

**Policy Proposal:**

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.” - Ronald Reagan, America’s 40th President. Freedom is only sustained by defending the values that make America great, including patriotism and service. These values have been on a decline in recent years, especially among the younger generations. This is a serious issue and the President is proposing a mandatory service period of one year for all men under 22, with exceptions for religious or ethical prohibitions.

**Justification for Policy:**

We, as Americans, are losing the values that first made America great. A 2023 poll conducted by the *Wall Street Journal* and the NORC at the University of Chicago, a nonpartisan research organization, revealed that only 38% of respondents thought that patriotism was “very important” to them, a 45% decrease from a 1998 *Journal* survey. This shift is particularly visible within younger people: only 23% of adults under 30 years old said that patriotism was “very important” to them. A decline in patriotism has made Americans a more individualistic group of people, making us less unified. Today, America is politically divided because of our religion, geography, and race; in fact, one in five Americans say that they have lost friendships because of politics, according to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. America is in need of a revival, something that will stir up the great love of America that we saw before and unify our country again.

## **Arguments for Policy: Make America Stronger**

### **Sub-Argument 1: Increase Patriotism Within the Populace**

The President's policy of mandatory military service will make America stronger by increasing patriotism within America. Charlie Hunt, a Vietnam Navy combat veteran, said that "Seeing a war-torn country, and what happens to people just cemented for me how important our freedom is." One particular experience that reminded him of the value of freedom came after the notoriously difficult survival, evasion, resistance, and escape (SERE) training; Hunt recounted the final stimulation of being captured "and put into a mock POWs situation". After completing the simulation and watching the American flag go up, Hunt recalls seeing "120 guys stand there and cry because they know what hell is like." Hunt and his peers experienced first-hand what a lack of freedom looks like.

Joe Kifolo, an Air Force veteran who enlisted at 18 years old and served for 20 years, also recounted that "going into the Air Force was probably one of the best things that ever happened to me." He talked about learning to respect authority even when he did not agree with them. The main lesson, however, was having "respect for life", which made him value the veterans who gave their lives in defense of our freedom. Both Hunt and Kifolo agree that their time in service made them more patriotic, and these two veterans are no anomaly. According to a 2019 Pew Research study, 71% of veterans describe themselves as more patriotic than those that have not served. By extension, this patriotism leads to a deeper appreciation for the freedom we take for granted. By mandating service, we will ensure that the leaders, inventors, and thinkers of the next generation learn about the pains that went through fighting for our freedom

### **Sub-Argument 2: Unify America**

When we ensure that the populace is well-educated about the price of our freedom, it will make us a more united nation, as we saw after the 9/11 attacks, when America's freedom, sovereignty, and safety were being threatened. If we can successfully educate and demonstrate to the youth the value and importance of patriotism, we will be able to heal some of the deep scars caused by political tensions. By emphasizing a collective mindset over an individualistic or tribalistic one, as today's pugilistic political environment encourages, we will be making important progress on making America more unified and therefore stronger.

### **Sub-Argument 3: Pro-Actively Preparing America**

Finally, mandatory service can ensure that our military has sufficient numbers at all times. In 2022, the U.S. Army missed its recruiting goal by 25% which forces people who are currently serving to do double duty which translates to two or three combat tours, which, as Hunt described, is "absolute hell". This policy will lighten the load on currently serving servicemen and ensure that if we ever have to fight a war in the future we will have soldiers that are already trained and ready, making America better prepared and stronger.

### **Counter Arguments**

There will undoubtedly be counterarguments including the practicality of convincing the general public to give up a year to serve. Kifolo also said there were doubts then but talked about the invaluable lessons he learned including discipline, organization, and structure. Some may argue that the policy would be violating constitutional rights, but the Supreme Court in 1918 ruled that the draft was constitutional. Another counter-argument might be that the policy could deteriorate the relationship between the military and civilians. This is highly unlikely as the

American public currently holds the military in high regard but through a clear messaging campaign, we will be able to explain the justification behind such a policy.

### **Conclusion**

Mandatory service will make America a stronger nation in three aspects: increasing patriotism, unifying America, and preparing America. America has gone through a contentious and divisive period and we have lost hold of the values that make America great. To fully appreciate our freedom, one must experience or be threatened with life without it which is what mandatory service offers. America's freedom is at risk of extinction if we do not educate the next generation on the importance of patriotism. Instituting this policy will be critical for the future of our country and it is imperative that we act quickly.

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