

Ladies: The Draft is Coming

UPDATE: The section of the Senate legislation, detailed below, that would have required women to register for the draft was later removed. However, the question of drafting women for military service remains alive, as in February of 2019, federal judge Gray Miller ruled that "the all-male military draft is unconstitutional."

The New York Times [reports](#):

In the latest and perhaps decisive battle over the role of women in the military, Congress is embroiled in an increasingly intense debate over whether they should have to register for the draft when they turn 18.

On Tuesday, the Senate approved an expansive military policy bill that would for the first time require young women to register for the draft. The shift, while fiercely opposed by some conservative lawmakers and interest groups, had surprisingly broad support among Republican leaders and women in both parties.

The United States has not used the draft since 1973 during the Vietnam War. But the impact of such a shift, reflecting the evolving role of women in the armed services, would likely be profound.

Under the Senate bill passed on Tuesday, women turning 18 on or after Jan. 1, 2018, would be forced to register for Selective Service, as men must do now. Failure to register could result in the loss of various forms of federal aid, including Pell grants, a penalty that men already face. Because the policy would not apply to women who turned 18 before 2018, it would not affect current aid arrangements.

'The fact is,' said Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona and the chairman of the Armed Services Committee,

'every single leader in this country, both men and women, members of the military leadership, believe that it's fair since we opened up all aspects of the military to women that they would also be registering for Selective Services.'

The Supreme Court ruled in 1981 that women did not have to register for the draft, noting that they should not face the same requirements as men because they did not participate on the front lines of combat. But since Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter said in December that the Pentagon would open all combat jobs to women, military officials have told Congress that women should also sign up for the draft.

'It's my personal view,' Gen. Robert B. Neller, the commandant of the Marine Corps, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in February, that with the complete lifting of the ban on women in combat roles, 'every American who's physically qualified should register for the draft.'

A nation now founded on the idea of equality will have to make all laws and traditions conform to that ideology. This legislation is just one example.

For better or for worse, welcome to the draft, ladies.

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