 days, up until he turns 26 years old. If a man changes his name, he must also notify the Selective Service and provide documentation to support this.

For answers to additional frequently asked questions, visit [www.sss.gov/faq/](http://www.sss.gov/faq/). If you have other questions, feel free to contact [information@sss.gov](mailto:information@sss.gov).

# LESSON 1: THE HISTORY OF SSS

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## SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS

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1. During the Civil War, both the North and the South used a conscription system controlled by the military with no local civilian involvement in the process.
2. Local Boards composed of civilians were first used during World War 1 to decide who should be deferred or exempted from service.
3. The first peacetime draft in the U.S. was in 1940, over a year before the U.S. entered into World War I.
4. In 1969 and the early 1970s, draft procedures were reformed in three ways. Many deferments were abolished, the lottery was established to determine the order of call, and a single year of prime draft eligibility was established.
5. Even though the authority to induct men ended in 1973, the Selective Service remains responsible for supporting the All-Volunteer armed force in an emergency. Peacetime registration guarantees the ability to respond quickly if an emergency makes it necessary for Congress to resume a draft.

### CONSCRIPTION DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Throughout our nation's history, federal and state governments have required some form of compulsory military service to meet national emergencies. Conscription in America can be traced historically to colonial times and stems from the old English military tradition. Every able-bodied freeman had an obligation to his country to bear arms in its defense. Harsh living conditions in the colonies and on the frontier required that every man be prepared to defend himself at all times as a matter of self-preservation.

The United States first attempted a national draft during the Civil War. In August 1862, President Abraham Lincoln needed to raise 300,000 troops for nine months of service. The Continental Congress authorized a regular military force, but this was unable to raise enough recruits for the war efforts. President Lincoln asked for a certain number of men from each state. In March 1863, a conscription law was enacted providing for an All-Federal Service with quotas of men required for service allotted to Congressional districts.

On both sides, those who could afford it were able to avoid military service by hiring substitutes. In many cases, the money offered to these substitutes was substantially better than the regular pay received by volunteers. This had the effect of creating two classes of soldiers and caused great division among the ranks.

**“The Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the Armed Forces and the Reserve Components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just, and which is consistent with the main tenants of an effective national economy.”**

**[Section 44 Military Selective Service Act]**

In the North, exemptions from service could be purchased for \$300, a sizable sum at that time. The South, in turn, allowed many exemptions based on a person's occupation. These included pharmacists, journalists, lawyers, teachers, and many others.

Following the Civil War, Brigadier General James Oakes, Acting Assistant Provost Marshall General for Illinois, recommended many ways to eliminate critical weaknesses in the Civil War draft system. He recommended having local groups of civilians involved in deciding who would be drafted. This was an important concept implemented in World War I.

### **SELECTIVE SERVICE IS FIRST ESTABLISHED**

The Oakes Report of 1866 laid the foundation for the World War I draft law, the Selective Service Act, which was enacted on May 18, 1917. This law prohibited the hiring of substitutes and created local civilian Boards composed of three or more members, “none of whom shall be connected with the Military Establishment.” The Boards were granted power within their own jurisdictions to determine all cases of exemption from military service. By the end of the war, civilian draft boards in 4,600 communities had registered nearly 14 million men and inducted more than 2.8 million into military service. The draft expired at the end of the war and the nation returned to volunteer Armed Forces.

The first peacetime draft came about with the passage of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, also known as the Burke-Wadsworth Act. The 1940 law followed the basic principles of the World War I draft and resulted in creating more than 6,400 Local Boards with the responsibility of classifying the men who registered. The Agency's National Headquarters provided directions to Local Boards to guide them in their decisions; however, these directions were general in nature and each Board took local conditions into account as it decided how registrants should be classified.

In 1947, following World War II, the Selective Training and Service Act was allowed to expire. Shortly after its expiration, faced with Soviet aggression in Europe and the failure of voluntary methods to achieve and maintain the required strength of the Armed Forces, President Truman asked for a renewal of the draft. Congress responded with new legislation, the Selective Service Act of 1948. The Act required men to be selected for the draft on a fair and equitable basis that was consistent with maintaining an effective national economy.

### **SELECTIVE SERVICE ACT OF 1948**

Administration of the draft under this Act was highly decentralized. Local Boards of three or more civilians were established, and a smaller number of Appeal Boards, also composed of

civilians, were created to review appeals of Local Board decisions. Regulations, directives, and other guidelines were issued to give general guidance to the Boards, but as was the case during World War II, varying interpretations of the guidelines resulted in disparity in treatment of registrants in different parts of the country. This inequity was not seen as a major problem during the Korean Conflict and the peacetime draft which followed. It was not until the late 1960s, during the U.S. involvement in Vietnam that the matter of perceived unequal treatment became a serious concern.

## **REFORM AND DEEP STANDBY**

A series of reforms around the end of the Vietnam conflict changed the way the draft operated in an effort to reduce a man's uncertainty about his chances of being drafted. Three major reforms were:

- the abolition of some categories of deferments, particularly student and occupational deferments, resulting in fewer reasons to excuse a man from service;
- beginning in December 1969, the use of a lottery based on birth dates to determine the order in which men would be called;
- reducing a man's period of prime vulnerability for the draft to the year in which he turns 20, with his risk of being drafted steadily decreasing after that year.

The last draft calls went out in December 1972 and the President's authority to induct men ended in 1973, and the Selective Service was placed in standby. From then on, its role became to plan and train for an emergency draft which would provide backup to the All-Volunteer Armed Force. This was established as a result of recommendations made in 1970 by a Presidential commission. In 1975, registration was suspended, followed by the closing of the state and local offices of the Selective Service in 1976. The Agency was reduced to fewer than 100 employees during this period of "deep standby."

By 1978, the Selective Service was further reduced to the point where there was serious concern that it might not be able to fulfill its mission of providing manpower in an emergency. A number of revitalization actions began in order to improve the Selective Service's capabilities. While these actions were underway, President Carter announced his intention to resume registration. In July 1980, the requirement for men to register with Selective Service was resumed.

## **SELECTIVE SERVICE TODAY**

Today, the only requirement is for men to register within 30 days of their 18th birthday and maintain accurate contact information with Selective Service until they turn 26. With very few exceptions, all males in the U.S. — both citizens and non-citizens — and U.S. citizens abroad are required to register.

The Selective Service and the Department of Defense share the responsibility for maintaining the military manpower procurement capability. When the All-Volunteer Force was established in 1973, it was not intended to stand alone in times of an emergency. Current plans provide that in the event of an emergency, the Armed Forces would be supplemented quickly by the National Guard and Reserves. The next level of supplementation, when enacted by the President and

Congress, would be through the Selective Service, which would begin with a lottery to determine who would be called to serve. From there, draftees would be classified and ordered to report to the nearest Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS), where each registrant would be examined to determine his acceptability for military service.

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## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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**Q: How was the Civil War draft different from the Selective Service developed later?**

A: The Civil War draft was operated by the military with no local civilian involvement. Men could hire a substitute to serve in their place. Beginning with the World War I draft, civilian Local Boards were established to decide who should be deferred or exempted from service and substitution was no longer allowed.

**Q: Is the draft used only in times of armed conflict?**

A: No. The first peacetime draft came in 1940, before U.S. involvement in World War II. A peacetime draft also existed before and after the Korean Conflict and the draft remained active during U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Right now, though, the U.S. relies on volunteers for its Armed Forces.

**Q: What are the three major reforms of the Selective Service process which make the draft more equitable?**

A: The lottery, the abolishment of many deferments, and the establishment of a single year of prime eligibility for the draft.

**Q: What is the mission of the Selective Service when no draft is in effect?**

A: To maintain high rates of registration and prepare to provide manpower to the Armed Forces if a national emergency makes it necessary for the draft to be

# LESSON 2: CHANGES FROM VIETNAM TO NOW

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## SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS

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1. During the Vietnam War, the Selective Service was responsible for providing 20% of the men in uniform. The rest served as part of our All-Volunteer Armed Forces.
2. The four major ways in which the draft system has changed since the Vietnam War are a standardized system for postponements, deferments, and exemptions; more representative boards; a lottery for the call of order, beginning with men 20 years old; and a guaranteed appearance in front of a man's Local Board to make his appeal.
3. Today, in the event of a draft, all men called via lottery would be considered 1-A, "available for service," unless given a different status through the claim and appeal process.
4. Before the use of the lottery, there was no system in place to determine order of call besides the fact that men between the ages of 18 and 26 could be drafted, leaving men vulnerable to the draft until their 26th birthday.

### **SELECTIVE SERVICE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR**

During the Vietnam War (1950-1975), the Selective Service provided 20% of the men in uniform. The Selective Service encountered protest about unfair deferments, and beginning in 1969, several major reforms were made to make the draft a more equitable and fair process.

#### **Operation & Organization:**

Selective Service operated as an independent agency with a Director responsible to the President. Governors were responsible for administering Selective Service laws within their state; functions were then delegated to the State Director. Local Boards, composed of citizens in each community, selected men for induction based on individual cases and the needs of the economy and industry. Appeal Boards were composed of civilians. This system organization dated back to World War II.

#### **Registration:**

Men ages 18-26 were required to register. Civilian authorities conducted the registration. Individuals were responsible for their own registration. Registration was suspended on April 1, 1975 by Presidential Proclamation 4360.

**“The Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the Armed Forces and the Reserve Components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just, and which is consistent with the main tenants of an effective national economy.”**

**[Section 44 Military Selective Service Act]**

### **Classification:**

Local Boards determined classification in accordance with regulations and guidance issued from the National Headquarters. Deferments were available for students, some fathers, farmers and other occupations which supported the national interest. It was the duty of the registrant to provide information required by Local Boards to ensure proper classification. However, deferments granted at the time lacked nationwide uniformity.

Conscientious Objectors (COs) were required to serve 24 months contributing to the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest as their Local Board deemed appropriate. COs could select a suitable alternative service job or be assigned one. In 1971, deferment policies were established in the Registrants Processing Manual to enforce the uniform application of Selective Service regulations. Student, fatherhood, occupational and agricultural deferments were phased out.

### **Sources of Personnel:**

The quota system used in the Korean War, which established a number of men required to serve for each state organization, was abolished. In 1971, calls for inductees were then issued on the basis of random sequence lottery number assigned to a birthdate.

### **Selection & Induction:**

Uniform National Call began, where all men with the same lottery number throughout the nation were called. The selection was made from those registered and classified but not deferred or exempt. The first priority selection group was men age 20, rather than the oldest first as it had been done during the Korean War. Local Boards sent registrants to induction stations, where the determination of acceptability and induction was made by the Armed Forces.

The last induction call was issued on December 1972. Induction authority expired on July 1, 1973.

## **SELECTIVE SERVICE TODAY VS. THEN**

Since then, the Selective Service has seen many changes. A series of reforms during the latter part of the Vietnam Conflict changed the way the draft operated to make it more fair and equitable for any future drafts, the four most significant being changes to the postponement, deferment, and exemption policy; increased representation in Boards; a randomized lottery for call of order; and a guaranteed appeal appearance.

### **Postponements, Deferments, and Exemptions:**

If a draft were held today, there would be fewer exemptions from service offered and the exemptions would be standardized across the U.S., unlike during the Vietnam War. For example, before Congress reformed the draft in 1971, a man could qualify for a student

deferment if he could show he was a full-time student making satisfactory progress in virtually any field of study. Men with the means to attend college began enrolling as a way to avoid the call to service. There was no time limit on their schooling, so men could continue attending school and be deferred from service until they were above the draft age. Under the current draft law, a college student could have his induction postponed only until the end of the current semester. A senior could be postponed until the end of the full academic year.

Today, if we were under emergency mobilization procedures, all men called via lottery drawing would be considered 1-A, “available for service,” unless given a different status through the claim and appeal process. If a man believed that for some reason he could not or should not report for examination and induction as directed, he would be able to request a postponement or reclassification by filing a claim and sending it to the Selective Service office in his area. A registrant would file a claim only after receipt of an order to report for induction and before the day he is scheduled to report.

The following instances are eligible for postponement, deferment, or exemption in the event of a military draft:

#### **Postponement**

- High school students, until he graduates or reaches age 20, whichever is first.
- College students, until the end of the semester or, if a senior, until the end of that academic year.
- Automatic postponement if he files a claim for reclassification.
- Entitled to file for a postponement if he has an emergency beyond his control, such as a serious illness or death in his immediate family.

#### **Deferment**

- Hardship deferments, for men whose induction would result in hardship to persons who depend upon them for support.
- Ministerial students, deferred until completion of studies.

#### **Exemption**

- Ministers
- Certain elected officials, exempt so long as they continue to hold office.
- Veterans, generally exempt from service in peacetime draft.
- Immigrants and dual nationals in some cases may be exempt from U.S. military service depending upon their place of residence and country of citizenship. Learn more at [www.sss.gov/register/immigrants/](http://www.sss.gov/register/immigrants/).

#### **More Representative Boards:**

If a draft were held today, Local Boards would better represent the communities they serve. The changes in the new draft law, established in 1971, included the provision that membership on the Boards was required to be as representative as possible of the racial and national origin of registrants in the area served by the Board. There is also no longer a limit to the number of individuals who can serve on a Board for a particular county, increasing the opportunity for a more diverse Board.



**Lottery for Call of Order:**

Before the lottery was implemented in the latter part of the Vietnam Conflict, there was no system in place to determine order of call besides the fact that men between the ages of 18 and 26 could be drafted. Local Boards called on men classified 1-A, 18 years and 6 months through 25 years old, beginning with the oldest first. The lack of a system resulted in uncertainty for the potential draftees during the time they were within the draft-eligible age group.

A draft held today would use a lottery system under which a man would spend only one year in first priority for the draft—either the calendar year he turned 20 or the year his deferment ended, whichever came first. Each year after that, he would be placed in a lower priority group and his liability for the draft would lessen accordingly. In this way, he would be spared the uncertainty of waiting until his 26th birthday to be certain he would not be drafted.

**Guaranteed Appeal Appearance:**

Before 1971, a draftee was not guaranteed the right to a personal appearance before his Board, leaving some decisions about whether a man would be drafted to be made based on paperwork. Some men were able to appeal in-person before their board, leading to further inequality.

Today, if a man wanted to appeal to his Local Board for an exemption or deferment, he could speak to them directly to appeal his classification.

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## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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**Q: How was the Vietnam War draft different from the Selective Service we have today?**

A: Initially, the Vietnam War draft did not use a lottery system to establish the order of call, many more deferments existed that made the draft less fair, Boards responsible for claims and appeals were not as representative of the registrants in the area served by the Board, and a man was not guaranteed an in-person appearance in front of his Board.

**Q: How does the lottery system improve a man's draft vulnerability?**

A: Instead of being vulnerable to the draft from age 18-25, his vulnerability would decrease each year after age 20, sparing him the uncertainty of waiting until his 26th birthday to be certain he would not be drafted.

**Q: Which exemptions from service would be allowed in the event of a draft today?**

A: Ministers, certain elected officials, veterans, and immigrants and dual nationals in some cases may be exempt from U.S. military service depending upon some additional factors.



# LESSON 3: HOW THE SSS WORKS

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## SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT POINTS

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1. The missions of the Selective Service are to provide manpower to the Armed Forces in response to requests made by the Department of Defense and to develop and operate an Alternative Service Program for conscientious objectors.
2. The Selective Service is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government. It is not part of the Department of Defense.
3. One of the first steps taken in the event of a draft would be a lottery drawing, ensuring a random selection of men and the ability of a man to know his chances of being drafted very early in the draft process.
4. The Boards and claim and appeal process are activated only after Congress, by law, has given the President the authority to induct men into the Armed Forces.
5. Board Members would decide claims made by registrants and must be prepared to examine the evidence, and in some cases, interview registrants and their witnesses about the claim.
6. Claims for Conscientious Objectors require an appearance before a Local Board.

## ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS

The twofold mission of the Selective Service is to provide manpower to the Armed Forces during an emergency in response to requests made by the Department of Defense and to develop and operate an Alternative Service Program for Conscientious Objectors. The Military Selective Service Act requires that upon granting of the legal authority to conduct a draft, the System can immediately operate in the event of a national emergency.

## STRUCTURE

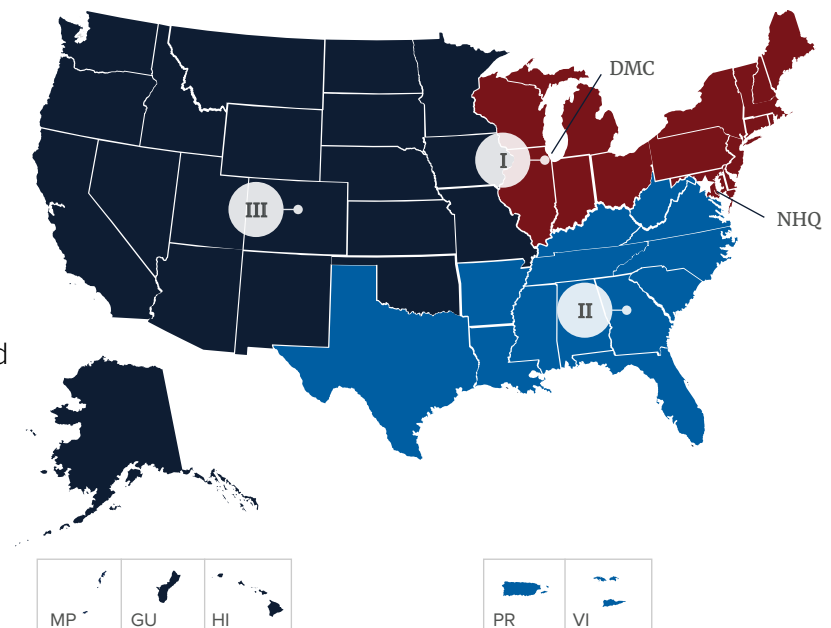
The Selective Service is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the U.S. Federal Government. The President of the United States appoints the Director of Selective Service. Selective Service is not part of the Department of Defense. The staff is primarily composed of civilians hired under the rules which apply to all Federal employees. Several active-duty military officers and several hundred National Guard and Reserve service members are assigned to the Selective Service. In an emergency, the Reservists would be called to active duty to support the full-time staff.

“The Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the Armed Forces and the Reserve Components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just, and which is consistent with the main tenants of an effective national economy.”

[Section 44 Military Selective Service Act]

The law provides that the Selective Service System will include a State Headquarters in each state, territory or possession, and the District of Columbia; Local Boards composed of civilians will be established, there will be Appeal Boards for Federal Judicial Districts, and a National Appeal Board will be established to act for the President as the highest level of appeal. Most of this structure is not operational when there is no draft, although Local and Appeal Board Members and State Directors have been appointed and are trained in case they are needed.

Currently, National Headquarters, Regional Headquarters, and the Data Management Center are operational on a full-time basis. The remaining field structure would be activated if a draft is reinstated. If Congress authorizes and the President directs a return to the draft, State Headquarters, Local and Appeal Boards, and area offices would become operational almost immediately.



## FUNCTIONS

In peacetime, Selective Service carries out three major functions to support the mission of being prepared in the event of draft:

- Maintaining high rates of registration compliance through advertising, outreach, and legislative efforts.
- Continuing to review and improve the system for quickly providing additional personnel to the Department of Defense through regularly scheduled exercises.
- Maintaining the Alternative Service Program and expanding the Alternative Service Employer Network (ASEN) for Conscientious Objectors.

Learn more about the Alternative Service Program and ASEN online at [www.sss.gov/register/alternative-service/](http://www.sss.gov/register/alternative-service/).

# THE DRAFT PROCESS

## 1 DRAFT AUTHORIZATION CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT

A national emergency, exceeding the Department of Defense's capability to recruit and retain its total force strength, requires Congress to amend the Military Selective Service Act to authorize the President to induct personnel into the Armed Forces.

## 2 ACTIVATION OF SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

Selective Service activates and orders all personnel to report for duty. Reserve Force Officers and selected military retirees begin to open Area Offices to accept registrant claims. Local, District Appeals, and National Board members are notified to report for refresher training.

## 3 THE LOTTERY RANDOM SELECTION OF MEN

A publicly attended, nationally televised, and live-streamed lottery is conducted. The lottery, a random drawing of birthdays and numbers, establishes the order in which individuals receive orders to report for induction. The first to receive induction orders are those whose 20th birthday falls during the year of the lottery. If required, additional lotteries are conducted for those 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 19, and finally 18.5 years old.

## 4 ORDERS TO REPORT TO MEPS FIT-FOR-SERVICE EVALUATION

Induction notices are sent, and registrants may now make claims if desired for a postponement, deferment, or exemption. Inductees report to a local Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) for induction. At MEPS, registrants are given a physical, mental, and moral evaluation to determine whether they are fit for military service. Once notified of the evaluation results, a registrant would either be inducted into military service or sent home.

## 5 ACTIVATION OF LOCAL & DISTRICT APPEALS BOARDS

Local and District Appeals Boards begin to process registrant claims for classification as Conscientious Objectors, dependency hardships, ministerial and ministerial student deferments, and appeals.

## 6 INDUCTION FIRST DRAFTEES

According to current Department of Defense (DoD) requirements, Selective Service must deliver the first inductees to the military within 193 days from the onset of a crisis and the law being updated to authorize a draft.

## CLAIM AND APPEALS PROCESS

In the event of a draft, men could file claims for postponement, exemption, or deferment after being ordered to report for induction. Below are the classifications that would be available.

### Administrative Classifications

A man's eligibility for administrative classifications is decided by personnel at a Selective Service area office. These classifications are given to men who meet certain criteria, including:

- Members on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces
- Members of the National Guard, Reserves, or students in ROTC
- Veterans
- Certain public officials
- Dual nationals and certain non-citizens
- Men whose father, mother, brother, or sister was killed in action or died in the line of duty while serving in the Armed Forces or is missing in action
- Treaty aliens

### Judgmental Classifications

Judgmental classifications require, as their name implies, that the Local Board make a judgment. For judgmental classifications, men must file their claims along with supporting evidence that meets the qualifications of that specific classification. The Board must evaluate the registrant's claim on an individual basis, applying the rules and regulations of the law, for the following groups:

- Men who identify as Conscientious Objectors
- Men whose induction would cause hardship
- Ministers of religion
- Students preparing for the ministry

If a man is claiming Conscientious Objector status, he must appear before the Board. He may have witnesses to reinforce his claim and may have someone there to advise him during the proceedings. In other cases, a personal appearance is optional.

The registrant would be ordered to report for examination before his claim for a judgmental classification has been processed. A registrant who has filed a claim for Class 1-0, conscientious objector opposed to military participation in any form, could have

### Board Members

The Selective Service has nearly 9,000 volunteer Board Members nationwide. Each Board Member receives formal training on Selective Service laws and regulations. Local Board Members receive annual training with the primary goals of this training being to maintain a readiness for Board Members to perform their jobs, and to keep Board Members informed about legislative changes, regulations, and related agency policies and procedures.

### Local Boards

Local Board jurisdictions are based on counties or corresponding political subdivisions. However, there may be more than one Board in larger cities and sparsely populated areas; a Board may serve several counties. To the maximum extent possible, the membership on each Board reflects the ethnic composition of the registrants within its jurisdiction.

### Appeals Boards

District Appeals Boards review and affirm or reject appeals given to them by Local Boards in their area or those which have been transferred from another Appeals Board. If a claim for classification is denied by the District Appeals Board and one or more members of the Appeals Board disagree with the decision, the registrant may appeal to the President through the National Appeals Board.

his examination waived. If a man was found physically, mentally, or morally unacceptable, his claim for reclassification would be abandoned and his 1-A classification would be changed to 4-F. If he was found acceptable, his claim would be decided based on evidence he provides.

A man's induction would automatically be delayed if he filed a claim for reclassification. The Local Board or the Area Office would decide whether to reclassify him. If the claim was denied, the man would be given the reasons for the denial and an explanation of any further appeal rights he may have. If he did not appeal, the decision would become final and he would be ordered for induction if his lottery number was called.

If the Area Office denies a claim for an administrative reclassification, the man may ask that his Local Board review the Office's denial. If the Local Board denies the administrative reclassification upon review and the vote is not unanimous, the man may appeal to the District Appeals Board. Any Local Board denial of a judgmental claim, even if the vote is unanimous, may be appealed to the District Appeals Board. All non-unanimous decisions of the District Appeals Board may be appealed to the National Appeals Board.

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## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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### **Q What is the mission of the Selective Service?**

A: The mission of the Selective Service is to register men and maintain a system that, when authorized by the President and Congress, rapidly provides personnel fairly and equitably while managing an Alternative Service Program for Conscientious Objectors.

### **Q Is the Selective Service a part of the Department of Defense?**

A: No. The Selective Service is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the U.S. Federal Government.

### **Q In the event of a national emergency, what is the order of call-up for military service?**

A: Plans are that the National Guard and Reserves would first supplement the active Armed Forces, followed by draftees provided by the Selective Service.

### **Q What would a lottery help to ensure?**

A: The lottery would help ensure that the selection of men to be drafted would be done in a random manner. It would also allow a man to know his chances of being drafted early in the draft process.

### **Q: What classification actions are taken by the Local Board?**

A: The Local Board takes action on claims for conscientious objection, hardship, ministers of religion, and students studying for the ministry. The Local Board would also review claims for other classifications or student postponements that were denied by the Area Office, should a registrant request such a review.

### **Q Does a registrant filing a conscientious objection claim appear before the Local Board?**

A: Yes. For the Local Board to judge the sincerity of the Conscientious Objector's claim, the registrant is required to make a personal appearance before the Local Board.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## PRINTABLE MATERIALS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

Find printable brochures and posters to help you share the Selective Service mission with your students. You can easily download and print the materials from our website at [www.sss.gov/news-and-media/outreach-materials/](http://www.sss.gov/news-and-media/outreach-materials/), or contact [publicaffairs@sss.gov](mailto:publicaffairs@sss.gov) to request printed materials or with specific outreach material requests.

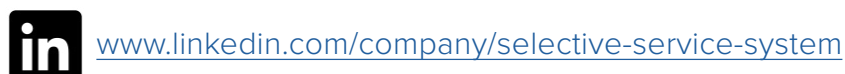
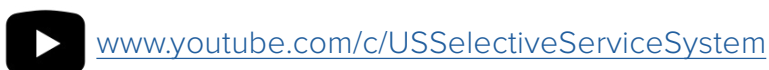


## INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Local Board Members play an important community role closely connected with our nation's defense. In the event of a draft, approximately 2,000 Selective Service Local Boards would decide which registrants in their respective communities receive deferments, postponements, and/or exemptions based upon established criteria.

To get involved, visit [www.sss.gov/volunteers/](http://www.sss.gov/volunteers/).

## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA




# THANK YOU

FROM SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM



**NATIONAL  
HEADQUARTERS**

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