

Draft Winds Blowing

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A month ago, the U.S. drone strike against an Iranian commander in Baghdad sparked enough public concern over military conscription to overwhelm the Selective Service System's website.

"With the ongoing military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan unlikely to end any time soon," former Congressman Ron Paul writes, people are "right to be concerned about a return of the draft."

"There is *not* going to be a draft," SSS Director Don Benton emphatically declared. "At least, we don't think so."

The current context? Last February, a federal judge ruled male-only draft registration

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unconstitutional. On March 3, the Fifth Circuit will hear the government's appeal of that ruling.*

A few weeks later, the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service will release their report to Congress on what to do with draft registration — jettison or keep and expand to young women — as well as the advisability of a year or two of



compulsory government service after young people graduate from high school.

The issue is really very old unfinished business. "The U.S. draft proposal that no one supported," reads the headline of a February 8, 1980, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation article on then-President Jimmy Carter's proposal to register both men and women.

Back then, women were not permitted in combat units, and Carter's proposal did not propose putting women into such positions. Still, as the CBC's Washington correspondent at the time explained, "On Capitol Hill, the reaction was overwhelmingly negative."

Especially because of a *Catch-22*. "Those who are for the draft are mostly against women being included," he found. "Those who favor equal treatment for women are mostly against the draft."

Nowadays, support for the draft is, if anything, even less enthusiastic.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* See *National Organization for Men v. Selective Service System*.