

The Duty of a Citizen

“Since the days of Greece and Rome, when the word ‘citizen’ was a title of honor, we have often seen more emphasis put on the rights of citizenship than on its responsibilities” (Robert F. Kennedy). A citizen, by definition, is a legally recognized subject or national of a state or commonwealth. The word “subject” implies some form of servitude. As Kennedy discovered, this part of citizenship is often neglected. One way to ensure American citizens are performing their duty to their country is to require every male US citizen to complete one year of military service before the age of 22. A year of mandatory military service would provide a readily available mass of trained soldiers, promote national unity, and aid in the formation of the character of America’s citizens.

The primary goal of every country at war is victory in the shortest possible amount of time. The longer the war, the higher the cost, both in money and in precious lives. A year of compulsory military service for all male US citizens would allow for a throng of trained men to accumulate. If war were to suddenly arise, there would be a reservoir of trained soldiers ready for action. This would eliminate the months of basic training necessary for young men, who have never been introduced to warfare, before they enter a war against veteran enemy soldiers. This peacetime training also allows for more personalized training. Personalized training would improve the efficiency of forces when millions of men are trained in the military operation they excel at. This not only decreases the time required to complete operations, but also will reduce casualties when trained personnel are in combat. Weakness invites aggression from enemies, but having a well-trained force of men ready for active duty at any time plants hesitation and doubt

into hostile minds. A reserve of trained soldiers would serve to decrease the costs and casualties of war and establish a sense of security among the people of America.

Requiring a year of service in the military would also foster unity in America. Serving in the military brings men from diverse backgrounds together and eliminates any barriers created by race, class, livelihood, and location. The universally recognized quote, “The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb,” conveys the strength of the bond created between those who fight together. Those who fight alongside each other become family, they become brothers. It is a bond that lasts a lifetime, regardless of time or distance. A bond that will heal our nation and bridge any gaps formed by diversity. A year of military service would benefit the restoration of unity to the United States of America.

Mandatory military service would also assist in the cultivation of the character of America’s men. Thucydides, a Greek historian and general, once wrote, “In peace and prosperity states and individuals have better sentiments, because they do not find themselves suddenly confronted with imperious necessities; but war takes away the easy supply of daily wants and so proves a rough master that brings most men’s characters to a level with their fortunes.” In this quote, he shows how the harshness of war can refine a person’s character. Soldiers in the military experience an environment with a high level of equality. Prejudices crumble after living in close quarters with men from various backgrounds and fighting by their side daily. One man who was eligible for the draft when it was the law stated that mandatory military service would teach our men the value of “discipline, teamwork, and physical exercise.” The physicality of military training erases any chance for laziness or lack of effort. Placing our young men in this situation

would not only cause obesity rates to drop, but would also raise generations of tough, hard-working men. A year of service in the military would transform the boys of America into men.

While one year of mandatory military service would greatly benefit our country, not everyone approves of the concept. One of the arguments raised against this proposal is that compulsory service infringes on freedom. Dissenters claim that it is involuntary servitude. Yet, serving in the military is not slavery. Rather, it is the duty of a country's citizens. It is the responsibility of citizens to defend their freedom. As George S. Patton Jr. stated, "The soldier is also a citizen. In fact, the highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one's country." Another argument raised against mandatory military service is that it interferes with the opportunity for higher education. However, boys' high school graduation rates are 6% lower than girls', and, across the nation, 60% of the collegiate student body is women. The young men of America appear to be struggling to keep up with their education. Serving in the military for a year would give these boys a purpose until they find their next path. Currently, mandatory military service is not a popular idea, but, in the words of a man who entered adulthood when the draft was active, "It's hard on a soldier, but it's good for the country. It's something that needs to be done." Requiring a year of military service from our young men would greatly improve not only this country, but also her citizens.

Mandatory military service, in conclusion, is necessary for the welfare of America and her citizens. A year of service in the military would supply a mass of men ready for military duty, aid in the restoration of national unity, and refine the character of the men of America. In

Abraham Lincoln's Lyceum Address, the famous president defines the "noblest cause" for our civic order as "that of establishing and maintaining civil and religious liberty." In order to maintain liberty, citizens must fight for it. Fighting for this country is not only an honor, it is the duty of the citizens of the United States of America.