



Refuse to Register
NO REGISTRAR
CONSCRIPCION NO

*poster by Fred Moore for the
National Resistance Committee*

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**Testimony to the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Transportation
in opposition to H. 3296 and S. 2281
June 23, 2023**

My name is Edward Hasbrouck, and I'm here (remotely) to testify against H. 3296 and S. 2281, which would automatically register applicants for drivers licenses or state IDs with the Selective Service System for a possible military draft.

In 1982, I became the *only* person to be prosecuted in Massachusetts for refusing to register with the Selective Service System since the current system was established in 1980.

Only 20 draft registration resisters were singled out for prosecution nationwide, and *nobody* has been prosecuted anywhere in the U.S. for refusing to register for the draft since 1986.

That's *not* because most people comply with the law.

Men are required not only to register at age 18 but to notify the Selective Service System every time they change their address until they turn 26.

At the most recent Congressional hearing on this issue, the chair of the House Armed Services Committee noted that the address reporting requirement is, in his words, "universally ignored". And in 2019, the former Director of Selective Service who oversaw the establishment of the current program in 1980 testified that the registration database is now so incomplete and inaccurate that it would be "less than useless" for an actual draft, and that the Selective Service law should be repealed entirely, as some in Congress have since proposed.

Criminal prosecutions of nonregistrants were abandoned *not* because they were effective but because they proved counterproductive and encouraged greater resistance. Even when people like me were convicted and imprisoned, prosecuting a handful of vocal nonregistrants called attention to the resistance and sent a message to others that there was safety in numbers and that they were at little or no risk of prosecution if they kept quiet.

These bills are a misguided attempt to bail out a Federal program that has been an abject failure and that the Feds themselves have chosen not to even try to enforce for decades.

This a bad idea, and it won't work.

As long as California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and other states continue to base drivers licenses on driving tests, and not draft registration, it's beyond the power of the Commonwealth to salvage this failed Federal program – even if it were appropriate, which it isn't, to impose sanctions on the basis of unproven accusations that individuals have violated Federal law, even though the Feds have chosen not to press charges or give them a day in court.

Most Massachusetts residents don't support planning and preparation for a draft. We are seeing today how the existence of a “fallback” system of compulsory mobilization emboldened Russian military planners and made them think they didn't need to worry about whether the Russian people would be willing to fight a war in Ukraine. The U.S. should not make the same mistake of relying on the draft to avoid consideration of popular support – or lack thereof – for its war plans.