

Making Conscious Choices Within Selective Service Guidelines

How can/should you respond?

Conscientious objection: a sincere conviction, motivated by conscience, that forbids someone from taking part in organized killing.

No one but you can make the choice of how you respond to Selective Service requirements. It is your choice of conscience. *Respond clearly from your personal convictions.*

The Selective Service Agency, in cooperation with other state and federal agencies, have put into place several avenues for selective service enrollment that raise difficult choices for conscientious objectors. Below you will find scenarios and alternative choices you might make in response.

First of all... ARE YOU A C.O.?

It depends on whether you would find it unconscionable, or against your deepest held beliefs, to engage in activities designed to take a human life. If that's you, it is your legal right not to have to fight in war. You are not off the hook, you will still need to do alternative service. That means spending time doing other kinds of service in the national interest through an agency such as Brethren Volunteer Service. Some C.O.'s actually go into the military, but are assigned noncombatant roles such as in the medical corps. Some find this difficult and think this is being supportive of the war effort.

Still others refuse to go along with the whole process, they don't register for the draft or cooperate in any way with the Selective Service system. These persons sometimes face fines or imprisonment, or at least the denial of federal student loans or government jobs. Yet they feel this is the step their faith requires.

So, what about you? Would you go if called? Would you fight to kill? Would you support others while they did?

Just because you do not believe in killing does not mean you are a coward or do not care about your neighbor. Many peacemakers have put themselves on the line by going unarmed into dangerous places to work for peace: living with refugees to protect them from the military; accompanying church leaders to help them find safety; working in war zones to help people survive while their world is falling apart; protesting at military training camps or at missile silos. It takes a certain courage to do these things without the protection of the latest weaponry or the support of vast military forces.

Due to the requirements of Selective Service and other agencies one may be denied financial aid, federal jobs, or the ability to obtain a driver's license without first registering. A list of those states who currently automatically register 18 year olds when they get their license is attached to

this information. If you make the choice to register, in order to receive these otherwise unavailable opportunities, you will below find possible ways of doing this while still registering your conscientious objection to the process.

While the government doesn't officially recognize C.O.'s until there is an actual draft, you as young men and women (if this becomes the case for women) faced with registration for selective service, can express your peace convictions by writing "I am a conscientious objector to war" above your name on the registration form and photocopying the form. Send a copy, on the same date, to the Brethren Witness/Washington Office where a file will be opened in your name, into which other peace-related information provided by you can be placed. This step is important as the date of your mailing will document the date of your registered voice for conscientious. The Selective Service will not do this. You should also keep a photocopy for yourself and possibly one at your church as well. It would also be helpful to fill out the form "What Do I Believe About War?", and send a copy to the Brethren Witness/Washington Office. This is a good thing to do in any event, but especially important if you have already filled out the Selective Service form without noting your beliefs about conscientious objection, or if, being a female, you did not need to fill out that form. Rather than automatically being registered by the Department of Motor Vehicles in states where this is required, you are encouraged to register through the above process so the objection status can be documented. Then you can obtain the license having already documented your conscientious objection.

It is also a good idea for young women to find ways to document their beliefs, as they may be subject to a future military draft. Young men and women who do this demonstrate their on-going commitment to conscientious objection, which will help establish a conscientious objector claim should the need arise.

Some young men refuse to register, choosing to not cooperate with the Selective Service System. The Church of the Brethren supports open non-cooperation, and has a fund to help reimburse college students for loans and grants denied due to their non-registration. Non-registrants can also be denied employment by the government. The government has legal grounds for prosecuting non-registrants, which can mean fines and imprisonment. There is little evidence of active prosecution in recent years, however.

What if I've Already Signed Up?!

Men and women who decide they are conscientious objectors after they have already enlisted in the military can receive counsel on how to be discharged from the military from the Brethren Witness/Washington Office (1-800-785-3246) or the Center on Conscience and War (202-483-2220; nisbco@nisbco.org).

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other one as well (Matthew 5:38,39)." "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them (Luke 6:32)."

States and their Laws Associated with Selective Service Registration

(Current September 2005)

Alabama	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment
Alaska	Denied state student financial aid Denied state employment
Arizona	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state student financial aid Denied state employment
Arkansas	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
California	Denied state student financial aid
Colorado	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied admittance to public colleges and universities
District of Columbia	Registration is available when obtaining a driver's license for men 18-25
Delaware	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Florida	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state employment
Georgia	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Hawaii	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license
Idaho	Registration is available when obtaining a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Illinois	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men

	Denied state student financial aid
Iowa	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied admittance to public colleges and universities (bill) Denied state employment (bill) Denied state student financial aid (bill)
Kansas	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men
Kentucky	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state student financial aid
Louisiana	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment
Maine	Denied state student financial aid
Maryland	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25
Massachusetts	Denied state student financial aid
Minnesota	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men
Mississippi	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state student financial aid Denied state employment
Missouri	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Montana	Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
New Hampshire	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid Denied admittance to public colleges and universities
New Jersey	Denied state student financial aid
New Mexico	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25
New York	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state employment

	Denied state student financial aid
North Carolina	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Ohio	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state student financial aid Requires non-registrants to pay out of state tuition rate
Oklahoma	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state student financial aid
Rhode Island	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25
South Carolina	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men 18-25
South Dakota	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment
Tennessee	Denied state student financial aid Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment
Texas	Registration is available when obtaining a driver's license for men 18-25 Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Utah	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state student financial aid
Virginia	Registration is mandatory for a driver's license for men Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
West Virginia	Denied admittance to public colleges and universities Denied state employment Denied state student financial aid
Wisconsin	Denied state student financial aid

*(bill) - indicates that this item is not yet a law in this particular state but rather a pending bill. You are encouraged to contact your legislators and make your voice known on this issue.