

DEALING WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

- 1. What choices do I have regarding possible military service?**
- 2. Where can I find help in making this difficult decision?**
- 3. What are the specific steps involved in carrying out my decision?**

PeaceAction 
of San Mateo County



If you are a young person, you have an important decision to make concerning the military. This decision will have a profound effect on the rest of your life. This brochure contains vital information relative to the four options you have and the possible consequences of your decision. Currently, **choices I and IV** apply to males only, but this could change. Young women should read all options.

Choice I

Register with Selective Service, and hope you don't get drafted.

Within 30 days before or after you turn 18 years old, the present law requires that you register for military service. The consequences of this choice are that IF a draft is reinstated, you will most likely receive a draft notice from the Army. (No one knows for sure if a draft will or will not be reinstated by Congress in the near future, but it is best to prepare AS IF it will be.) You will report for duty, be sent to boot camp and/or be given other basic training, and probably be shipped out to a combat zone. Warning: the details on registration can change quickly. Consult the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCCO) for the latest information. (Contact information for the CCCCO can be found at the end of the "Choice III" section of this brochure.)

Choice II

Sign up for a Delayed Enlistment Program (DEP) with the branch of the military of your choosing, and be ready for combat.

The DEP applies to students and non-students. It is designed to stagger recruits according to the recruiter's scheduling needs. It allows one to enlist and postpone his/her report date into the active military up to 365 days from the initial signing of the enlistment agreement.

The organization that created this brochure (Peace Action of San Mateo County) would encourage you NOT to make this choice.

Peace Action of San Mateo County

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Approximately 95% of all new recruits enter the military through the DEP, drawn in by the often false promises of the military recruiters. You should know that 65% of recruits who pay the required \$1,200 into the Montgomery G.I. Bill never receive a dime in return. Also, the vast majority of recruits are only eligible for the basic college benefit which is not enough to cover the costs of attending a community college. For possible scholarships, grants and loans, see your career center and check out www.fastweb.com.

How to get out of a DEP agreement

If you have already signed DEP papers, it is still possible to get out of this agreement. The DEP contract states that the undersigned agrees to enlist into the active component of the military on a future date that is specified within the DEP contract. Not until a DEP recruit reports for basic training and is sworn in again, is he/she considered on active military duty. **Up to that point a recruit can still back out of the DEP agreement by simply writing to the Commander of the recruiting station where you signed up.** The address is on the DEP contract that you signed. It is best to go to the Post Office and mail a certified letter with a "return receipt requested." Additionally, you should mail another copy to yourself. When you receive it, keep it unopened. The postmark is your legal proof. Inform the commanding officer of your change of heart and the reasons for it. Tell him you will not be going for your physical or any aptitude tests, nor will you be participating in any further activities with them. Simply by not showing up on your "ship date" you are automatically out. Once you enlist and are sworn in at the Command, then you have signed a binding contract. **Part of that contract—Section 9.5.b—states that, "Laws and regulations can be changed without notice to me. Such changes may affect my status, pay, allowances, benefits, and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment reenlistment document."** Additionally, even sections of the DEP contract that may have been crossed out by your recruiter will become binding.

Choice III

Apply for “conscientious objector” (or C.O.) status, and hope you qualify.

This choice involves complying with the Selective Service draft registration law, but also starting immediately to build a file to substantiate your claim that your conscience—your sense of ethical, moral and/or religious beliefs—does not allow you to kill other human beings, nor to participate in military combat. You must be morally opposed to all wars, but you can still advocate using violence in personal self-defense. Young people from any religion and those who are non-religious from any racial group or social class are eligible to apply for C.O. status. There will be a hearing at which you can present evidence, etc. That is why it is important to start a C.O. file right away. Your Draft Board has the power to decide “yes” or “no” regarding your C.O. classification. Many people have been refused C.O. status. There is an appeal process.

What are the specific STEPS in establishing a C.O. file and applying for C.O. status?

- (1) Before you send in your Selective Service System (SSS) Registration Form, first, write somewhere on the form, in bold letters: “I am a conscientious objector.” Make several photocopies of the form before you mail it to keep for your C.O. file.
- (2) Mail the original into the SSS. At the same time, mail yourself one of the copies you have made. When it comes back to your address, don’t open it. You will then have a sealed and dated piece of evidence that you are claiming C.O. status.
- (3) Start building a C.O. file. Building a C.O. file is important for young men *and women also*, since a draft may include women. Write out a statement of your beliefs—what they are, when and how you arrived at them, and what effects those beliefs have had on how you lead your daily life. Your statement of beliefs must mention that you object to **all wars** as a means of solving conflicts, even though you can believe in using violence to protect yourself if attacked. This can be a

short or a long statement. Collect at least three letters of support from teachers, friends, family, clergy, and counselors—anyone who knows about your beliefs and can testify to them. Consider joining organizations such as Peace Action of San Mateo County, the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, the CCCO, the War Resisters League, and/or others. Contact information is at the end of this brochure. Keep records of organizations you belong to, events you have participated in, demonstrations, meetings of peace oriented groups, photographs, books and movies that have influenced you, etc. Date all documents that go into your file. Get your documents notarized whenever possible. Keep a copy of your C.O. file in at least one other safe place.

- (4) If you have ALREADY REGISTERED with the SSS, and you did NOT write, "I am a conscientious objector" on the registration form, that does NOT mean that you are barred from filing for a C.O. exemption in the event of a draft. If you NOW feel that you are a C.O., or you want to now begin to consider this option, begin immediately to start your C.O. file as described above.
- (5) If a draft is reinstated and you receive a draft notice, you then check a box on a form that comes with the draft notice that says you are applying for an exemption as a conscientious objector. You will be scheduled for a hearing before your draft board. Again, your Draft board may accept or reject your application for C.O. status. Contact the CCCO office in Oakland. They can help you through this process. For questions in general about C.O. status, procedures, etc., call the Oakland CCCO office's regular phone number, (510) 465-1617 or (888) 231-2226. If you are already in the US military service, and you have questions about applying for C.O. status, call the CCCO's G.I. Rights Hotline, 1-800-394-9544.

Choice IV

Draft Resistance: Refusing or postponing Selective Service Registration

Some men have chosen to not register for the draft at all. Others have chosen to resist registering until just before their 26th birthday. The draft has traditionally applied only to men under the age of 26. This choice, of course, involves some risk, but you have a right to know that it is one of your choices. During the Vietnam War, at least 250,000 men refused to register; only about 250 of them were convicted in court. No one has been indicted for non-registration since 1986.

The main reason non-registrants give for refusing to register is that registration is an act that acknowledges the government's right to conscript persons into the military, and that you will cooperate if the draft returns. Also, while you are on active duty, you must give up most of your civil liberties. This option (non-registration) says that you will not cooperate with the system of war and killing AT ALL. This position was well expressed by Albert Einstein when he said, "Nothing will end war unless the people themselves refuse to go to war."

Possible consequences of this choice:

(1) Often military recruiters will obtain your name, address and birth date either from your school or some other source. Therefore, if you haven't registered by shortly after your eighteenth birthday, you may receive one or more threatening letters from the Selective Service System. The letter(s) will say that since you haven't registered they are turning your name over to the Department of Justice for possible prosecution, and that refusal to register for the draft is a Federal crime punishable by a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or up to 5 years imprisonment. It is very unlikely that you will actually be prosecuted for non-registration, as noted above. However, if you are selected for prosecution, you will get a warning letter from the U.S. Attorney or a visit by the F.B.I. You will be given a "last chance" to register. If you still choose to refuse, you will probably be prosecuted. You will need to get legal counsel. Again, the CCCO, and the G.I. Rights

Hotline is the best place we know of for help.

(2) Normal consequences for non-registration (assuming you are not prosecuted) are:

- A.** You become ineligible for federal financial aid for college.
- B.** You are barred from employment and training programs with the federal government, including the Postal Service and the National Park Service.
- C.** If you do not register before your 26th birthday, you forfeit the possibility of future federal financial aid and government employment and training.
- D.** The state of California has added the additional penalty that you will be ineligible for State Financial Aid.

Whatever choice you make from those options presented above, we hope you will make them carefully. Don't just listen to the military recruiters' side of the story alone. That would be the same as a judge in a court of law making a decision after listening to the arguments of only one side of a case. Discuss your decision with your parents, school counselors, veterans, veterans groups or others of your choice. You can talk to a member of the Veterans Speakers Alliance by calling, in the San Mateo County area, George Johnson at (650) 207-6073 or leave a message at the San Francisco office at (415) 255-7331. Your very life may be at stake. You should know that you are not alone. There are many dedicated people who have studied at great length the issues surrounding these difficult choices. They are ready and willing to help you, but ultimately **IT IS YOUR DECISION TO MAKE.**

Some helpful websites with much more information include: www.objector.org, (GCCO), www.StudentPeaceAction.org, www.warresisters.org, www.rcnv.org, www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm, www.nisbco.org, www.hasbrouck.org.

This flyer is brought to you by Peace Action of San Mateo County, Campus Outreach Committee. www.sanmateopeaceaction.org. Committee co-chairs Don Havis (donmths@rcn.com) and Cheryl Kozanitas (cherylkoz@earthlink.net) will be happy to answer questions and/or discuss issues in this brochure.

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