

Questions About Military Draft

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From time-to-time we receive questions regarding the military draft. It is true that there is no draft at this time and that many politicians have assured us that there will be none in the near future. However, some young people are concerned about the possibility of a future military draft and have asked for advice on how they should prepare for declaring themselves to be conscientious objectors.

Let's begin by relating to you the doctrine of military service and war as taught by many of the Churches of God. It is as follows:

We believe that the saints of God are forbidden by the commandments of God from deliberately taking human life and that bearing arms in a military organization is prohibited. Therefore, we believe Christians should not voluntarily become engaged in military service or war. If they are involuntarily so engaged, we believe that they should conscientiously refuse to bear arms and, to the extent possible, refuse to come under military authority.

It is your choice as to whether or not you believe and follow this doctrine. You are free to follow a different course. The purpose of this article is to let you know what options are available to you if you do indeed believe the above. Listed below are some common questions regarding being a conscientious objector (CO):

Question: Why is it important to think about this now?

Answer: *If a war were declared today, the draft could begin immediately. Or a peacetime draft or compulsory national service might be enacted. Under current regulations, conscientious objectors (COs) have a very limited time (sometimes only nine days) following an induction order to document their claims for exemption from military service. COs should think through the basis of their claim **now**. In peacetime or in war, early documentation of beliefs is evidence of sincerity.*

Question: What is the legal definition of a person who is a CO?

Answer: *A CO is a person who objects to participation in all forms of war and whose belief is based on a religious, moral, or ethical belief system. To be a CO, you don't have to oppose using violence in personal self-defense. However, under current legal definitions you must oppose participating in ALL wars.*

Question: What types of conscientious objectors are NOT recognized by federal law?

Answer: *The Military Selective Service Act and government regulations recognize COs who are opposed to participation in war in any form and those who are opposed to deliberate killing in any form, but who do not object to performing noncombatant duties in the military. The federal government does not recognize COs who object to their taxes being used to pay for a war, COs who believe in differentiating between just and unjust wars, and nuclear pacifists.*

Question: What about women?

Answer: *Despite the fact that women are not required to register for the draft, Congress has the power to include women in a draft. Therefore, it is important that women consider what they believe about war at this time.*

Suggestions

Listed below are steps that are suggested by organizations that help those seeking CO status. It is basic information on how to compile a claim as a CO:

1) When you register with the Selective Service, write that you are a CO on the card before sending it in. Photocopy the card. Mail the photocopy to yourself in a sealed envelope. Do not break the seal. Keep this envelope in a safe place.

2) Write a statement of beliefs that explain why, how, when, where, etc. that you became a CO. List anything that could have influenced your beliefs against war and killing.

3) Find three people who know you very well who can write a letter on your behalf supporting your beliefs as a CO.

4) Save all these documents in a safe place. If you get drafted, you can present all this information to your local draft board. This documentation will significantly increase your chances of receiving CO exemption.

It is important that you build a paper trail and document everything possible that could help define you as a person who could not go to war. If you attend an anti-war event, document that you were there. Keep any fliers. Have your photo taken at the event. The draft board will want to clearly see that you are genuinely opposed to war and that you are not someone who simply doesn't want to fight. You must be opposed to ALL wars, but this doesn't mean you can't use violence in personal self-defense if your intent is to **stop** an assailant and not to **kill** an assailant. There is a difference.

Draft Board Questions

Listed below are some questions you will have to answer for your local draft board:

- 1) Describe the beliefs which are the basis for your claim as a CO. If appropriate, state whether those beliefs would permit you to serve in a non-combatant position in the armed forces or pay taxes for war.
- 2) Describe how you acquired these beliefs.
- 3) Describe how your beliefs affect the way you live and the type of work you do or plan to do.

Organizations That May Assist You

Listed below are organizations that can give you more assistance in obtaining CO status from your local draft board:

www.sss.gov

www.objector.org

www.fum/org/naministries

www.quakerbook.org/get/555007