

Major General William E. Ingram, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LET'S NOT 'FIX' THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

There is an old saying that "if it's not broken, don't fix it." That saying applies specifically to current proposals in Congress to "fix" the Selective Service System by, in effect, ending registration.

H.R. 1050, offered by Congressmen Martin O. Sabo, (D-Minnesota), and Bill Green, (R-New York), is attempting to fix something that isn't broken. First, the charge that registration with the Selective Service System isn't working will not stand up to critical analysis. Second, the assertion that registration would only save two weeks in delivering drafted men to training stations isn't accurate, either. And finally, the effective repeal of registration would be a terrible geopolitical signal to send our allies and foes alike. Let's take these issues one at a time.

One. A year or so ago critics of registration were lambasting the Selective Service System because it had "only" achieved a registration rate of 94 percent. Major General Thomas K. Turnage (ret.), Selective Service director, recently told a congressional committee that this has risen to 95.4 percent. Percentages in the 90s are significant but not if you listen to critics of registration.

Further, Turnage attributes even this small percentage of failures in lack of compliance with registration requirements to lack of information available to young men turning 18. He proves this with registration figures for the years (of birth) in question:

- 1960—98.6 percent
- 1961—98.6 percent
- 1962—96.8 percent
- 1963—96.6 percent
- 1964—86.3 percent

Figures for the men in year of birth 1965, who were supposed to register in 1982, are not complete. However, Turnage notes that as time goes by, men who have not registered find out they must and generally do as the figures above indicate. In fact, he noted that for the 1963 year of birth, only 65.9 percent registered on time,

although 96.6 percent have now registered. Turnage said he is further encouraged by the fact that 86.3 percent registered on time the next year, indicating a much greater compliance than a year earlier.

Two. The assertion that registration will only save two weeks in delivering young men to training stations involves two erroneous assumptions. First, it is supported by a military manpower study done during the Carter Administration that was repudiated even before it was officially issued by the Department of Defense. Carter did not rely on that information when he proposed and won

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approval for registration in 1980. Military planners don't rely on it today. Rather, today's planners assume a six- to eight-week time saving with registration.

Registration's critics assert two other deficiencies in this area. First, they note that Selective Service doesn't require young men to keep current addresses on file as the old local draft boards did in the 1948-76 period. True, but the principle behind registration is to have young men register. And, registration data include a Social Security number, which makes location a relatively simple

procedure through employment information or tax data.

The critics further assert that even if young men could be delivered to training stations in two weeks, as Selective Service says it will do, the Army is not prepared to train them because of the current shrunken training superstructure. Wrong again. The U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) has 12 training divisions for this very purpose. Those divisions, among the highest priority of the USAR's units, would be there with trained drill instructors waiting for the young draftees to step off the bus. Welcome to the Army!

Three. The United States, in pressuring its European allies to increase their defense spending, comes under considerable criticism from those allies for not having a military draft. West Germans, for example, say that the best indication they could have of U.S. sincerity in defending Europe if attacked by the Warsaw Pact would be for the United States to resume drafting men into the Army.

That isn't likely to happen for a whole lot of American political reasons. But in that same vein, it would be the worst sort of international signal for the United States to quit registration. The Russians would assume a lack of national commitment on our part and certainly Europeans would be justified in questioning our commitment to NATO.

Registration is by no means the solution to various military problems that have afflicted the United States since the draft was abolished in 1975. However, registration does serve a definite mobilization purpose. It greatly accelerates the process of fully manning the military. Unless and until something is done to double or triple the size of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) to provide enough men to fully man the active Army and the reserve components and to provide enough fillers to replace combat casualties during the first six months of any future war, there will be an urgent need for continued registration.

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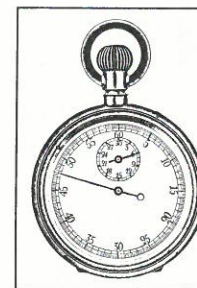
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Army Guard Directorate's Validation Branch is seeking to equate time and money, and justifying the requirements for full-time support positions in the Army National Guard.

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It will be Indy '83 in Indianapolis, Indiana, in early October as members of the Association gather for the 105th NGAUS General Conference.

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Equipment program, size of force get committee attention.



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COVER: The mournful notes of "Taps" from an Army bugler punctuate our memories of fallen comrades and veterans this Memorial Day—1983. Story on page 24. Cover Design: Johnson Design Group.

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