

September 1997

# SELECTIVE SERVICE

## Cost and Implications of Two Alternatives to the Present System



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**National Security and  
International Affairs Division**

B-277597

September 10, 1997

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio  
The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums  
The Honorable Dana Rohrabacher  
The Honorable Gerald B. Solomon  
House of Representatives

This report responds to your requests that we review the Selective Service System's (sss) draft registration program and other selected alternatives. We reviewed two alternatives, suspending active registration and placing the agency in "deep standby." A suspended registration alternative would eliminate the current requirement for men between the ages of 18 and 26 to register for a possible military draft. Under this alternative, most of sss' infrastructure would remain intact—including a significant portion of its staff and all of its local, district appeal, civilian review, and national boards. The "deep standby" alternative would suspend registration, reduce a substantial portion of the workforce, and disband the local, district appeal, civilian review, and national boards. Between 1976 and 1980, sss operated in a deep standby posture similar to the one detailed above.

We reviewed the organization and costs of the current program, and agency estimates of the comparative costs and organizational structure changes of the two alternatives.<sup>1</sup> Further, assuming implementation of either of the two alternatives, we obtained estimates on how quickly and at what cost sss could be returned to its present posture and a draft conducted upon mobilization. Ultimately, any decision to change sss would require policy judgments that involve other considerations, some of which cannot be quantified, in addition to cost and time required to respond to a national emergency.

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**Background**

sss is an independent agency within the executive branch of the federal government. Its missions are to (1) provide untrained manpower to the Department of Defense (DOD) for military service in the event of a national emergency declared by the Congress or the President, (2) administer a program of alternative service for conscientious objectors in the event of a draft, and (3) maintain the capability to register and forward for induction health care personnel if so directed in a future crisis. sss' authorizing

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<sup>1</sup>Initially, we also considered a passive registration system. Such a system would automate identification/registration, requiring no actions by individuals to register. After consultations with your staffs, we discarded this alternative because its implementation would raise constitutional issues.

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legislation, the Military Selective Service Act,<sup>2</sup> requires that all males between the ages of 18 and 26 register with sss under procedures established by a presidential proclamation and other rules and regulations. Men are required to register within 30 days of reaching age 18.

sss operations have fluctuated since the end of the draft in 1973. In 1975, President Ford terminated registration under the act by revoking several presidential proclamations.<sup>3</sup> In 1976, sss state and local offices were closed, placing the agency in a deep standby. In 1980, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter issued a proclamation to establish the current registration procedures.<sup>4</sup> Under these procedures, sss has been registering young men between the ages of 18 and 26, but not classifying them for a potential draft.

According to sss officials, the September 30, 1996, version of the registration database contained about 13 million names of men between the ages of 18 and 26 and represented about 92 percent of the eligible universe of males subject to registration. Men are most vulnerable to being drafted during the calendar year they reach age 20 and become increasingly less vulnerable each year through age 25. sss officials estimate that registration compliance for men considered "draft eligible," those aged 20 through 25, is 95 percent. A detailed description of registration methods appears in appendix I.

Currently, sss operates as a backup for the recruiting efforts of the volunteer armed forces in case an emergency compels a reintroduction of the draft. To carry out its operations, sss is authorized a staff of 197 civilians (166 on board as of June 1, 1997); 15 active military personnel (2 additional positions are funded by the Air Force); 745 part-time authorized reservists (518 are funded); 56 part-time state directors (one in each state, territory, the District of Columbia, and New York City); and 10,635 uncompensated civilian volunteer members of local, review, and various appeal boards. The state directors would manage state headquarters and oversee their states' Area and Alternative Service Offices and boards for sss in the event of a mobilization. The local and district appeal boards would review claims that registrants file for draft deferments, postponements, and exemptions in a mobilization. Under the Alternative Service Program, civilian review boards review claims for job

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<sup>2</sup>50 U.S.C. app. 451-471a.

<sup>3</sup>Proclamation No. 4360, 40 Fed. Reg. 14567 (1975).

<sup>4</sup>Proclamation No. 4771, 45 Fed. Reg. 45247 (1980).

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reassignment based on conscientious objector beliefs. sss' 1997 budget is \$22,930,000, which is divided as follows: \$7,810,000 for operational readiness (includes all boards activities), \$7,360,000 for registration (includes public awareness activities), and \$7,760,000 for administration. (All cost figures provided in this report are in 1997 dollars.)

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## DOD's Views on Registration

Although DOD does not currently foresee a military crisis of a magnitude that would require immediate reinstatement of the draft, it continues to support registration for all men between the ages of 18 and 26. The registration process furnishes a ready pool of individuals that could be drafted when needed to meet DOD's emergency manpower requirements.

Until 1994, DOD required the first inductees to be available 13 days after mobilization notification and 100,000 to be available 30 days after notice. That year, DOD modified its requirements, prescribing accession of the first inductees at 6 months plus 13 days (that is, on day 193) and 100,000 inductees at 6 months plus 30 days (that is, on day 210). For a draft of doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel, the first inductees are presently slated to report on day 222. sss officials stated that they can provide personnel to DOD in the event of an unforeseen emergency assuming adequate funding and staff. DOD based its time line modifications on the expectation that active and reserve forces would be sufficient to respond to perceived threats, thereby mitigating the need for an immediate infusion of inductees. We did not validate the current DOD requirements for inductees. However, according to DOD, the current requirements maintain an adequate margin of safety and provide time for expanding military training capabilities.

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## Results in Brief

Most of sss' potential cost reductions, under either a suspended registration or a deep standby alternative, would result from reductions in personnel. sss estimates that the suspended registration alternative would reduce authorized and assigned civilian, active military, and part-time military reserve personnel by about 33 percent (to 123 civilian, 13 active military, and 504 reserve personnel). These reductions would produce first-year cost savings of \$4.1 million and subsequent annual cost savings of \$5.7 million. sss estimates that the deep standby alternative would reduce authorized civilian, active military, and part-time reserve personnel by about 60 percent (to 77 civilian, 10 active military, and 305 reserve personnel). The latter alternative reflects a dismissal of thousands of trained, unpaid local, review, and appeal board volunteers. In addition,

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under the deep standby alternative, the part-time state directors, who according to sss officials are paid for an average of 14 days of work per year, would not be paid. Altogether, these reductions would produce first-year cost savings of \$8.5 million and subsequent annual cost savings of \$11.3 million.

Under both alternatives, mass registrations would be needed if a mobilization were authorized. sss' plans show that the agency could currently meet DOD's requirement to provide the first draftees at 193 days. In contrast, sss officials believe that the agency would be unable to meet DOD's current requirements for untrained manpower under either alternative. The reason cited is the time needed to reinstate an active registration system (for either alternative), to reconstitute and train the boards, and to rebuild their supporting infrastructure (for the deep standby alternative). sss officials estimate that in reinstating registration after suspension, they could meet DOD's requirement for the first draftees in about 217 days (24 days more than the current 193-day requirement). They also estimate that in reinstating a registration system, reconstituting and training the boards, and rebuilding the supporting infrastructure after a deep standby posture, they could meet DOD's requirement for the first draftees in about 374 days (181 days more than the current 193-day requirement). Officials told us that these estimates represent their best assessment of the time required to return to full operations. sss officials also estimated that the cost to reinstate a suspended registration could total about \$17.2 million and the cost to revitalize the agency from a deep standby posture could total about \$22.8 million.

Figure 1 shows a comparison of the current level of operations and the two alternatives—suspending registration and placing the agency in a deep standby.

Figure 1: Selective Service System’s Current Operations and Alternatives

<b>Mission:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide personnel for military service to the Department of Defense in the event of a national emergency.</li> <li>- Operate an Alternative Service Program.</li> <li>- Maintain the capability to register and forward for induction health care personnel, if so directed.</li> </ul>
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Selective Service System	Current operations	Suspended registration	Deep standby
Personnel			
Civilian (authorized/assigned)	197/166 (as of 6-1-97)	123	77
Military			
Active (authorized/assigned)	15/15+2 paid by the Air Force	13	10
Reserve part-time (authorized /funded)	745/518	504	305
State directors part-time	56	56	56 (unpaid)
Local and appeal board members	10,390	10,390	0
Civilian review board members	240	240	0
National appeal board	5	5	0
Budget (1997)	\$22,930,000	\$17,230,000	\$11,630,000
Estimated 1st year gross savings		\$5,700,000	\$11,300,000
(less severance pay)		(\$1,600,000)	(\$2,800,000)
Estimated net 1st year savings		\$4,100,000	\$8,500,000
Estimated subsequent annual savings		\$5,700,000	\$11,300,000
Estimated time to deliver first draftees	Mobilization+193 days	Mobilization+217 days	Mobilization+374 days
Estimated costs to restore operations		\$17,173,000	\$22,773,000

## Effects of the Options on Organization and Costs

The portions of the \$22.9 million 1997 budget that could be most affected by the alternatives total approximately \$15.2 million: \$7.4 million for the registration program and \$7.8 million for operational readiness. Registration program activities include handling and entering information into the database on new registrants, producing and distributing publicity material about the requirement to register, running subprograms on

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registration compliance and address updates, deactivating registrants who no longer remain eligible because of age, and verifying the registration of individuals who may be applying for federal or state employment or other benefits. Operational readiness activities include organizational planning; National Guard and reserve training and compensation; tests and exercises; and various boards' operations, including training, automatic data processing support, and other logistical types of support.

Suspending the current registration requirement, with or without maintaining the boards, would generate cost savings primarily through reduced personnel levels. However, savings derived from implementing either option would be partially offset by the cost of downsizing the agency to accomplish planning and maintenance missions only and by severance costs associated with reducing personnel levels. sss officials estimate one-time severance costs (including severance pay, unemployment insurance, lump sum leave, and buyouts) of \$1.6 million for the suspended registration alternative and of \$2.8 million for the deep standby alternative.

Also, under current federal law and a number of state laws, certain benefits may be denied to individuals who fail to register for a draft.<sup>5</sup> sss officials estimate that the current cost to verify registration to ensure compliance with such provisions totals about \$1.6 million annually. Therefore, the amount of savings under either alternative would depend upon whether the agency is required to continue its verification function (for individuals who were subject to registration prior to suspension) or whether the applicability of such provisions is suspended.

According to sss officials, under the suspended registration alternative, 74 civilian, 4 active duty military, and 241 part-time reserve positions may be eliminated. sss officials estimated first-year cost savings of \$4.1 million and subsequent annual cost savings of \$5.7 million under this alternative. sss would maintain the various boards, their training and operating programs, and the ability to update automated data processing capabilities as technology advances. The agency also informed us that it would continue readiness planning and training plus conduct or participate in

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<sup>5</sup>For example, these benefits include federal and some state educational assistance and eligibility for most federal and some state employment. See 50 U.S.C. app. 462(f) and according to SSS similar laws in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas. (New Jersey recently passed similar legislation, which is awaiting the governor's signature.)

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mobilization field exercises to test and fine-tune its role in national security strategies.

SSS officials told us that under the deep standby alternative, 120 civilian, 7 active duty military, and 440 part-time reserve positions may be eliminated. Also, 10,395 local and appeal board members and 240 civilian review board members (all unpaid volunteers) would be dismissed. In addition, the 56 state directors would move to an unpaid status. SSS officials estimated first-year cost savings of \$8.5 million and subsequent annual cost savings of \$11.3 million under this alternative. SSS would be placed at a level at which it could accomplish planning and maintenance missions only, including the ability to update automated data processing capabilities as technology advances.

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## Time and Costs Required to Reinstitute Full Operations

Under either the suspended registration or the deep standby alternative, reactivation of a draft registration process would be initiated upon receipt of authorization. The President can reinstate registration requirements by issuing a proclamation,<sup>6</sup> but the Military Selective Service Act does not currently allow induction into the armed forces. The Congress would have to pass legislation giving the President induction authority.<sup>7</sup> Two major concerns relating to the implementation of either of the alternatives are whether SSS could meet DOD's requirements, given the time needed to make the agency fully operational, and how much reconstitution would cost.

SSS officials estimate that recovering from suspended registration or a deep standby and delivering the first draftees to the induction centers would take more time than DOD's current 193-day requirement. They estimate it would take about 24 more days to deliver the first draftees after recovering from the suspended registration alternative. The officials expect that the recovery costs would total about \$17.2 million. SSS officials also estimate that revitalizing the agency from a deep standby posture and delivering the first draftees would take about 181 more days than DOD's current requirement and would cost about \$22.8 million. These costs cover rehiring personnel; obtaining data processing capability; and acquiring equipment, supplies, and other resources needed to conduct a mass registration and return the agency to its present operating capability. These costs also cover acquisition of necessary additional office and data processing space.

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<sup>6</sup>50 U.S.C. app. 453(a).

<sup>7</sup>50 U.S.C. app. 467(c).

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sss officials informed us that if the agency reinstated registration after having operated under either the suspended registration or deep standby option, it would need to conduct a time-limited registration of the 19- and 20-year-old groups and then conduct a continuous registration of all males in the remaining age groups (those between the ages of 21 and 26). The agency's experience in conducting a 2-week registration of the 19- and 20-year-old age groups was very successful during the peacetime reinstatement of registration in 1980. However, the agency could not project with a high degree of confidence that it would similarly succeed when conducting a time-limited registration during wartime or a national crisis. sss officials stated that unless the mass registration program can achieve high levels of compliance (at least 90 percent of the targeted population), the fairness and equity of the ensuing draft could be called into question. Additionally, officials said the "lottery," which would be used to determine the order of call in a draft, could be delayed until high compliance is achieved to preclude men with birthdates that draw low numbers from willfully refusing to register.

In 1980, sss demonstrated that it could achieve a high percentage of compliance during a time-limited registration. At that time, sss conducted two time-limited registrations, after recovering from a deep standby posture. During these registrations, 87 percent of the young men born in 1960 and 1961 (19- and 20-year-olds) registered during a 2-week period in July 1980, and 77 percent of the young men born in 1962 (19-year olds) registered during a 1-week registration period in January 1981.<sup>8</sup> sss officials indicated that these mass registrations occurred after 6 months of publicity and public debate and with no threat of an impending draft. In the view of sss officials, a return to registration from either alternative described in this report is likely to be in connection with a war or crisis, and they believe early compliance rates cannot be predicted in a crisis environment. sss officials stated that the agency's main problem in gearing up in 1980 was in reinstating and activating the local, district appeal, and national boards in preparation for a possible draft. They said the process would be time-consuming because more than 10,000 volunteers forming 2,000 boards would need to be identified, appointed, and trained. sss officials also stressed that to help ensure fairness, the composition of the boards should racially and ethnically reflect the demographics of the young men in the communities they would serve. Given the agency's experience in recovering from a deep standby in 1980, sss officials added extra time to their current estimates of the time required to make the

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<sup>8</sup>Alternatives to Current Draft Registration Program Needed Unless Level of Compliance Improves (GAO/FPCD-82-20, Apr. 19, 1982).

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agency fully operational. sss officials believed that the variables that could affect the timeliness, fairness, and equity of a future draft made it prudent to build additional time into their estimates to conduct a draft, should registration be suspended or the agency placed in deep standby.

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## Agency Comments

sss reviewed a draft of this report and stated that the report did an excellent job of analyzing the dollar requirements of peacetime registration and estimating the structure and funding changes that may result if national security policy was changed to abandon the current registration requirement. sss also commented that our report did not address some aspects of continuing peacetime registration that it characterized as equally important, but less tangible. Those aspects included viewing peacetime registration as (1) low-cost insurance against unforeseen threats, (2) a sign to potential adversaries of U.S. resolve, and (3) a link between the all volunteer military force and society at large. We did not review these implications of continuing peacetime registration as part of our audit scope and clarified the report to reflect this fact. sss also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. sss comments are presented in appendix II.

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## Scope and Methodology

In performing our review, we interviewed and obtained documents from sss officials in Financial Management; Planning, Analysis, and Evaluation; Operations; Public and Congressional Affairs; and Information Management. We identified sss' current mission and operating parameters, focusing on the draft registration system. We made preliminary inquiries regarding four alternatives to sss' present operations, that is, two passive registration alternatives, a suspended active registration alternative, and a deep standby alternative. Since passive registration alternatives would raise constitutional issues and possibly encourage lawsuits regarding fairness and equity of such systems during mobilization, we did not address these alternatives.

For the two remaining alternatives, we obtained from sss estimates of costs that could be saved upon implementation of either alternative. Since the cost savings would surface through reductions in personnel, we obtained from sss the effect of implementing either alternative on its staffing levels. In addition, we obtained from sss cost estimates associated with revitalizing registration or with moving the agency from a deep standby posture to full operational status. sss also gave us time estimates for the revitalization of both the registration process and the board

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structure and its assessment of the alternatives' effects on meeting DOD's manpower and mobilization time frame requirements. We did not validate the cost and time estimates but made judgments on their reasonableness by discussing the methods and assumptions SSS used to develop the estimates and by matching baseline information to agency backup documents. We did not review the policy implications of changing or continuing the peacetime registration program.

We conducted our review between December 1996 and July 1997 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Minority Members of the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, House Committee on National Security, Senate Committee on Armed Services, and House and Senate Committees on the Budget; and the Director of the Selective Service System; the Secretary of Defense; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies of the report available to others, on request.

Please contact me on (202) 512-5140 if you have any questions concerning this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.



Mark E. Gebicke  
Director, Military Operations  
and Capabilities Issues

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Figure 1: Selective Service System's Current Operations and Alternatives

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## Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
SSS	Selective Service System

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# Current Registration Methods

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Men between the ages of 18 and 26 can register with sss in six ways: (1) fill out an sss form at U.S. Postal Service facilities throughout the nation and at U.S. embassies or consulates overseas; (2) complete and return a registration reminder mail-back postcard or a compliance postcard required as a result of having been identified by sss from various databases; (3) join the military or Job Corps; (4) complete a registration form provided by volunteer registrars; (5) register when applying for student financial assistance; and (6) initiate registration by computer using the Internet.

Men may register at any one of the more than 34,000 post offices in the United States and U.S. territories by completing sss Form 1. During fiscal year 1996, about 386,000 individuals used this procedure to register. Registrants should receive a registration acknowledgement and a Selective Service number within 90 days. If the registrant does not receive acknowledgement within this time frame, he is required to contact sss.

sss sends reminder postcards to young men about to turn 18, based on driver licenses lists received from states' departments of motor vehicles and similar lists from other sources. In fiscal year 1996, over 2 million young men were sent reminder mail-back registration postcards, and 792,435 men returned the registration portion. sss also does list matching to identify eligible males who have not registered as required, using data from each state's departments of motor vehicles, Department of Defense high school recruiting lists, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service's files of individuals seeking citizenship or legal residency status, voter registration files, and the Department of Education. Once identified as possible nonregistrants, the individuals are sent a reminder, including a compliance postcard. About 343,300 men registered after receiving at least one communication requiring compliance. The names of those who did not register or respond are referred to the Department of Justice for possible prosecution.

The third registration method is the automatic registration of active duty and reserve military personnel as well as males in the Job Corps who have not reached age 26 at the time of their enlistment. Approximately 55,400 military personnel and about 16,700 Job Corps members were automatically registered through this method in fiscal year 1996. Beginning in fiscal year 1998, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service plans to include on its forms language for automatic registration of all eligible male aliens applying for citizenship or adjustment of status.

sss also has more than 10,000 volunteer registrars in public and private schools who advise eligible males of their responsibility to register. The volunteers provide registration forms and collect and forward the completed forms to sss. Additionally, sss has about 4,300 volunteer registrars in the National Association of Farmworkers program and in various state agencies and state military departments. Approximately 60,500 men were registered by volunteer registrars during fiscal year 1996.

The electronic registration procedure can be used by students applying for student financial assistance and by individuals who initiate registration through the Internet. In 1982, the Congress amended the Military Selective Service Act<sup>1</sup> to provide that any student who is required to register with sss but has failed to do so is ineligible for student assistance under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Since then, the Department of Education and sss have implemented a telecommunications datalink that is used for electronic registration and registration verification. A student is automatically registered by marking the box "register me" on the Application for Federal Student Aid. During fiscal year 1996, about 177,600 men registered using this method.

Beginning in March 1997, men who have access to the Internet can initiate the registration process by filling in name, date of birth, address, and social security number on an on-line registration form. This information is downloaded to sss, which sends the registrant a card requesting that the information be verified. When the verification card is returned and sss sends the registration acknowledgement to the registrant, registration is completed. All new registrants receive an acknowledgement card from sss. The card serves as proof of registration and gives each registrant a unique Selective Service number.

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<sup>1</sup>See 50 U.S.C. app. 462(f).

# Comments From Selective Service System



THE DIRECTOR OF SELECTIVE SERVICE  
Arlington, Virginia 22209-2425

August 3, 1997

Mr. Mark E. Gebicke  
Director, Military Operations and  
Capabilities Issues  
National Security and  
International Affairs Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Gebicke:

Thank you for the opportunity to review GAO's draft report on the Selective Service registration program and other selected alternatives (GAO code 703186).

Enclosed you will find large typeface copies of the basic draft report and Appendix I. The oversized type is for better readability of the changes we are recommending, indicated by strike-outs (words or portions recommended for deletion) and shaded boxes (recommended additions or substitutions). I believe these changes clarify and elaborate more lucidly upon complex and sensitive issues inherent to SSS programs. They also enhance accuracy, and make the report easier for the layman to understand.

As requested, I am also enclosing Appendix II input, "Agency Comments."

For convenience, enclosed is a computer diskette containing the above documents in WordPerfect format (software version 6.1 or 7.0 may be used to work with these files). Additionally, the diskette contains a .WMF file of the chart included in Appendix II.

If you or your staff members have any questions about the enclosed, or wish to discuss the recommended changes, my staff and I can meet with you at a mutually convenient time and place.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gil Coronado".

Gil Coronado

Enclosures

## Appendix II

### AGENCY COMMENTS

This report does an excellent job of analyzing the dollar requirements of peacetime registration and estimating the structure and funding changes that may result should national security policy be changed to abandon America's current registration requirement. However, the report does not address the many other equally important but less tangible aspects of continuing peacetime registration. President Clinton summarized some of these in letters to the Congress.<sup>1</sup> The Commander-in-Chief views the Selective Service System and the peacetime registration program as "a hedge against unforeseen threats and a relatively low cost 'insurance policy' against our underestimating the maximum level of threat we expect our Armed Forces to face." The President also noted that terminating draft registration would send "the wrong signal to potential adversaries who are watching for signs of U.S. resolve." He observed that SSS must be preserved as a link between the All-Volunteer military and society-at-large. "The Armed Forces must also know that the general population stands behind them, committed to serve, should the preservation of our national security so require," Mr. Clinton wrote.

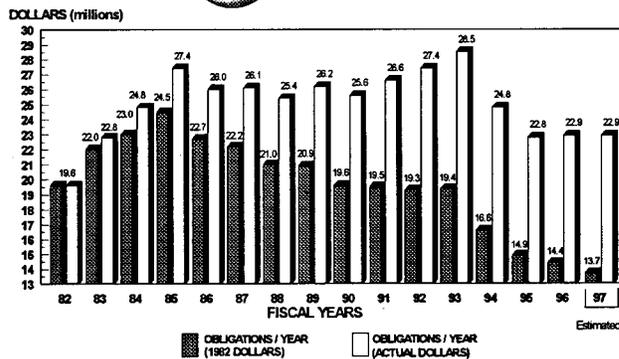
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<sup>1</sup>Letters to the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. President Clinton. May 18, 1994.

**Appendix II**  
**Comments From Selective Service System**

Indeed, the SSS is the Nation's only time-proven defense manpower insurance policy. It operates at a minimum essential funding level. In actual dollars, the Agency operated with a \$28.5 million budget in FY 1993. In FY 1997, its budget is substantially less, \$22.9 million. In constant dollars, the Agency's annual budget has declined steadily since FY 1985 (see Chart 1). Thus, the SSS has of necessity become a model of efficiency, making gradual but constant reductions in manning, replacing manpower intensive operations with automated procedures, and trimming programs to the bare bones. While these cuts have taken a toll in Agency responsiveness, the negative impacts have been mitigated by DOD's extension of their projected time lines for the SSS' conduct of a draft. The new time tables allow the increased risk associated with Agency downsizing, an acceptable degree of risk according to the Nation's defense strategists.

Chart 1.



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As noted in this report, abandonment of the requirement for young men to register will not allow the SSS to meet DOD's mandate for delivery of draftees in the required time frames. Importantly, a future draft, no matter how fair or equitable, will not be accepted by all Americans. This is natural in a free society. History indicates that the SSS can only be successful in a crisis if it has broad public acceptance. Therefore, it is a vital and ongoing task of the SSS to ensure that any return to conscription will be more fair and more equitable than any draft in U.S. history. Suspension of the peacetime registration requirement and/or disbandment of the SSS volunteer boards will, by definition, denigrate any attempts at fairness in the early, most critical stages of a reinstated draft in a national emergency. The key to effective mission accomplishment is to maintain a viable SSS in peacetime; one that is sufficiently funded, strengthened by high registration compliance, and has available trained volunteer board members who demographically reflect the Nation's registrants.

Since its revitalization in 1980, the Selective Service System has reinvented itself many times, building on years of experience and doing more with less. As an Agency, it has undergone many management reviews, including a 1994 interagency study led by the National Security Council Staff, ordered by the President. Present operations at the reduced level, and continuation of peacetime registration, were the recommendations of all reviews, and this

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remains the position of President Clinton, the National Security Council staff, the Congressional leadership and the majority of the Members of Congress. Additionally, over 20 of America's grass roots patriotic, veteran, service, and defense-minded organizations are on record in support of maintaining a viable Selective Service System and peacetime registration. These include the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Reserve Officers Association and others.<sup>2</sup> They strongly believe in the registration requirement as a patriotic duty for America's young men.

For several years, the SSS conducted focus group research in dozens of U.S. cities with men of registration age and varying backgrounds. The research indicated that the requirement to register is accepted as routine by virtually all draft-age men. Most young men are aware of the statutory registration requirement and know that "signing up for the draft" is something they have to do.<sup>3</sup> The five minutes spent filling out the SSS Registration Form is one mandated moment in each American man's life when he recognizes his potential obligation to serve his Nation in time of crisis. It is one of the few civic obligations that America still requires of its young men, and it forms a societal bond that cannot be measured in dollars.

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<sup>2</sup>Remarks by Rep. G.V. Montgomery, House floor. Oct. 15, 1993, Congressional Record, p. H8021.

<sup>3</sup>Concept Evaluation Focus Groups, Market Research Bureau Report, 1992.

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**Appendix II**  
**Comments From Selective Service System**

A functioning SSS helps America live up to the tenets of the Constitution by ensuring that "We the people... provide for the common defense." For over 55 years, "service to country" has always been what Selective Service is all about, but until recently, the Agency has generally been viewed as a standby tool of war. That image is rapidly changing. Capitalizing on the fact that SSS communicates with every young man in the Nation turning 18, it has seized upon that opportunity with a new program to encourage men to volunteer to serve America today, and not just in a future crisis or war. Working closely with the Accessions Policy Office of the Department of Defense, and the Corporation for National Service, the SSS now uses its acknowledgment card, which is mailed to the 1.7 million men who register each year, to inform them about volunteer civic and military service opportunities. This adaption of an existing procedure to accomplish a dual purpose at no additional cost is certain to generate increased interest in service opportunities. Thus, the Selective Service System and its registration program are effectively serving America in peace, as well as keeping America prepared for war.

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# Major Contributors to This Report

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