

WASHINGTON MEMO

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DRAFT REFORMS WOULD REDUCE UNCERTAINTY

President Nixon, in presenting his six proposed alterations in the Military Selective Service Act of 1967, said, "Ultimately, we should end the draft."

His proposed alterations would alleviate some of the anxiety and the inequities which exist in the current system. They would help bridge the gap between the current draft system and the desired end of no draft at all.

Last January, I co-sponsored the Voluntary Military Manpower Procurement Act of 1969, which would provide a completely voluntary system of Armed Forces enlistments. That bill is currently pending in the Senate Armed Services Committee. Due to the backlog of legislation facing the Senate, it may be sometime before the bill will be reported on by the Committee.

The Armed Services Committee is holding hearings on the Nixon proposals and indications are that Congress may soon consider them. If it does not, the President can implement his proposals via Executive Order.

One of his proposals has already been put into operation. Graduate students who are eligible for the draft are being allowed to finish the school year (rather than just one term) before they are inducted.

- Other Proposals -

The other proposed changes are:

1. Change from an oldest-first to a youngest-first order of call;
2. Reduce the period of prime draft vulnerability from seven years to one year;
3. Select those who are actually drafted through a random system;
4. Continue the undergraduate student deferment, with the understanding that the year of vulnerability would come whenever the deferment ended.

The President has also suggested that the National Security Council and the Director of Selective Service review all guidelines, standards and procedures in order to insure consistent administration of draft procedures by the local boards across the United States.

During the year of maximum eligibility for the draft (usually the year following the youth's 19th birthday) selection of draftees would be on a random basis. Which youth would be called up first would be determined by a lottery of calendar numbers. If a youth was born on June 1, and June 1 came out 365th in the random selection of dates, he would not be called up until after all those born on different dates. If not that many men were needed to be drafted that year, he would not be called at all.

If he were not called that year, he would not be eligible for callup in any later year except in cases of emergency where the required number of draftees could not be provided by the 19-20 year old group.

Deferments would be available. A youth reaching 19 and seeking a deferment would be assigned a callup number in accord with where his birthdate fell in the lottery. That would remain his permanent number, but it would not become effective until his deferment ended (i.e. he finished school). Thus a 19-year-old with a callup number putting his birthdate 100th on the list could finish school at age 22 or 23 and still have a 100th ranking for callup.

During the first year the new program is in effect, the lottery would affect all eligible men in the 19-25 age group so that no one already over 20 would escape vulnerability. Then the lottery would revert to 19-year-olds and older men who lose deferments.