

## Organizations that can help:

Center on Conscience & War (NISBCO)  
1830 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(800) 379-2679  
ccw@centeronconscience.org

Committee Opposed to Militarism and the  
Draft (COMD)  
PO Box 15195  
San Diego, CA 92175  
(619) 265-1369  
comd@comdsd.org

Quaker House-Fayetteville  
223 Hillsdale Ave.  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
(910) 323-3912  
qpr@quaker.org

## If you are a non-registrant who has been denied federal student financial aid, contact:

Fund for Education and Training (FEAT)  
1830 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(800) 379-2679  
feat@centeronconscience.org



# Should I Register for the Draft?

## Advice to Conscientious Objectors Facing Selective Service Registration

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## An Important Decision

In the United States, an 18th birthday can be a great milestone in the lives of young men. They legally become adults, and are granted the rights and responsibilities that come with this distinction. One of the first decisions that these young men must make concerns draft registration. For many, this decision is automatic, and they register with Selective Service without giving it a second thought. For others, however, this could be the biggest decision in their young lives. These young men, who might think of themselves as conscientious objectors, must decide whether to surrender their principles and register, or follow their conscience and become subject to the penalties and possible punishments levied on non-registrants.

## What is Selective Service Registration?



All men born after January 1, 1963 must, by law, register with the Selective Service System (SSS) within 30 days of their 18th birthday. At this time, women are not required to register, though this could change in the future. Selective Service law also states that a registrant must keep an updated mailing address on file with the SSS until his 26th birthday.

Those who decide not to register are committing a felony punishable with a prison sentence of up to five years and/or a fine of up to \$250,000. Although the potential

punishment is fierce, there has not been a conviction since 1985. Even up to 1985, the government would give non-registrants several chances to register before pursuing prosecution. However, there are several automatic penalties applied to non-registrants. Those who do not comply with Selective Service registration become ineligible to receive federal student financial aid, job training, and employment with the federal government. More than half of the states have established registration requirements for student financial aid and employment as well. Many are now passing legislation to link registration with application for a driver's license, permit, or identification card. Immigrants who meet registration requirements, but do not register, can not gain U.S. citizenship. After a person's 26th birthday, he will no longer be allowed to register, and will be forever barred from these benefits.

## Why do some people NOT register?

There are many reasons why young men do not register with the Selective Service System. Selective Service registration puts your name on a list of over twelve million young men. In the event of an active draft, it is this list that will be used to determine who will be drafted. Since there is no legal way to register as a conscientious objector, there is no legal way to differentiate oneself from the list of men that the government says are willing to fight and kill for their country.

Some young men do not register because of the political implications of the Selective Service System. Draft registration in its

current form was instituted in 1980 as one of President Jimmy Carter's answers to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The list of registrants was, and is, intended to send a message of civilian readiness in support of U.S. military policy. As recently as 1994, President Clinton reaffirmed the political implications of draft registration, calling it a "hedge against unseen threats" and a means of showing "U.S. resolve" to "potential enemies". Some young men who disagree with United States' foreign policy can not register and participate in sending a message of military readiness to the world.

### Should I register?

Whether or not to register is a decision that only you can make. However, it may be helpful to talk to your parents, religious leaders or a draft counselor. You can find a draft counselor through your religious body's peace organization or by contacting the Center on Conscience & War or another peace organization listed on the back of the pamphlet. In the end, though, no matter what advice you get, it is your decision to make.

One crucial factor to consider is higher education. If you are planning on attending an institution of higher education anytime in your life, you need to understand that if you do not register with Selective Service, you will be ineligible for federal financial aid. Over twenty five states have similar restrictions on student financial aid and admission to a state institutions of higher learning.



While there is some money for non-registrants available, the sources are limited. If you are considering continuing your education, and you do not plan on registering, it is important to contact the Center, or a similar organization, for support and information. Finally, remember that once you turn 26, there is no turning back, as the Selective Service will no longer allow you to register.

### What should I do if I register?

Remember, there is no way to register as a conscientious objector that the government will recognize. However, you can write on the face of your registration card, between the lines, *I am conscientiously opposed to war in any form*. MAKE A COPY OF THE FORM before you turn it in. It is important to make a copy of this form because Selective Service will destroy the original form as soon as it is entered into their database and microfilmed. A great place to keep this photocopy would be in a CO File.

A CO File would be an invaluable resource in the event of an active draft. This file would contain the photocopy of your registration form as well as any other communication that you have with Selective Service. It should also contain documentation of your beliefs about war and military service. The Center on Conscience & War can provide you with more information on creating this file.

It is important that Selective Service has a current address to reach you. Not only is it the law, it is important for you as well. In the case of an active draft, you will only have a few days to return your draft notice with the proper paperwork stating that you are a

conscientious objector. Therefore you need to receive your draft notice as soon as possible, and the only way this can happen is if the Selective Service has an accurate address to reach you.

### What should I do if I do not register?

If you do not register, you must keep in mind that you are breaking the law. Although the Justice Department is not currently prosecuting anyone, this could change at any time. There is no guarantee that they will give you a chance to register before they prosecute you as they have done in the past. You also must plan how established penalties, and any that may be created in the future, will affect your life. Organizations such as those listed on the back of this pamphlet are good sources of information on the alternatives available to non-registrants.

If you are a non-registrant and you are interested in continuing your education, you may be eligible for the Fund for Education and Training (FEAT) Loan. This is a supplementary loan created to specifically assist non-registrants. The amount of money available varies, so please contact FEAT for further information.

A WARNING: When Selective Service registration was reinstated in 1980, the only persons that were prosecuted were those that were vocal against registration. In the future, the government may target such individuals again. In preparation for this, organizations that offer assistance to non-registrants will work to maintain confidentiality to the best of their ability.

### What can I do to help?

The Center on Conscience & War is working very hard to eliminate this decision for young men. The Center works closely with members of Congress to develop and support legislation to defund the Selective Service System and place it in deep standby. The Center also monitors legislation on the state level, and sends out Urgent Action Alerts whenever new legislation linking some benefit or opportunity to Selective Service registration is discovered.

There are many ways in which concerned individuals can support the movement to end Selective Service registration. Policy will only change if representatives and governments hear of the support for this change.

Contact your federal and state representatives and tell them that you are against Selective Service registration and the increasing penalties against non-registrants.

Volunteer to be a draft counselor and help other young men through this decision.

Support the organizations that are working for non-registrants and conscientious objectors.

Please contact the Center for more information on any of these opportunities to advance the cause of conscientious objection. We need your help if we are to be successful.

### Good Luck!!!!

As a conscientious objector, the decision to register with Selective Service is not always an easy one. The decision is yours. Listen to your heart. The Center on Conscience & War wishes you luck on your decision.