
Defense Report

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Registration for Selective Service—A Success Story Overlooked

When President Jimmy Carter and Congress agreed to reinstitute registration for selective service they made a difficult decision in the face of emotional, vocal opposition by those who oppose the notion that any citizen has an obligation to serve the nation. The system first put in place for renewed registration incorporated few means of verifying the registration status of eligible males. This made it difficult to accumulate accurate statistics to indicate the numbers of men who had or had not registered.

The still-active opposition took advantage of this situation to report a high level of noncompliance while the Selective Service System reported better success. Fortunately, over the intervening years, Congress has authorized the use of social security and other records to permit the accumulation of more accurate data and, even more important, to provide more assurance that young men are in fact complying with the law. In the meantime, of course, the anti-registration groups have continued to counsel disobedience.

Now, the Selective Service System has had the time, and the proper access to outside sources of names, to make a more accurate assessment of the numbers of young men who have actually registered. As of 5 December, 1982, selective service records show that of the young men born in 1960 (the earliest year group required to register under the renewed program) 95.6 percent of the potential number of registrants have complied with the law. For year group 1961, the compliance figure is 97.8 percent; for the 1962 group, it is 94.8; and for 1963, it is 94.9 percent.

Considering the difficulty in establishing the true size of the eligible population and taking into consideration the active campaign to persuade young men to break the law, these compliance percentages are very reassuring. They stand as proof of the commitment of our young citizens to the preservation of our freedom through their personal participation. They also stand as a rebuff to those who would enjoy our freedoms but are not willing to sacrifice for their security.