

September 16, 1940

[Signing of Selective Service Act]

FDR Speech File

Sept 1, 1940
Message

Letter to Congress file

NOTED
H. L. H.

I do not believe war will be forced upon our country. Even though this conviction is held, however, common sense has compelled us to take bold action in many directions to prepare for any eventuality. The American people vigorously support this preparedness program because they regard our Democratic institutions as too precious to be risked upon the quixotic turn of international events inspired by governments motivated only by greed for power. The American people have been impressed by the folly of unpreparedness as it has been written with the life and blood and liberties of crushed countries which had chosen to live in a dream world of "it can't happen here". We have forged many phases of our drive toward preparedness, and now I am submitting to the Congress another vital part of that drive -- A Home Defense Training Program.

Defense is everybody's job. It is the job of the older generation -- men and women alike. It is equally the job of the younger generation -- young men and young women alike. Should the



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FROM THE PAPERS OF
HENRY L. HOPKINS

eventuality all of us dread become a fact, the burden and sacrifice will fall upon all -- young and old. Even now the burden and sacrifice of preparedness falls upon all -- young and old -- and is being willingly accepted by all. As a matter of fact, many segments of our people -- particularly the young -- are clamoring for more to do -- more opportunities to make their just contribution to the cause of national defense.

It is to furnish an outlet for this desire among the younger people as well as to train them for responsibilities and tasks they may be called upon in the future to meet, that the Home Defense Training Program has been evolved.

Under this program, every young man will be asked to devote one year of service to his country. He will be asked to serve either in training in our armed forces or in training in the many industrial and civilian fields that buttress our defense behind the lines and bulwark an effective army and navy. I want to emphasize that this is a program of training and not actual service. Those who choose



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From the Papers of
BARRY L. DOPPLER

to enter the field of military preparedness are only going into military training, not actual war service. This distinction must be drawn sharply to avert distortion of our objectives.

Our objectives are clear. Since we already have increased the standing personnel of our army and navy, we have fashioned this program to begin building up a reservoir of trained manpower for our armed forces. At the same time we shall be training workers in skills necessary to equip and keep supplied our front line ranks with the implements of defense. This portion of the training program will dissolve shortages of skilled labor now existing in certain industries upon whom we are dependent for production of our rearmament needs. Above all -- and I cannot overemphasize this feature -- we are determined to do all this in a wholesome Democratic manner that will instill a greater affection and respect among the younger generation for our Democratic processes.

To launch the program, I am asking the Congress to call to service for one year all young men who, on X date, will be closer



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to their 18th birthday than any other birthday. This should involve about 700,000 young men. They would be given the choice of receiving training in any branch of our land and sea forces or along industrial and civilian lines necessary to national defense. Since at the start, I believe we can handle only about 375,000 of these young men in military training, I am asking the Congress to give the President authority to apportion these recruits to other work should any one branch become overcrowded.

It is necessary in beginning the program to call into service now all young men who are eighteen. In the future, however, a young man would not be called automatically upon reaching this age. Instead, he would have a seven-year span from which to elect the 12 months for government service. As he reached 18, he would know that before his 25th birthday he would have to go into government training for one year. By giving him this option, we reduce to a minimum, if not completely eliminate, any serious disruption of a young man's education or working career.



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From the Report of
HARRY L. HOPKINS

Unquestionably, many young men above the age of 18 would like to volunteer for this training program immediately. I urge the Congress to allow those up to the age of 25 to do so.

The young men who choose army or navy service would be trained by regular officers of those services in regular camps. Public acceptance of this phase of the program is definitely indicated by the current widespread urgings of compulsory military training and service. The effectiveness of our armed forces depends considerably, however, upon the availability of productive facilities and skilled personnel to equip these forces and keep them supplied. To that end is fashioned the remainder of the program.

All young men who did not choose training in our armed forces or were physically unable to do so would be assigned to other defense tasks in line with their particular abilities. They would be given vocational training to make of them skilled factory workers, mechanics, communications operators, office and clerical workers, surveyors, auto and truck operators, building and road construction experts,



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workers on soil and forest conservation and in many other fields. It should be obvious that such training will not only provide for the future, but will immediately help conserve and build up the nation's manpower, physical plant and resources.

If we are to realize the full benefits of this part of the program, I recommend to the Congress that these defense workers also be quartered in camps or dormitories managed by civilian officials. In these camps we could couple the vocational training of our young men with education that will intensify their respect for the democratic processes we are fiercely determined to protect. We know how valuable have been the Civilian Conservation Corps camps to this end.

We know how the CCC camps have fired a feeling of Democratic unity between boys of all classes, all races, all creeds. We know how they have developed a sense of responsibility and self-discipline and improved the health of our boys. We know how these boys have come out of the camps trained for jobs they previously were not



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equipped to hold. In short, we know our CCC boys are better American citizens because of this training. What we achieved with the Civilian Conservation Corps camps we can achieve with the Civilian Defense Corps camps.

I do not believe the young men should be paid wages or salaries for this service to their country, any more than we pay students for going to school. They should be given their food, lodging, clothing, medical attention, traveling expenses, and probably \$6 monthly for spending money.

Because this is a new undertaking, I feel the program at this stage should not include young women except on a voluntary basis. Throughout the country young women already have demonstrated their desire to do their bit for national defense. We can use them. We can train these volunteer young women as clerks, nurses, telephone and telegraph operators, chauffeurs and factory workers. In short they would be schooled in those lighter duties that men will abandon for more urgent tasks in times of emergency.



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There are those who will say this Home Defense Training program with its camps is repugnant to Democracy. There are those who will brand it as un-American because some of its phases remind them of techniques in countries whose philosophies we abhor. In part this criticism will come, I suspect, from those who pay only lip service to defense of Democracy. This argument is as foolish as it would be for us to reject the use of mechanized army forces merely because they have been employed effectively by countries with this alien philosophy.

We would run this program the American way. There would be no teaching of the philosophy of force and hate, but instead these destructive beliefs would be riddled by a wholesome schooling in the Democratic virtues of free speech, free worship, free assembly. If the blessings of Democracy are worth defending, it is certainly worth the time of a young man to prepare for their defense. By applying this program to all young men -- whether they be the sons of immigrant parents or the descendants of Mayflower families --



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we act in the finest tradition of our country.

Aside from the immediate requirements of our own defense, adoption of this program would give the world another impressive demonstration of our determination to defend ourselves. It would stand as another imposing symbol of our unity.



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From the Papers of
Henry L. Hopkins

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT AT
THE SIGNING OF THE SELECTIVE
TRAINING AND SERVICE ACT - -
SEPTEMBER 16, 1940.

America has adopted selective service in time of peace, and, in doing so, has broadened and enriched our basic concept of citizenship. Beside the clear democratic ideals of equal rights, equal privileges and equal opportunities, we have set forth the underlying other duties, obligations and responsibilities of equal service.

In thus providing for national defense, we have not carved a new and uncharted trail in the history of our democratic institutions. On the contrary, we have merely reasserted an old and accepted principle of democratic government. The militia system, the self-armed citizenry with the obligation of military service incumbent upon every free

man, has its roots in the old common law. It was brought to this continent by our forefathers. It was an accepted institution in colonial days. At the time of the adoption of the federal Constitution, nine of the thirteen states explicitly provided for universal service in their basic laws.

In those days, little was required in the way of equipment and training for the man in arms. The average American had his flintlock and knew how to use it. In addition, he was healthy, strong, and accustomed to hardship. When he reported for military duty, he brought with him his musket and his powder horn. His daily life inured him to the rigors of warfare.

Today, the art of war calls for a wide variety of technical weapons. Modern life does not emphasize the qualities demanded of soldiers. Moreover, behind the armed forces, we must have a munitions industry as a part of an economic system capable

of providing the fighting man with his full requirements of arms and equipment. Many individuals, therefore, may serve their country best by holding their posts on the production line. The object of selective service is to provide men for our Army and Navy and at the same time disturb as little as possible the normal life of the nation.

Selective service consists of four steps, which singly and in the group, have been developed to operate with the fairness and justice characteristic of free, democratic institutions. These steps are: registration, classification, selection, and induction.

Wednesday, October sixteenth, has been set aside, on which day every male between 21 and 35, inclusive, will be expected to report to a neighborhood precinct to fill out a registration card and a registration certificate. The certificate issued to the individual will be carried by him as a testimonial

to his acceptance of the fundamental obligation of citizenship. The registration card will be forwarded to the county clerk or similar official and will be delivered by him to the local selective service board. These boards, consisting of three men, each appointed by the President, upon recommendations of the state governors, will be set up in more than 6,000 communities. When the states notify the national director of selective service that all of the local boards have completed this work, a national drawing by lot will determine the order of priority of the registrants in each local board area. The national priority list will be furnished to the local boards and the corresponding order of selection will be entered on the registration cards in their custody.

The priority established by the drawing will determine the order in which questionnaires will be mailed to the registrants. Upon receipt of these questionnaires the registrants will enter on these forms pertinent facts on the basis of which their final classification will be determined.

There will be organized in every community in our nation advisory boards for registrants, composed of patriotic citizens, civilian volunteers, to assist registrants in presenting fairly the facts to be used in determining the place of each individual in the scheme of national defense.

After the return of these questionnaires, the local board, after due consideration, will place the registrants in one of four classes. In Class I will be those who are available for immediate service; in Class II, those who are deferred because of the essential character of the service they are rendering in their present occupations; in Class III, those individuals who should be deferred because of individuals dependent upon them for support; in Class IV, those specifically deferred by the terms of the Act.

The total number of individuals needed by the armed forces will be prorated among the several states. In this allocation due consideration will be given to the number of men already furnished by that state for our military forces. Within each state a quota, in a similar manner, will be divided among the local boards. Thus, each locality will be asked to furnish its fair share of individuals for induction into our armed forces.

In each of these local board areas individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 will be offered an opportunity to volunteer for a one-year period of service and training. Such applicants will be accepted before any other individuals are selected, provided they are suitable for military service. It will be the duty of the local board to select as many additional individuals as are necessary to fill the quota for that particular area.

Following the tentative selection of these individuals, a local medical examiner will examine them physically. If they are accepted, they will be sent forward for final physical examination by medical officers of the Army, Navy or Marine Corps. Those who pass will be inducted into the service.

In the military service they will be intelligently led, comfortably clothed, well fed, and adequately armed and equipped for basic training. By the time they get physically hardened, mentally disciplined and properly trained in fundamentals, the flow of critical munitions from factory to combat units will meet the full requirements for their advanced training.

In the military service, Americans from all walks of life, rich and poor, country-bred and city raised, farmer, student, manual laborer and white collar worker, will learn to live side by side, to depend upon each other in military drills and maneuvers, and to appreciate each other's dignity as American citizens.

Universal service will bring not only greater preparedness to meet the threat of war, but a wider distribution of tolerance and understanding to enjoy the blessings of peace.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Original

For the Press

Sept. 16, 1940
Immediate Release

Major A. R. Ginsburgh,
Republic 6700, Branch 1013

Statement of the President

~~SELECTIVE SERVICE BECOMES A FACT~~

America has adopted selective service in time of peace, and, in doing so, has broadened and enriched our basic concept of citizenship. Beside the ~~past~~ ^{clear} democratic ideals of equal rights, equal privileges and equal opportunities, we have set forth the ~~latest~~ ^{underlying} ~~other~~ ^{correlative} duties, obligations and responsibilities of equal service.

In thus providing for national defense, we have not carved a new and uncharted trail in the history of our democratic institutions. On the contrary, we have merely reasserted an old and accepted principle of democratic government. The ~~English~~ militia system, the self-armed citizenry with the obligation of military service incumbent upon every free man, has its roots in the old common law. It was brought to this continent by our forefathers. It was an accepted institution in colonial days. At the time of the adoption of the federal Constitution, nine of the thirteen states explicitly provided for universal service in their basic laws.

In those days, little was required in the way of equipment and training for the man in arms. The average American had his flint-lock and knew how to use it. In addition, he was healthy, strong, and accustomed to hardship. When he reported for military duty,

he brought with him his musket and his powder horn. His daily life insured him to the rigors of warfare.

Today, the art of war calls for a wide variety of technical weapons. Modern life does not emphasize the qualities demanded of soldiers. Moreover, behind the armed forces, we must have a munitions industry ^{as a part of our economic system} capable of providing the fighting man with his full requirements of arms and equipment. Many individuals, therefore, may serve their country best by holding their posts on the production line. The object of selective service is to provide men for our Army and Navy and at the same time disturb as little as possible the ^{normal} economic life of the nation.

Selective service consists of four steps, which singly and in the group, have been developed to operate with the fairness and justice characteristic of free, democratic institutions. These steps are: registration, classification, selection, and induction. ^{Wed. Oct 10 has been observed, on which day, ~~Ordinary~~ ^{normal} est. acts as a legal holiday, soon to be announced,} every male between 21 and 35, inclusive, will be expected to report to a neighborhood precinct to fill out a registration card and a registration certificate. The certificate issued to the individual will be carried by him as a testimonial to his acceptance of the fundamental obligation of citizenship. The registration card will be forwarded to the county clerk or similar official and will be delivered by him to the local selective service board.

These boards, consisting of three men, each appointed by the President, upon recommendations of the state governors, will be set up in more than 6,000 communities. When the states notify the national director of selective service that all of the local boards have completed this work, a national ~~lottery~~ ^{drawing by lot} will determine the order of priority of the registrants in each local board area. The national priority list will be furnished to the local boards and the corresponding order of selection will be entered on the registration cards in their custody.

The priority established by the ~~lottery~~ ^{drawing} will determine the order in which questionnaires will be mailed to the registrants. Upon receipt of these questionnaires the registrants will enter on these forms pertinent facts on the basis of which their final classification will be determined.

There will be organized in every community in our nation advisory boards for registrants, composed of patriotic citizens, civilian volunteers, to assist registrants in presenting fairly the facts to be used in determining the place of each individual in the scheme of national defense.

After the return of these questionnaires, the local board, after due consideration, will place the registrants in one of four classes. In Class I will be those who are available for immediate service; in Class II, those who are deferred because

of the essential character of the service they are rendering in their present occupations; in Class III those individuals who should be deferred because of individuals dependent upon them for support; in Class IV those deferred by ^{aperficially} legislative ~~action because of physical, mental and moral deficiency.~~
The terms of the act.

The total number of individuals needed by the armed forces will be prorated among the several states. In this allocation due consideration will be given to the number of men already furnished by that state for our military forces. Within each state a quota, in a similar manner, will be divided among the local boards. Thus, each locality will be asked to furnish its fair share of individuals for induction into our armed forces.

In each of these local board areas individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 will be offered an opportunity to volunteer for a one-year period of service and training. Such applicants will be accepted before any other individuals are selected, provided they are suitable for military service. It will be the duty of the local board to select as many additional individuals as are necessary to fill the quota for that particular area.

Following the tentative selection of these individuals, a local medical examiner will examine them physically. If they are accepted, they will be sent forward for final physical ex-

amination by medical officers of the Army, Navy or Marine Corps. Those who pass will be inducted into the service.

In the military service they will be intelligently led, comfortably clothed, well fed, and adequately armed and equipped for basic training. By the time they get physically hardened, mentally disciplined and properly trained in fundamentals, the flow of critical munitions from factory to combat units will meet the full requirements for their advanced training.

In the military service, Americans from all walks of life, rich and poor, country-bred and city raised, farmer, student, manual laborer and white collar worker, will learn to live side by side, to depend upon each other in military drills and maneuvers, and to appreciate each other's dignity as American citizens.

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END

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT AT
THE SIGNING OF THE SELECTIVE
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- - - - -

September 16, 1940

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT OF THE INCIDENT

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REGISTRATION DAY

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the Congress has enacted and I have this day approved the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which declares that it is imperative to increase and train the personnel of the armed forces of the United States and that in a free society the obligations and privileges of military training and service should be shared generally in accordance with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service; and

WHEREAS the said Act contains, in part, the following provisions:

"SEC. 2. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, it shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States, and of every male alien residing in the United States, who, on the day or days fixed for the first or any subsequent registration, is between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-six, to present himself for and submit to registration at such time or times and place or places, and in such manner and in such age group or groups, as shall be determined by rules and regulations prescribed hereunder.

* * * * *

"SEC. 5. (a) Commissioned officers, warrant officers, pay clerks, and enlisted men of the Regular Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the Public Health Service, the federally recognized active National Guard, the Officers' Reserve Corps, the Regular Army Reserve, the Enlisted Reserve Corps, the Naval Reserve, and the Marine Corps Reserve; cadets, United States Military Academy; midshipmen, United States Naval Academy; cadets, United States Coast Guard Academy; men who have been accepted for admittance (commencing with the academic year next succeeding such acceptance) to the United States Military Academy as cadets, to the United States Naval Academy as midshipmen, or to the United States Coast Guard Academy as cadets, but only during the continuance of such acceptance; cadets of the advanced course, senior division, Reserve Officers' Training Corps or Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and diplomatic representatives, technical attaches of foreign embassies and legations, consuls general, consuls, vice consuls, and consular agents of foreign countries, resid-

ing in the United States, who are not citizens of the United States, and who have not declared their intention to become citizens of the United States, shall not be required to be registered under section 2 and shall be relieved from liability for training and service under section 3 (b)."

* * * * *

"SEC. 10 (a) The President is authorized --

(1) to prescribe the necessary rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this Act;"

* * * * *

"(4) to utilize the services of any or all departments and any and all officers or agents of the United States and to accept the services of all officers and agents of the several States, Territories, and the District of Columbia and subdivisions thereof in the execution of this Act;"

* * * * *

"SEC. 14 (a) Every person shall be deemed to have notice of the requirements of this Act upon publication by the President of a proclamation or other public notice fixing a time for any registration under section 2."

* * * * *

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, President of the United States of America, under and by virtue of the authority vested in me by the aforesaid Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, do proclaim the following:

1. The first registration under the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 shall take place on Wednesday, the sixteenth day of October, 1940, between the hours of 7 A.M. and 9 P.M.

2. Every male person (other than persons excepted by Section 5 (a) of the aforesaid Act) who is a citizen of the United States or an alien residing in the United States and who, on the registra-

tion date fixed herein, has attained the twenty-first anniversary of the day of his birth and has not attained the thirty-sixth anniversary of the day of his birth, is required to present himself for and submit to registration. Every such person who is within the continental United States on the registration date fixed herein shall on that date present himself for and submit to registration at the duly designated place of registration within the precinct, district, or registration area in which he has his permanent home or in which he may happen to be on that date. Every such person who is not within the continental United States on the registration date fixed herein shall within five days after his return to the continental United States present himself for and submit to registration. Regulations will be prescribed hereafter providing for special registration of those who on account of sickness or other causes beyond their control are unable to present themselves for registration at the designated places of registration on the registration date fixed herein.

3. Every person subject to registration is required to familiarize himself with the rules and regulations governing registration and to comply therewith.

4. The times and places for registration in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico will be fixed in subsequent proclamations.

5. I call upon the Governors of the several States and the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia to provide suitable and sufficient places of registration within their

respective jurisdictions and to provide suitable and necessary registration boards to effect such registration.

6. I further call upon all officers and agents of the United States and all officers and agents of the several States and the District of Columbia and subdivisions thereof to do and perform all acts and services necessary to accomplish effective and complete registration; and I especially call upon all local election officials and other patriotic citizens to offer their services as members of the boards of registration.

7. In order that there may be full cooperation in carrying into effect the purposes of said Act, I urge all employers, and government agencies of all kinds -- Federal, State and Local -- to give those under their charge sufficient time off in which to fulfill the obligation of registration incumbent on them under the said Act.

America stands at the cross roads of its destiny. Time and distance have been shortened. A few weeks have seen great nations fall. We cannot remain indifferent to the philosophy of force now rampant in the world. The terrible fate of nations whose weakness invited attack is too well known to us all.

We must and will marshal our great potential strength to fend off war from our shores. We must and will prevent our land from becoming a victim of aggression.

Our decision has been made.

It is in that spirit that the people of our country are assuming the burdens that now become necessary. Offers of service have flooded in from patriotic citizens in every part of the nation, who ask only what they can do to help. Now there is both the opportunity and the need for many thousands to assist in listing the names and addresses of the millions who will enroll on registration day at school houses, polling places, and town halls.

The Congress has debated without partisanship and has now enacted a law establishing a selective method of augmenting our armed forces. The method is fair, it is sure, it is democratic — it is the will of our people.

After thoughtful deliberation, and as the first step, our young men will come from the factories and the fields, the cities and the towns, to enroll their names on registration day.

On that eventful day my generation will salute their generation. May we all renew within our hearts that conception of liberty and that way of life which we have all inherited. May we all strengthen our resolve to hold high the torch of freedom in this darkening world so that our children and their children may not be robbed of their rightful inheritance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and
caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

DONE at the City of Washington this sixteenth day of
September in the year of our
Lord nineteen hundred and
(S E A L) forty, and of the Independence
of the United States of America
the one hundred and sixty-fifth.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

By the President:

CORDELL HULL

Secretary of State.