

3 April 2005

Dear Family and Friends,

I have been trying to put myself in the position of a young person, conscientiously opposed to war, with the possibility of a draft looming in the uncertain future. I ask myself what I could start doing right now to forestall being inducted into the military and forced to kill. I came up with two courses of action. The first can be accomplished immediately and the second is ongoing.

### **FIRST – WHAT IS THE ROOT AND DEPTH OF MY BELIEFS?**

The first thing I would do is some introspection to determine how sincere and to what extent I do object to war. Would I be willing to accept a military job if I don't have to kill? Or would I feel that any job in the military contributes to the killing and refuse to serve in any capacity? Do I object to war in any form or do I just think the current war is wrong. Is my objection based purely on moral, ethical, philosophical, or religious source or is it mostly for other reasons such as legal or political. Am I willing to cooperate with the Selective Service to do alternative service or do I plan on complete non-cooperation with the draft, possibly including not even registering. Questions such as these should be sorted out and the consequences understood before a CO can meaningfully act upon his or her convictions.

So you can see that there are several degrees, they might be called, of conscientious objection to participating in war. A one-page information sheet that outlines these various degrees can be obtained at <http://www.nisbco.org/TalkingPoints/ConscientiousObjectors.htm> I suggest this document be studied carefully to determine where each of you fit in as a CO. This is an important first step. When you reach a decision and feel you fully understand your own conscience, it is time to move on to the next step.

### **NEXT – START PREPARING MY CASE TO PROVE THAT I AM A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR**

If you haven't registered for the draft yet, you can start with that. Write very prominently on the registration form that you are a conscientious objector to war. Make a copy of this form, fold it in half and staple it together. Apply the necessary postage and address it to yourself, then mail it. When it is returned to you via the US Postal Service it will have a dated postmark on the back of your draft application copy. Since the draft board does not retain the application once the data is on the computer, and since it does not record any CO data on the computer at this time, you will have a dated-postmarked record that you claimed to be a CO at the time you registered.

Make your own personal CO file and put this dated-postmarked copy in it as the first document. This is the first step in preparing your case. If you have already registered, you will probably have a chance to do so again, as I point out below.

There is more you can do, such as responding to the registration acknowledgment you will receive from the draft board, and calling attention that the acknowledgment didn't mention your claim of CO status. An 18-page document from the Center on Conscience and War is available on their website which explains all of these actions and more. I suggest that you study it carefully. It tells what to do at various stages of the conscription process from initial registration to an actual call-up. The web address for this document is

<http://www.nisbco.org/literature/COandDraft.pdf>

Remember – keep a copy of everything in your personal file. Review your file occasionally and do any updating that you believe necessary. Of course there will be no call-up until Congress passes another Selective Service Act. My paper on "Conscription and Conscience" (<http://www.plrc.org/docs/050227.pdf>), which I advised you of in my last mailing, describes what a new draft law might be like. Chances are that it will incorporate as Skills Draft, in which case everyone will have a chance to register (or re-register) to declare any skills they possess. **The important thing is to start your personal file right now and keep it current.**

**UPDATE ON INDICATORS THAT A DRAFT MAY BE IMMINENT.**

In my paper, "Conscription and Conscience," I detailed many indicators that the military will need a draft to maintain their desired troop level, such as missed recruitment goals, incentives offered for enlistment, and more. Here I will describe events that have occurred since my paper was released.

***Recruitment Lacking:***

Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are behind their recruitment goals so far in 2005. The Army was 27% below its goal for February and predictions are that they will again miss their quota for March and April.

***Age Raised for Enlistment in Guard and Reserve:***

Both the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve have raised their maximum enlistment age from 34 to 39 (the 40<sup>th</sup> birthday is the new cutoff). It would probably have raised the age for the regular army, also, except it is set at 34 by law.

***Military Health Care Incentive:***

The length of time an army soldier can keep his or her military health insurance (Tri Care) after leaving active duty has been raised from 6 months to as much as 8 years, providing he or she enlists in the guard or reserves when demobilized. This is hoped to encourage enlistment and help meet recruiting goals.

***Experts Predict Draft Within a Year:***

If American forces aren't pulled out of Iraq, a draft may be needed in a year to meet military manpower requirements, according to Lawrence Korb and Phillip Carter. Korb is a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress (a liberal think tank) and also for the Center for Defense Information. He opposes the draft and was an assistant defense secretary for manpower under Reagan. Carter is an attorney who writes on military affairs. He favors a draft and is a former army captain.

\*\*\*\*\*

**REFERENCES.**

Associated Press; "Army Eases Age Limit for Guard, Reserve," *Washington Post*, 23 March 2003.

Associated Press; "Reservists to Keep Military Health Insurance," MSNBC, 25 March 2005.

Dart, Bob; "Draft May Be Needed In A Year, Analysts Warn," Cox News Service, 30 March 2005.

In Brief; "Army Likely to Miss Recruiting Goals Again," San Jose (CA) *Mercury News*, 24 March 2005.

Schmitt, Eric; "Army Officials Voice Concern Over Shortfall in Recruitment," *The New York Times*, 3 March 2005.

NOTE: Web addresses (URLs) on PDF documents do not link. They must be typed into the browser bar on a web page.