



Courage to Resist

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To the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

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Statement Opposing Mandatory Draft Registration or Compulsory Service

Courage to Resist formed in the early days of the US War on Iraq in order to advocate for the brave service persons who refused to participate in that illegal and unjust war. Since then, we've helped politically and legally defended approximately 50 service persons at military courts martial resulting from their courage to resist deployments, or from repercussions for speaking out about the realities of war. Some of these cases have involved mobilizing thousands of people in protest at US military trial locations, such as Fort Lewis (US v. Watada) and at Fort Meade (US v. Manning). We have also organized hundreds of public demonstrations, vigils, and parades, in our communities.

Now that the current men-only draft registration requirements have been ruled unconstitutional, the draft registration system is at a crossroads: End draft registration once and for ALL, or expand it to young women as well as men.

The cornerstone of our mission is to "support military resistance, counter-recruitment, and draft resistance." In our opinion, the harder it is for our government to fight unpopular and unnecessary wars, the better. We pledge to continue that mission, and rally others to do so as well.

Specifically, we oppose any and all registration and/or national service that is not 100% voluntary with full disclosure of commitments and obligations, as well as incentives.

Additionally, it is not enough to offer a conscientious objector waiver to mandatory servitude. The onus must not be placed on individuals to articulate to a government official why they should not have their freedom stolen from them.

On a personal note, as a young Marine Corporal, I was imprisoned after refusing to deploy to the Gulf War with my artillery battery. This came after my application for discharge as a conscientious objector was denied by my command and the Pentagon. In my view, the government has a poor track record of evaluating individual conscience.

On behalf of the Courage to Resist community of resistance,

Jeff Paterson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "JEFF PATERSON". The signature is stylized with a large, circular flourish at the beginning of the word "JEFF".

USMC 1986-1990