NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Service Registration System Proposal For Voting – Passive Post-Mobilization Registration

The following bullet points summarize a package of policy alternatives for the Service Registration System. These alternatives have not been discussed or endorsed by the Ends Ways and Means Working Group and require full Commission deliberation. Each component of this package will be voted on separately. _Note: This memo is contingent upon a Commission vote in favor of post-mobilization registration._

1. **Establish the Service Registration System (SRS).**[1] *Problem:* Americans of all ages lack a centralized source of information about military, national, and public service opportunities, and many service organizations face challenges identifying candidates interested in or eligible for service. *Goal:* Provide a platform to inform individuals about, and potentially connect them with, organizations and opportunities in military, national, and public service as well as allow service organizations to identify and facilitate recruitment of candidates to meet their needs.[2]
    o The Commission recommends that Congress authorize and appropriate funds to establish the SRS.

2. **Rebrand the Selective Service System as host of the Service Registration System.** *Problem:* Ensuring a post-mobilization registration system efficiently and quickly meets capacity and fulfills its purpose in the event of a national mobilization is challenging and subject to risk if its infrastructure degrades; additionally, the SRS requires a host. *Goal:* Maintain resources and general infrastructure of Selective Service System (SSS) to promote voluntary service when not performing national mobilization responsibilities.
    o The Commission recommends that Congress amend the MSSA to task the SSS data management center, headquarters, and regional offices to administer and oversee the SRS when not otherwise assigned with responsibilities to prepare for the implementation of a draft.
    o The Commission encourages the SSS to ask that local board volunteers also serve as ambassadors for the SRS.

Should these proposals be adopted?

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[1] Service Registration System (SRS) is a placeholder pending Commissioner deliberation.
[2] Those opportunities might include employment, participation in termed service programs, service sabbaticals, and emergency response needs.

1. Establish the Service Registration System

- The SRS could encourage voluntary service across military, national, and public service opportunities through increased awareness while simultaneously offering service organizations more tools to reach prospective service members.

Background

      Proposals to develop national service registration systems have arisen regularly throughout the past few decades.[3] While the concepts varied in purpose and desired outcomes, from a redesigned Selective Service System promoting national service to a nonprofit web platform to advertise service-year opportunities, they have generally all sought to advance the notion of service to the nation.

      The SRS presented below is based on Commissioner deliberation to date. The purpose of this system would be to provide individuals information about, and potentially connect them with, military, national, and public service opportunities as well as allow participating service organizations to identify and facilitate recruiting of candidates to meet their needs. Details of the SRS are as follows:

Registrants:
- Individual registration for the system would be voluntary.
- All registrants would supply certain baseline information to take advantage of the SRS's functionality. Individuals may choose to provide additional details to improve the specificity of their interactions with military, national, and public service organizations ("service organizations").
  - o Baseline information would include contact information and information related to military eligibility, including educational background and skills.
  - o Additional information would include interests, service preferences (to include identifying specific service organizations, types of service, career goals, and others), and willingness to be contacted by public or national organizations to volunteer in a nonmilitary capacity for state or federal emergencies.
- Registrants may elect the type of information they want to share with, and receive from, participating service organizations.
- Registrants would be allowed to update their information.

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[3] For example, see Marc Magee, *From Selective Service to National Service: A Blueprint for Citizenship and Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Progressive Policy Institute, July 2003), 6; and *A 21st Century National Service System: Plan of Action* (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute and Franklin Project, June 2013), 22, https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/franklin/FranklinProject_PlanofAction_final.pdf

Participating Service Organizations:
- The U.S. military and uniformed services would be required to participate. Their participation is designed to provide the military with richer information on potential recruits and a better indication of individual interest in military service.
- All federal agencies would be required to participate. Their participation is designed to allow agencies to identify candidates for positions; however, the proposed SRS is not intended to replace USAJOBS.
- State, local, and tribal governments would be encouraged to participate. The U.S. government cannot mandate that nonfederal governments participate in the SRS; however, the proposal envisions that the SRS host would develop standards and procedures to enable state, local, and tribal governments to participate in different capacities.
  - For example, a state may wish to make use of the SRS to expand the reach of an existing volunteer mobilization program but not make use of the system for filling civil service positions.
- Nongovernmental organizations would be encouraged to participate. The U.S. government cannot mandate such entities participate in the SRS; however, the proposal envisions that the SRS host would develop standards and procedures to enable nongovernmental organizations to participate.
  - For example, the U.S. government could propose that any CNCS grantee may participate in the SRS.
- Participating service organizations may use the SRS to contact individuals who have expressed interest in the service organization or opportunity type, or to push recruiting materials for employment, participation (for example, AmeriCorps), service sabbaticals (for example, a six-month service deployment), and emergency response needs (for example, state volunteer mobilizer program) to candidates who have expressed interest.

The proposed SRS is reflective of Commissioner deliberation through June 2019. Additional details for the SRS remain to be determined.

Findings

- While awareness of service opportunities is acknowledged as an issue across military, national, and public service, demand exceeds supply for many types of service—particularly national and public service opportunities. Additionally, significant access challenges remain across military, national, and public service.[4]
- The design and implementation of the system will impact its success.

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[4] Dorothy Stoneman advocated for more service opportunities instead of funding spent on a system expanding awareness during the June hearing, citing expanded opportunities as the greatest need—particularly for national service. Dorothy Stoneman, Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, June 20, 2019.

- o According to Dr. Ben Ho, matching markets such as the proposed SRS are more effective when a greater percentage of users use the same network,[5] but achieving such scale is challenging.[6]
- o Drew Train remarked that due to the high number of opportunities available to every user, the SRS may be more similar to a buyer/seller marketplace than a matching service—making the ability for participants to sort through information on available opportunities an important system function.[7]
- o According to Dr. Dorothy Stoneman, the design of the system should place the burden on service organizations, not individuals, to keep information updated and links functional, ensuring the informational reliability of the platform.[8] She suggested the system serve only as an informational portal—not a registration/matching site. She cautioned that if the system becomes too burdensome for service organizations, many may opt out.

- Individual participation is critical—but unknown. Results from the Harvard IOP Survey found that only 22.74 percent of young people aged 18-29 would "very likely" or "likely" support the SRS, while 27.7 percent said they would be "unlikely" or "very unlikely." The most common response was "neutral" with the second most common response being "don't know."[9]
    - o Results from the IOP Survey also found that there was a strong correlation between those willing to register for a voluntary national roster or willing to respond to a national call for volunteers and those who would be supportive of the SRS.[10]

- Additional risks and gaps covered in the SRS policy analysis apply to this proposal.

Recommendation and Implementation

For the purposes of deliberation, the italicized text below serves as the foundation of potential recommendations and should be the focus of decision-making. Detailed descriptions of how to implement recommended changes are offered to illustrate a means of achieving the desired outcomes.

- *Authorize and appropriate funds to establish the SRS.*
    1. Authorize and appropriate funds for the SRS for an initial period of five years.
    2. Require GAO to conduct two biennial reviews of the SRS, including the host agency's administration and management of the SRS.

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[5] Dr. Benjamin Ho, "Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service," June 20, 2019.
[6] Dr. Benjamin Ho, "Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service," June 20, 2019.
[7] Drew Train, "Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service," June 20, 2019.
[8] Drew Train, "Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service," June 20, 2019.
[9] Ipsos, "The Ipsos Public Affairs Project Report for the Youth and Politics Long Survey 2019," March 22, 2019.
[10] Ipsos, "The Ipsos Public Affairs Project Report for the Youth and Politics Long Survey 2019," March 22, 2019.

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3. Require that the Executive Office of the President be closely involved in development of the SRS.
4. Require that all federal agencies participate in the SRS.

2. Rebrand the SSS as Host of the Service Registration System

- With mandatory registration suspended until after Congress passes legislation authorizing the draft and mobilizing the Selective Service System, on-hand capacity required to mobilize the SSS to its full strength of 6,500 personnel needs to be preserved.
- Managing the SRS, which has overlapping infrastructure requirements with a compulsory registration system, may provide a means of preserving that capacity.

Background

The Selective Service System (SSS) is appropriated approximately $24.5 million annually.[11] The agency has a national headquarters, three regional headquarters, a Data Management Center (DMC), and around 11,000 volunteer local, district, and national appeal board members.[12] It is budgeted for 130 full-time civilian positions and 150 Reserve Force Officers (RFOs).[13] Additionally, each state and territory "has a part-time state director who is compensated for an average of up to 12 duty days per year."[14]

The database managed by SSS is comprehensive for the population it tracks, collecting registrants' full name, date of birth, street address, city, state, zip code, and Social Security number.[15] In 2010, the database stored around 16.4 million names and DMC added 2.2 million records in 2011 alone.[16] In its FY 2017 budget justification, the Selective Service indicated "the number of records in the database is approximately 78 million."[17]

The SSS dedicates resources to components outside of registration and database maintenance as well—these include: "public registration awareness and outreach, responding to

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[11] In testimony to the Commission, SSS Director Don Benton noted his agency successfully obtained an additional approximate $3.1 million (for updating IT systems and enhancing cybersecurity) for forthcoming annual appropriations. SSS staff relayed that the SSS recently secured a budget increase, $26 million in FY 2019 which includes some provision for modernization, with a new outyear budget of $24.5 million. See U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *The Selective Service System and Draft Registration: Issues for Congress*, R44452 (2019); and Donald Benton, Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, 24 April 2019.

[12] Note: Selective Service national headquarters is located in Arlington, VA, and its Data Management Center is located in Chicago, IL. Its three regional headquarters are located in Chicago, Illinois; Smyrna, Georgia; and Denver, Colorado. U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, GAO-12-623 (Washington, DC, 2012), https://www.gao.gov/assets/600/591441.pdf.

[13] SSS funds 150 RFOs and an additional 25 RFOs are on loan from the military.

[14] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, 8.

[15] U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *The Selective Service System and Draft Registration: Issues for Congress*, R44452 (2019).

[16] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System.

[17] U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *The Selective Service System and Draft Registration: Issues for Congress*, R44452 (2019), 2.

public inquiries about registration requirements and providing training and support to volunteer local board members, state directors, and Reserve Force Officers."[18]

A vital function of the current SSS structure is ensuring a fair and equitable draft process.[19] In the event of a draft, the SSS has 11,000 uncompensated men and women who have volunteered to remain trained and ready to serve as local board members. These individuals would decide the "classification status of men seeking exceptions or deferments based on conscientious objection, hardship to dependents, their status as ministers or ministerial students, or any other reason."[20]

In addition, the SSS regional offices, along with RFOs, maintain SSS's peacetime preparedness task including recruiting and training volunteer board members, serving as field contacts for state and local agencies, and conducting outreach to the public.[21]

In the event of a draft, SSS would manage the alternative service program for conscientious objectors. The requirement to provide a means of alternative service if a draft were enacted is substantiated by a "body of case law from the Vietnam era that would put the whole [draft] system in legal jeopardy if both the local board structure and the alternative service programs were not in place and viable."[22]

Findings

- SSS could potentially adapt its registration system to the requirements of the SRS. Aspects such as data collection, data security, operational personnel, and mechanisms to engage the public apply to both SSS registration and the voluntary SRS.
  - o If the SSS were rebranded to support the SRS in peacetime, the institution may need to suspend support to the SRS if Congress authorizes a draft or the President orders the resumption of active pre-mobilization registration.
  - o Rebranding SSS as host of the SRS may prove challenging.[23] Confusion and lack of clarity on the purpose of either system may result. In addition, there could be some reticence to utilize an SRS that is affiliated with the organization that administers draft processes.

- A post-mobilization system intertwined with an ongoing voluntary SRS may carry a degree of risk for the readiness and functionality of the national mobilization process. Prioritizing the SRS

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[18] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, 3.
[19] DoD, Rostker, and SSS cite the critical role an agency independent from DoD plays in ensuring an equitable draft process.
[20] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, 8.
[21] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, 8.
[22] Bernard D. Rostker, What to Do with the Selective Service System? Historical Lessons and Future Posture, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018, 18, https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE197.html.
[23] Drew Train, "Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service," June 20, 2019.

may lead to a concentration of funding, effort, and planning toward the active, voluntary peacetime system and away from the maintenance of post-mobilization registration planning.

- Local boards perform a function necessary for a post-mobilization draft that would not exist for an operable voluntary SRS. Thus, an alternative to local boards or a plan to reactivate them if required should be considered.

- Select components are deemed critical for maintaining a fair, equitable, and *functional* draft process. Considering history shows around 50 percent of inductees were found unfit to enter the armed forces, Dr. Rostker argues it is necessary that any future national mobilization system preserves a system to adjudicate claims and evaluate conscript fitness.[24]
  - o Rostker also notes the following aspects of the current SSS infrastructure will take longer to reconstitute such as "examination and classification of registrants; the selection, appointment, and training of local board members; and the development of an alternative service program."[25]

- Reduction of SSS infrastructure could constitute a change in posture to "deep standby" or "disestablishment." SSS estimates that if the agency were in a standby mode or disestablished and there was a call for a draft, it would require approximately 830 days or 920 days, respectively, to deliver the first inductees.[26] This estimate is primarily driven by the agency's experience with the 1980 decision to restart active registration.[27] This far exceeds the current DoD plan requiring SSS to provide inductees 193 days after draft authorization.
  - o If Congress were to place SSS in deep standby but not disestablish it, SSS estimates needing a $17.8 million budget and "93 full-time civilian personnel at the national headquarters and Data Management Center to continue inputting and processing registrations, maintain registration awareness and compliance, and facilitate plans to reconstitute the agency if needed."[28]

- Assuming the government will continue preserving the rights of conscientious objectors in the event of a draft, plans for the operation and management of an alternative service program are needed.[29]

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[24] Bernard D. Rostker, What to Do with the Selective Service System? Historical Lessons and Future Posture.
[25] Bernard D. Rostker, What to Do with the Selective Service System? Historical Lessons and Future Posture, 18.
[26] U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System.
[27] Bernard D. Rostker, What to Do with the Selective Service System? Historical Lessons and Future Posture, 17.
[28] Estimates assumes the agency "would reduce its civilian workforce by 37 positions, would no longer employ Reserve Force Officers or state directors, and would reduce its physical infrastructure costs by closing its three regional offices." U.S. Government Accountability Office, National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System, 11.
[29] Bernard D. Rostker, What to Do with the Selective Service System? Historical Lessons and Future Posture.

Recommendation and Implementation

For the purposes of deliberation, the italicized text below serves as the foundation of potential recommendations and should be the focus of decision-making. Detailed descriptions of how to implement recommended changes are offered to illustrate a means of achieving the desired outcomes.

- *Rebrand the Selective Service System and assign it responsibility as host of the SRS.*
    1. Amend the MSSA to authorize the SSS to host the SRS and maintain O&M appropriations in line with current year appropriations to fund the SRS and other work of the SSS.
    2. Require the SSS to provide an annual report to Congress providing an evaluation of the system's performance.
    3. Require the SSS to prioritize responsibilities to prepare for the implementation of a draft when such called to do so by the President.
    4. Require the rebranded SSS to maintain separation between the SRS and legacy or post-mobilization SSS databases.
    5. Authorize SSS to populate registrant information for post-mobilization registration from the SRS only if Congress authorizes a draft.

- *Encourages the SSS to ask that local board volunteers also serve as ambassadors for the SRS.*
    1. Consider training in the use of the SRS as part of their duties.