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Draft Creep

by **David Wiggins**

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Say hello to "draft creep." Remember "[bracket creep](#)," AKA the "sneaky tax increase," whereby inflation and income growth forces people into progressively higher tax brackets?

Bracket creep is a way for the government to raise taxes without *seeming* to be raising taxes. There is no congressional debate, and no new law is passed for the President to sign. Taxes

just go up. Similarly, draft creep is a way for the government to initiate the draft without *seeming* to initiate the draft.



Draft creep is a sneaky draft. There is no congressional debate, and no new law is passed for the President to sign. Nonetheless, people are being forced into military service against their will. In other words, they are being drafted, conscripted, or whatever you care to call it. The government chooses to call it "Stop Loss," and it applies to members of the armed forces. After all, what better way is there to initiate a sneaky draft than to start with the group of people least likely to object to a draft, and at the same time, with the least legal rights to fight one?

Prior to September 2001, the armed forces last used stop loss in 1990, during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, under then President George H. Bush. President George W. Bush authorized a new Stop Loss policy on September 14, 2001, in [Executive Order 13223](#). Since then, [the Army has announced 11 stop-loss orders](#).



On 4 November 2002, a new [stop loss policy](#) affected over 60,000 soldiers. With this policy, a typical Ready Reserve soldier could be affected up to 30 months: 3 months during alert, 12–24 months while actually mobilized, and 3 months for demobilization. Ready Reserve soldiers who also possessed a certain skill or specialty could be affected

until the later of 90 days after demobilization or the completion of an additional 12 months active duty.

Over the past year, [the Army alone has blocked the possible retirements and departures of more than 40,000 soldiers](#).

Hundreds more in the Air Force, Navy and Marines were blocked from retiring or departing the military. Under the latest Stop Loss iteration, announced in January 2004, seven thousand additional soldiers will be required to stay in the theater for the duration of their unit's deployment and up to a maximum of 90 days afterward, [said Col. Elton Manske](#).

Because the stop-loss order begins 90 days before deployment and lasts for 90 days after a return home, those troops will be prohibited from retiring or leaving the Army at the expiration of their contracts until the spring of 2005, at the earliest.

Some Guard troops and reservists [complain](#) their release dates have been extended several times and they no longer know when they will be allowed to leave. On their Army paychecks, the expiration date of their military service is now listed sometime after 2030 – the payroll computer's way of

saying, "Who knows?" [Chief Warrant Officer Ronald Eagle](#), a member of the West Virginia National Guard, was due to retire last February, but now, draft creep has caught up with him. "I'm furious. I'm aggravated. I feel violated. I feel used," said Eagle. Eagle said he fears his fledgling business in West Virginia may not survive his lengthy absence.

The term "draft creep" might also be used to describe the way a full draft is "creeping" up on us. The draft officially ended in 1973. Registration for the draft ended in 1975, and the military reverted to an "all-volunteer" force. It is important to note that the "voluntary" part only extended until a person had signed up for military service. After that, except in unusual circumstances, one was required under threat of imprisonment, to complete their term of service – voluntarily or not. Only 5 years later, in 1980, President Carter reinstated registration for the draft for all men between the ages of 18 and 25 under an amendment to the [Military Selective Service Act](#). It is perhaps relevant to note that no person who voted for or signed this amendment was, according to the language of the amendment, required to register.

The law was greeted with overwhelming ambivalence. Millions of men who were required to register for the draft failed to do so. In fact, draft registration has been called the most widely ignored federal law since prohibition. All this indicated that, perhaps, the people who were required to register for the draft did not think that registration was such a great idea. In response, the democratically elected representatives of these people, in other words, those who made themselves exempt from draft registration, decided to impose penalties on those who were subject to registration, but did not register.

The [Solomon Amendment](#), passed in 1982, as a part of the Military Selective Service Act, requires draft registration for males 18–25 years old as a precondition for eligibility for Title IV Federal Student Financial Aid. This includes Pell Grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants, College Work-Study, National Direct Student Loans, and Guaranteed

Student/Plus Loans.

As time goes on, more and more penalties are added for those who fail or refuse to register. In November 1985, the [Thurmond Amendment](#) to the Defense Authorization Act required Selective Service System registration for men who are required to register as a prerequisite for appointment to most federal jobs. Currently, any man who arrived in the United States before his 26th birthday [cannot obtain citizenship or get federal job training](#) without first registering for the draft. In the worst case, a man who fails to register may, if prosecuted and convicted, face [a fine of up to \\$250,000 and/or a prison term of up to five years](#).

Most states have added [additional penalties](#) for those who fail to register. Perhaps the most onerous of these penalties is the one that requires a man to register for the draft before he can obtain a state driver's license. All these penalties for not registering for the draft tighten the noose around those who do not register, and brings the draft that much closer to reality. Only stop loss, however, actually increases the number of soldiers on active duty. But stop loss does have some limitations. With stop loss, the maximum amount of troops the government can raise is equal to those troops that are on active duty or in the reserves, plus those that have been inactive for less than six years (the inactive reserves), plus those that continue to sign up for military duty. Now that seems like a potential pool of one hell-of-a-lot of troops; more, one would think, than the government would ever need. Think again.

Aside from current and ex-military, the government has plans for other specialty drafts.

The "[Health Care Personnel Delivery System](#)" was authorized by Congress in 1987 to deal with large-scale casualties that outstripped the active-duty military's ability to handle them. If implemented, the bill would require a mass registration of male and female health care workers between the ages of 20 and 45.

The Pentagon is considering other "[special skills](#)" drafts, to include military linguists, computer experts, engineers, or other specialties. "We're going to elevate that kind of draft to be a priority," said Lewis Brodsky, acting director of the [Selective Service System](#).

And what happens when, even with all the specialty drafts, the government cannot satisfy its voracious desire for "fresh meat?" Universal conscription is reinstated, that's what.

A bill before the House Armed Services Committee would require the induction of young men into the military "to receive basic military training and education for a period of up to one year." In 2001, Representatives Nick Smith and Curt Weldon sponsored the bill, called the "[Universal Military Training and Service Act](#)." The measure is currently before the Armed Services Committee. On 23 Sept. 2003, the Defense Department web site called "[Defend America](#)" posted a [notice for people to join local draft boards](#). The announcement, which ran under the heading "Serve Your Community and the Nation," had read: "The Selective Service System wants to hear from men and women in the community who might be willing to serve as members of a local draft board." It went on to say that, "If a military draft becomes necessary, approximately 2,000 Local and Appeals Boards throughout America would decide which young men, who submit a claim, receive deferments, postponements or exemptions from military service, based on Federal guidelines. "That notice started to receive media attention, with articles from the [Associated Press](#), the [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), the [Oregonian](#), the [Toronto Star](#), the [BBC](#), and London [Guardian](#). Then, for some unknown reason, [the notice suddenly disappeared](#).

But the appeal for draft board members returned shortly thereafter. There was some politically correct fine-tuning and a disclaimer, but there it was, right up front on [the home page of the Selective Service System's web site](#). "Selective Service continues to invite interested citizens to volunteer for service

on its local boards that would decide claims from men if a draft were reestablished." Henry "Pete" Van de Putte, husband of State Senator Leticia Van De Putte of Texas, puts all of this into perspective. If the draft were reinstated, [Van de Putte says](#), "This whole system would be up and running full-tilt literally in a matter of a few days." Van De Putte has served on his local draft board in San Antonio since 1991.

All this amounts to draft creep, and that brings us back to the current stop loss situation. Here are some questions for all those soldiers who say that, though they personally disagree with some of the things they have been ordered to do, they knew what they were getting into when they signed up. What is your excuse now? You didn't sign up for stop loss. You are now on military assignment involuntarily. Are your actions contributing to suffering, death, and destruction in a war you disagreed with? Will you refuse to continue against your will, or will you magically come up with another reason that rationalizes your continued participation?

Here is a message for all those soldiers who insist that they are defending our freedom even though many of us disagree. Here is a message for those soldiers who may have thought us ungrateful when we told them that we believed their participation in this war was doing us a disservice. Here is a message for all those soldiers who thought us unpatriotic, or worse, called us cowards because we insisted that their actions were making us less safe, not safer.

We are on your side. We always were. Now, stop loss has taken away your freedom. You had no say in the matter. If you want to defend anyone's freedom, start by defending your own! Refuse this involuntary servitude called stop loss.

If you do refuse, you will diminish the chances that draft creep will get the rest of your countrymen. You will, finally, be defending our freedom.

For everyone who fears that they just might be engulfed by draft creep, [get educated now](#).

To some it may seem ironic that by writing this, I, an advocate of nonviolence, am defending the freedom of soldiers, soldiers who have had their freedom taken from them under the threat of imprisonment by the government they intended to serve. Stranger still is the knowledge that soldiers who resist this involuntary servitude will probably be arrested, prosecuted and possibly imprisoned by their own comrades in arms. But these ideas should not seem strange or ironic. After all, it was [James Madison](#), the 4th President of the United States, who in August of 1793 wrote:

"Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare."

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