

Congress Should Reject Defense Bill “Draft Our Daughters” Mandate

Members of the **Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC)** recently dragged out of the legislative dustbin a controversial mandate that would require young women to register with [Selective Service](#) for a possible future draft. “**Draft Our Daughters**” language in the **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2025**, which disregarded [strong opposition](#) in both Houses of Congress, would *weaken* readiness in the **All-Volunteer Force**, not strengthen it.

The Purpose of Selective Service Registration

The **Selective Service** system exists as a low-cost insurance policy that backs up the **All-Volunteer Force (AVF)**. Its purpose is not to advance “**equity**” between the sexes. The Selective Service issue is about **national security**, not “**men’s**” or “**women’s rights.**”

- Congress and the Supreme Court have affirmed the historic purpose of **conscription**: rapidly replacing **casualties fallen in battle** to fight during a nation-threatening war; the purpose is not to induct support personnel with special skills, such as medical or cyber.
- Some exceptional women may be able to meet minimal standards, but extensive research has shown that **most women cannot meet combat arms standards while most men can**. There is *no justification* for ordering all draft age women to register.
- The congressionally established **National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service**, which spent **\$45 million** over three years, called for women to register with Selective Service for a possible future draft because “*the time is right.*” (p. 122, Final Report) This vacuous, unsupported recommendation ignored inconvenient facts that did not support the Commission’s pre-conceived social agenda. (See below)
- The Commission also failed to make a plausible argument for shifting the *purpose* of Selective Service away from **combat replacement requirements** – an obvious and unnecessary step toward mandatory “**national service.**” (p. 113, Final Report)

The Case for Co-Ed Conscription Has Not Been Made

- According to three years of scientific research done by the **Marine Corps**, major sex-related differences exist in physical strength, speed, and endurance. As noted in this four-page [Research Summary](#), field tests found that units composed of average-ability men **outperformed mixed-sex teams** with highly qualified women in **69%** of evaluated tasks, including hiking under load and other tasks simulating close combat.
- USMC research also found that servicewomen were twice as likely to be injured. In addition, women suffer serious [health problems](#) such as [infertility](#) and [higher risks of suicide](#). Female [attrition](#) rates in combat arms units have been twice those of men.

(Over, please)

- In 2018, Army officials repeatedly promised that a six-event **Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT)** would be a “gender-neutral” replacement for the longstanding **Physical Fitness Test (PFT)**, which allowed for physical differences. However, initial trials reported an [84% failure rate](#) among female trainees and **30%** among the men.
- The Army attempted several [adjustments](#) in test requirements and scoring systems, but in March 2022, promises to make the ACFT sex-neutral were [abandoned](#). RAND data showed that only **52%** of the women could pass the test, compared to **92%** of the men.
- Involuntary conscription of women would make combat arms units **less strong, less fast**, more vulnerable to **debilitating injuries**, **less ready** for deployment on short notice, and **less accurate** with offensive weapons during combat operations.

Congress Should Prioritize Military Requirements, not “Equity”

Today – no less than when the **Supreme Court** issued its landmark *Rostker v. Goldberg* decision (1981) – women and men are not “*similarly situated*” insofar as physical strength and endurance required to succeed in the deadly environment of the battlefield.

- As Law Professor Emeritus **William A. Woodruff** has explained in a detailed [analysis](#), if Selective Service called up women and men ages **18-26** in roughly equal numbers, the administrative burden of finding the theoretical one-in-four woman who might be qualified would make it *more difficult* to find and quickly mobilize American forces.
- In the **Army** and **Marine Corps**, the largest communities are **infantry**. A “sex-neutral” call-up that ignores unchanging physical differences between men and women would **jam the induction system during a time of catastrophic national emergency**.
- **This would create a political crisis and a paralyzing administrative overload that would weaken our armed forces at the worst possible time.**

Opportunities are wide-open for women in the **All-Volunteer Force (AVF)**, but there is no evidence that military or civilian women want to be forced into the combat arms on the same involuntary basis as men. Nor is there any evidence that expanded **Military Selective Service Act (MSSA)** mandates including women would improve recruiting or readiness.

Civilian and military women have always volunteered to serve in times of national emergency. There is no reason to believe that they will not do so again. Involuntary “**Draft Our Daughters**” **registration for conscription** would irreversibly harm young women and weaken military readiness instead of strengthening it. -- June 2024

* * * * *

*For more information, see the detailed [Statement for the Record](#) that the **Center for Military Readiness** submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2021, and a [letter](#) to then-Ranking Member **Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK)**. CMR is an independent, non-partisan public policy organization that reports on and analyzes military/social issues: www.cmrlink.org.*