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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

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Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me on President Carter's proposal to register men and women between the ages of 18 and 20 for the draft.

We need to take strong, meaningful initiatives to augment our defense and to signal to the Soviets clearly and forcefully that further international aggression will entail grave risks. I have strongly supported a number of steps -- including the embargo on grain and sophisticated technology against the Soviets and necessary increases in the defense budget -- to bring this point home to the Soviets. Registration is not such a step. It does not send a clear signal to the Soviets because it is not needed to strengthen our military preparedness.

There are serious shortages of professional and highly trained personnel in certain areas of the armed forces. Registering or drafting 19 and 20 year-olds, however, will not solve these problems. Rather we must target our efforts on specific military manpower needs. Action already taken by Congress, which I vigorously supported, will provide special pay incentives for pilots and some highly trained technicians. More needs to be done, especially with regard to the shortfalls in the reserves and the national guard. Let me assure you that I will continue to work hard to find solutions to the problems the all-volunteer military force is facing. I believe this can be done without resorting to registration for the draft. Thus, I oppose registering men -- or women -- at this time.

I appreciated hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Alan Cranston