

Kaelem Culbertson
Lincoln Lyceum
15 July, 2023

Title

Many Americans view mandatory military service, or “the draft,” in a negative light. Originally established during the War for Independence, when the American colonies required a strong militia, the draft has undergone many changes throughout American history. Most recently, the draft was instigated before World War II and continued until the 1970s. Draftees were selected by lottery, a process similar to what it would be today with the current President. However, not everyone was actually called to military service. One such individual, Drake Lorence, was in the 1973 draft. He was one of many young men who did not end up serving the military. In his words, he would have “gladly gone. [He] was terribly naive,” and “probably would have been killed.” However, with the new military conscription system, men will not only benefit in many ways from this military service, but also learn the importance of war, in its proper place.

As the Declaration of Independence familiarly states, governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. In order for this consent to continue and flourish, one must show loyalty to that government. The military is structured to ensure the soldiers are loyal and obedient, both on the battlefield and in life. This character is exactly what this country needs, a mindset focused on following a just set of commands in order to protect the general welfare of the people. A year of military service cultivates patriotism and a strong mentality of work as the young men fully transition into American society.

America has been in relative peace for decades now, aiding in foreign affairs across the globe, in contrast to its position in the World Wars. However, George Washington famously provided invaluable insight into our current position: “To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace.” Many aspects of American life and culture can certainly be transformed to help America grow maturely into an even greater country, and the military is a wonderful place to begin.

As aforementioned, the military builds character. This is especially evident in many American presidents who served in the military themselves. From the founding fathers to even men in the twenty-first century, presidents with military backgrounds learned how to lead and serve effectively. This attitude is essential when a country is affronted with strong external forces, even if at peace. Currently, there is no 'world war,' but it is evident that there is unrest in many eastern countries, including world powers Russia and China. A president with a military background is ideal for this situation. He knows the value of life, and is hesitant to throw it away. He understands duty and performs it to the best of his ability. But why stop at the president? Why not have a strong culture dedicated to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Even with merely a year under conscription, young men across America will learn these valuable virtues, and will then incorporate them into society.

There will certainly be concern, whether about possible dangers or problems of conscience. Indeed, Lorence iterated this feeling from when the draft was still the law. "It was a confusing time, breeding a lot that was ugly and destructive." However, the benefits for the individual, the community, and the country at large are ever greater than any of the concerns. Much of this benefit is not as tangible as some would like, but the impact of the American character, combined with the loyalty of a well-ordered and filled military will provide stability to

the United States. After all, it is only one year of service before twenty-two years of age, right at the most influential point of a young man's life: the transition to adulthood.

In sum, then, military conscription provides a unique opportunity for young American men to grow in stature, leadership, and character. It institutes loyalty and patriotism, both in the soldiers and in the lives they impact. Just like many in America's history who were shaped by the military, American men will be shaped into citizens who love their country and who seek to make it thrive.