

Testimony before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

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Selective Service Hearing: Should Registration be Expanded to

All Americans? – Arguments against expansion

“Expanding Selective Service Registration to All Americans”

Ms. Ashley McGuire, Author of Sex Scandal: The Drive to Abolish Male and Female

My century-old co-op building abuts a World War II victory garden. Every morning as I pass it, I am reminded that performing one’s patriotic duty comes in myriad forms.

I would like to begin my remarks by commending the work and purpose of this commission and your efforts to cultivate a renewed sense of patriotic duty among Americans, especially young Americans. I am honored to be a part of the conversation about how best to do so.

And so I will get right to the point: I do not believe women should be required to register for the selective service. Ultimately, the selective service points to combat should a draft be needed in a national emergency. I am both unconvinced by the assurances of some that no such draft will ever be needed again, nor do I support sending women into combat or even conflict zones against their will. Proponents of sending women into combat may tout sexual equality, but as the 2015 study conducted by the Marines clearly found, though women today may have an equal opportunity to fight on the front lines, they have an unequal chance of surviving.

I am deeply committed to the principle of sexual equality. But equality between men and women is not established by treating them as identical. If anything, that mindset undermines women and devalues their distinct contributions to their families, to society, and to their country. That men and women are fundamentally different is an unpopular point to make, but it is the plain truth. Even the military acknowledges sex difference in the different physical standards men and women are held to. Those standards are not a marker of inferiority, merely a nod to reality. The military is able to include more women in its ranks *because* it affirms their difference.

The prospect of expanding selective service registration to include women worries me that my six year-old daughter could one day be sent into combat against her will. But it also worries me that the military, like so many other institutions, is drifting in a genderless direction. Genderless spaces are not safe spaces for women. I give you today’s college campuses, currently embroiled in a rape epidemic, as an example of what happens when sex is treated as irrelevant.

Moreover, the push to expand the selective service strikes me as yet another manifestation of the belief that women are only equal with men if we do exactly as men do. This leads to the dangerous mentality that if women are not at the ready to defend their country through military service in a time of need, that somehow their contribution is less valid or their patriotism less fervent. That too is not a mindset I want my daughter to grow up with.

It was largely women who led the victory garden movement, a movement that fed one third of this country for years. Was their work/service less valuable because they weren't in uniform?

In no way do I mean to devalue the courageous service of the women in our armed forces or suggest that women are inherently unqualified for military service.

I only mean to speak the truth that most of us believe but are unwilling to say – men and women are different in foundational ways. The male only requirement of the selective service is a reflection of the reality of the demands of military service, in particular when we are at war. It is one men are overwhelmingly better suited for biologically, and to deny that reality not only would endanger women but imperil our military readiness.

I have contemplated whether women should be required to register for the selective service with a provision that they cannot be sent into harm's way, but I take little stock in the assurances of government, and know how easily such a provision could be repealed. Further, I contemplated a separate registration for women, one that would allow for a choice between military service or civil service projects that would allow women to prioritize their families.

But ultimately, I believe the best arrangement is the one that respects the freedom of women to respond to a national emergency in a way that conforms to their natures. From the Daughters of Liberty of the Revolutionary Era to the Women's Land Army of the First and Second World Wars to the hundreds of thousands of women who stepped up during the Vietnam War, America's women have proven time and time again that we will *voluntarily* rise to the occasion when the fate of our country is at stake.