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Essay Contest

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For years throughout the history of our nation, it was a requirement that all men serve in the military for about two years before the age of twenty-two. The draft ensured that the U.S. army was large enough to protect the citizens of America and aid other nations after WWII. After the Vietnam War concluded, American citizens were tired of war, and called for an end to the military draft.

Now, the president wishes to bring back the draft. He himself was once a member of the United States military, and insists that this military experience is what made him the man he is today. He has seen firsthand how American citizens take their liberties for granted, the liberties that he and his fellow soldiers fought for. This is why he often returns to these words spoken by Robert F. Kennedy, our former US Attorney General: "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."

First and foremost, our president believes that the draft will remind American citizens of the duties and responsibilities they hold towards their country. Next, he knows from his own experience that time in the military allows soldiers to find a purpose, and sets their feet on a path towards good. America must welcome the draft. It will remind Americans of the struggles that we went through as a nation to reach a height where we are now, and why we must continue to protect the citizenship that our ancestors won for us.

One extraordinary thing the draft creates is a sense of shared responsibility for our country. American citizens enjoy a vast amount of freedoms and rights that many other nations could only dream of. And yet many people, particularly the young generation, take these rights for granted. To uncover a deeper perspective on this, I interviewed Mike Fleming, a Vietnam war veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and Army Commendation Medals. He supported the draft, saying “All kids should participate in the draft because the protection of our freedom and rights cannot fall solely on those who want to defend them. The responsibility to protect the rights of our nation belongs to the entire country.” It does not make sense for America to rely completely on the 0.5% of our population that makes up our military. Our freedom is not, and never has been, free. It comes at a cost, one that each and every citizen must be willing to pay.

Another reason that America must bring back the draft is because it creates a pathway and purpose for kids. Mike Wille was eligible for the draft during the Vietnam War, but was not chosen. His view on the draft focused more on kids, when he said “My four brothers who all served in the military were my idols. I looked up to them and copied them. Nowadays, kids don’t have that. They see people who tell them it’s okay to sit around and do nothing, that it’s okay to do bad things, like drugs.” When they are straight out of high school, many kids have no idea what they want to do with their lives. The military gives them a chance to figure it out, while helping them grow up and be shaped into good, strong people who truly care about their country.

These reasons aside, many people still have reservations. Most important are the moral implications of war. While researching, I interviewed Chris Wille, a Marine veteran from the Vietnam War. He said, “I didn’t want to be drafted, because I didn’t want to fight for a war I didn’t believe in. We had just found out the government was lying to us about what was really

happening in Vietnam, such as the bombings at Laos.” Mr. Wille is right - partly. The government did lie to the American public, by not releasing news of military advancements to the mainstream media. However, this was a mistake that rests solely on the presidential administration of that time. The military had nothing to do with the lies spread. The American government has felt the mistrust from citizens caused by the lies of the Vietnam War for many years, and will strive to make certain that nothing of that sort will ever happen again.

Another issue found in the military draft was brought up by Carey Wille, Mike Wille’s wife. As a citizen who watched her family members and friends go to war, she said “One drawback I’ve seen to the military draft throughout history is the inequality found in it. If you were rich, you could pay someone to take your place, or pay a doctor to make a false excuse that would exempt you from service.” And she is right. America’s history with the draft has shown unfair bias towards the impoverished, forcing them to bear the brunt of our nation’s defense. To establish equality in the draft if it is reinstated, the military will use modern technology in an attempt to erase fraud and make sure all exemptions are fully valid. The American government will not allow exemptions based on wealth, race, or any like factor, thereby demonstrating our belief that a country’s military should reflect the society it serves.

In the end, there is one thing that all citizens of the United States must remember: that we are united. We have become far too used to seeing each other as Democrats and Republicans, Liberals and Conservatives, rather than fellow citizens of the same country. When a country stands divided, people do not know how to defend it. However, there is always hope in the future. Reinstating the military draft will give the young people of America a united purpose: to discover their responsibility to defend the values their country stands for, and become worthy of the honor attached to their title of “American citizen”.