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COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS
SELECT REVENUE MEASURES
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
February 27, 2019

Dr. Joseph Heck
Chairman
National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service
2530 Crystal Drive
Suite 1000, Box #63
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As the Commission considers its final recommendations to Congress on the Selective Service System pursuant to Public Law No. 115-232, I write to urge you to include a proposal similar to my bill (H.R. 4412) from last Congress that would allow a registrant for Selective Service to indicate, *at the time of registration*, their desire to be classified as a conscientious objector.

As you all know, our country has long recognized the moral dilemma faced by those with strong religious or moral grounds against serving in the military and engaging in war. As noted by the Supreme Court in *Welsh vs. United States*, there are many in our country “whose consciences, spurred by deeply held moral, ethical, or religious beliefs, would give them no rest or peace if they allowed themselves to become a part of an instrument of war.”

Historically, Congress has provided for alternative service or exemption from service for those whose scruples and conscience cannot allow them to participate in combat or in any form of military service.

Additionally, in today's all-volunteer military, those who have moral objections to participating in war can opt not to join the military. However, under the Universal Military Training and Service Act, all men between the ages of 18 and 26, including conscientious objectors, are still required to register for a national draft, should Congress authorize one.

As you put together recommendations, I urge you to consider the needs of conscience objectors. One long overdue improvement to the Selective Service registration process that I urge you to consider would provide registrants, at the time of registration, with the option to indicate a desire to be classified as a conscientious objector. That provision would make clear that simply making that indication at registration does not bind the U.S. in any way and does not assure that the registrant will be so classified. However, it would make it easier for those with such objections to make them clear at the time of registration.

I want to be clear that this suggestion would not change current requirements for how such claims are handled should a draft occur, including the need to provide supporting evidence. My

suggestions simply tries to make the process of registering those objections more direct and straightforward.

Again, our nation has a history of recognizing, as noted by the Supreme Court in *Gillette v. United States*, “the situation of conscientious objectors to war, who, absent special status, would be put to a hard choice between contravening imperatives of religion and conscience or suffering penalties” and as you consider this system, I hope you will include recommendations that consider those needs and allow those with such objections to lodge them simply and fairly.

Sincerely,



Gwen Moore
MEMBER OF CONGRESS