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Congressional Record S. 2207 - Abomination - Draft and 18 Year Old Vote

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ABOMINATION

Mr. YOUNG of Ohio. Mr. President, consideration of our youth in time of peace is an abomination. It should never be tolerated. We should seek to have a purely voluntary army, though an increase in pay would probably be necessary. Only in times of grave national emergency and when Congress has declared war should our youth be conscripted into the Armed Forces. Under our former selective service laws the lives of young men were disrupted due to uncertainty. Under our present selective service policy, a 19-year-old boy if he is not summoned before his 20th birthday will not be drafted except in time of war. The old draft law of taking the oldest first needlessly disrupted countless homes, marriages and careers.

The Armed Services Committees of the Congress also have a duty to recommend a maximum 18 months' service for draft. In that connection, may I say that every one of our European allies has conscription for a lesser period than 2 years. West Germany has a conscription for 18 months. Belgium conscripts for only 12 months. France and Norway conscript for 12 to 15 months; Denmark from 12 to 14 months; we alone have 2 years.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator explain? Mr. Young of Ohio. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I want to express my approval of what the distinguished Senator has just said and also express my wholehearted support for the Gates Commission report on an all-volunteer army.

I think that the figure set by the Gates Commission is too high. Instead of being $2.5 million, the figure ought to be around $2 million or a little less.

Mr. YOUNG of Ohio. Mr. President, the distinguished Senator has also approved the recommendation of the Gates Commission. I think the present draft law is most inequitable and most unfair. I say that as one who voted against the draft law, and as one who opposed the lottery accepting the 19-year-olds, which I think in itself was also inequitable.

I am delighted that we have come to this pass whereby a Commission appointed by the President of the United States has made some sound and solid recommendations for the future. We should consider this.
guished majority leader for his further contribution. Indeed, it is a truly bi-
partisan effort. I should hasten to add that my colleague (Mr. RANDOLPH) has also
supported for a long time the concept of a volunteer army as soon as we are able
to move in that direction.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I wish
to join the distinguished majority leader and to congratulate him for holding out
to the 18-year-olds that we may take the step to extend to them the vot-
ing privilege. My State has the 19-year-
old law. Our 19-year-olds may vote. They
have been responsible in exercising this previ­
lege.

I would like to urge that we make this a
bipartisan effort and that we do not hold out a carrot to these young people to let them merely take this action and then not take it.

I think one of the great causes of un­
rest among the young people in this country is that they have had an
opportunity to really have a piece of the
action, so to speak, as far as participa­tion in Government nationally is con­
cerned. I will end this.

I notice the suggestion that the mat­
ter might be tacked on to the civil rights legislation. I think that would be a good thing, but in any event, it
would seem to me that once we start the
ball rolling we must keep the ball rolling because our young people have been dis­
appointed with us all too often because we start things and then do not finish them.

I think the majority leader will find he
has a lot of Young Turks who will be
behind him in his efforts to extend the
voting privilege to 18-year-olds.

Mr. BYRD of West Virginia. Mr. Presi­
dent,ament the suggestion that the franchise be accorded persons under 21
years of age, may I say that my colleague
(Mr. RANDOLPH) has been in the fore­
front of this effort over a period of many
years in the Chamber at the moment but I rise to remind Senators that my senior colleague has been fight­
ing this battle a long time. At the present
moment I am introducing a joint resolu­tion to provide for a constitutional
amendment placing the matter before the
people of the States for them to de­
cide. He has as sponsors of this pro­posed constitutional amendment about
two-thirds of the Members of the Senate.
He has been very diligent in his efforts to
obtain signatures. I am convinced of that
resolution. He is pressing for action by the
Committee on the Judiciary and, hope­fully, by the Senate at an early date.

I have the idea that we are in need of a con­
stitutional amendment. I could not sup­
port and suggestion that a Federal statute
be passed to implement this proposal be­cause I think it is under the Consti­
tution, article I, section 2; article II, sec­tion 1; and the 17th amendment to the
Constitution, the matter of determining the qualifications of voters remains the
prerogative of the States. The States may,
of course, act individually to lower the
voting age without action by the Con­
gress.

But I heartily support the idea of the
constitutional amendment. I would vote for it. I hope the Senate will take action
to present the matter to the people to let
them make the final judgment thereon.

But I want to remind Senators that my
colleague (Mr. RANDOLPH) has been
fighting this battle for a long time and I
did not want this moment to escape with­
out due credit being given him.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I, too,
want to join in giving full credit to the
distinguished Senator from West Vir­
ginia (Mr. RANDOLPH) for the interest he
has shown in trying to achieve the right
to vote for 18-year-olds over a long pe­
riod of time. He has made an outstanding
and continuing contribution to the
effort to bring about this desirable
change. Just a few days ago, hearings
were held on Senate Joint Resolution
447, which was introduced by the Sena­
tor from West Virginia (Mr. RANDOLPH)
and which would lower the voting age to
18. Among the witnesses supporting the
proposal at the time were Dr. S. I. Hayakawa, of San Francisco State
University, Dr. Walter Menninger, who
served on the National Commission on the
Causes and Prevention of Violence, and
Deputy Attorney General Richard
Kleindienst. I would also point out that
the distinguished senior Senator from
Vermont (Mr. ANKENY), the dean of the
Republicans, and I—and I say this in all
modesty—over a number of years jointly
have been interested in this matter and
have introduced constitutional amend­
ments seeking to achieve the same objec­tive.

I agree that basically it is the respon­
sibility of the States under all the nota­tions which the distinguished Senator
from West Virginia has cited; but I note
also in certain States like New Jersey and
Virginia in the last election—and just in the past week, I believe in the
Maryland House of Delegates—pro­
posals to lower the voting age to 18 or 19
were turned down.

In my State I have been advocating the vote should be given to 18-year-olds
for many years. It was turned down until last year. The Montana Legislature did
pass a resolution calling for a referen­
dum this November which would lower the vote to 19-year-olds in my State. I
am sorry it is not going down to 18-year­olds but I intend to campaign up and
down the width and length of my State in behalf of the 19-year-old amendment
for the young people of Montana. I am
hopeful that with a combined and co­
nordinated effort on the part of many of
us that this referendum will be agreed to
by the people.

I think what many of us forget or do
not recognize is that the young men and
women of today are far more aware and
far better informed than we were at their
age. They know what is going on. They
want a "piece of the action," to use the
phrase of the distinguished Senator from
Alaska (Mr. STEVENS), who has been in the
forefront of this fight. They are en­
titled to be given recognition and respon­
sibility, so that their responsibilities will
be in accord, at least in some degree, with
the making of the policies which they are
called on to carry on, as in Vietnam and
elsewhere.