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## **The Military Draft: A Moral Abomination**

**by Michael Boldin**

An article in *Newsweek*, “Why We Need a Draft: A Marine’s Lament,” stirred up a bit of a hornets’ nest online recently. It was written by a Marine who fought in Fallujah, Iraq, and gave a fairly compelling overview of the practical need for the draft.

I’m sure the Marine felt he was right. Forcing you or other people next to him to kill or be killed might have made him feel better in the battles he fought in. In fact, in the minds of Washington policymakers and Pentagon officials, a few million more soldiers, albeit conscripted, might well be quite beneficial to the military — and to the foreign-policy ambitions of the U.S. government.

Arguments about military “needs” or “benefits” aside, it seems that there are always plenty of politicians who absolutely love the concept of mandatory service to the state. To these types, the government *is* America, and serving the state is equal to loving one’s country.

### **Morality and the Constitution**

There are a number of solid constitutional arguments against the draft. The Thirteenth Amendment makes it quite clear that “involuntary servitude” is not permitted. Moreover, the principle of “positive grant” expressed in the Tenth Amendment states that any power not specifically given to the federal government by the Constitution is “reserved to the States, respectively, or to the People.” In short, since there’s nothing in the Constitution that authorizes the federal government to conscript, it may not do it. Yes, the principle really is that simple (and can be applied to everything else the feds do, but we’ll leave that for other articles).

As compelling as these constitutional arguments may be, they still miss the mark.

The most important argument against the draft is moral. Whatever the excuse given for its implementation, the draft is a form of slavery. Period.

Forcing someone to work for the state; forcing someone to kill or be killed; forcing someone to do anything at the point of a gun — under threat of prison or even death — *is* involuntary servitude. Of all the forms of slavery that have existed throughout history, forcing

someone to fight and die in war is among the most disgusting and is a form of murder against all who don't survive.

Even Ronald Reagan, writing in *Human Events* back in 1979, made a clear case against the draft:

Conscription rests on the assumption that your kids belong to the state. If we buy that assumption then it is for the state — not for parents, the community, the religious institutions or teachers — to decide who shall have what values and who shall do what work, when, where and how in our society. That assumption isn't a new one. The Nazis thought it was a great idea.

America was founded on the principle of individual liberty — that the government exists to serve, not enslave, the people. Yet conscription is a form of slavery, a horrible and costly exception to America's founding principle. It is morally repugnant to the ideals of a free society.

Without the draft, unpopular wars are very difficult to fight. The ability to use conscription actually encourages politicians to wage even more wars — the massive resources are a temptation that is hard for the war-lover to resist. When the draft was finally undermined in the 1970s, for example, the Vietnam War ended.

### **Slavery versus freedom**

The draft is slavery. If we see it return to America, arguments about whether this country is free or not become totally moot. No society can ever be free when its own government seizes by force not only the resources of the country, but the money and lives of "its" own people.

Military conscription in the name of freedom is illegitimate and criminal. A government that is willing to enslave people with conscription is not protecting people's freedom; it is destroying it. A government that forces people to fight for its goals, its protection, and its benefit has created a morally perverse situation where there is no free society left to defend.

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