Moves to change Selective Service rules in the US prompt outpouring of opposition to reintroduction of the draft

Andre Damon
20 June 2024

Last week, the House of Representatives voted to make enrollment in the US Selective Service database automatic, prompting a flood of worried statements by young people and parents on social media about the reimposition of the draft.

While all American men are required by law to sign up for the Selective Service, the bill passed by the House would make the process automatic. It would still need to pass the Senate to become law.

The move comes against the backdrop of the war between Russia and NATO in Ukraine, the largest war in Europe since World War II, statements by US officials that American troops will be deployed to Ukraine, and US allies expanding or reintroducing the draft.

In this context, the bill, while publicly framed as a mere bookkeeping measure, was seen by significant sections of the population as preparatory toward an introduction of the draft.

In posts on TikTok and Instagram, young people and parents expressed their fears of being drafted into the military and their opposition to the war.

“Y’all ain’t taking me,” said one woman in a video on TikTok that was liked over 26,000 times. “They’ve been able to get away with a whole lot of stuff. There hasn’t been a whole lot of uprising. But we are not going to let our young men fight a war that we don’t agree with and that we don’t want.

The response from the US national media, however, was to dismiss public concern over the expansion of the draft as the result of “misinformation.”

An article in Rolling Stone was headlined, “Gen Z Fears a Military Draft Because of TikTok Misinformation.” It stated:

They’ve been able to get away with a whole lot of stuff. There hasn’t been a whole lot of uprising. But we are not going to let our young men fight a war that we don’t agree with and that we don’t want.

The outpouring of concern, opposition and ridicule prompted local news coverage. In an article entitled “How do Metro Detroiter feel about the possible Selective Service mandate?,” local news station WXYZ encountered near-universal concern and opposition to the reintroduction of the draft.

Southfield resident Brandon Richards replied:

Very, very. Especially with everything going on in the world now and the stuff that’s happening. I don’t think it’s fair that my son would have to go and fight for his country.

In posts on TikTok and Instagram, young people and parents expressed their fears of being drafted into the military and their opposition to war.

The response from the US national media, however, was to dismiss public concern over the expansion of the draft as the result of “misinformation.”

An article in Rolling Stone was headlined, “Gen Z Fears a Military Draft Because of TikTok Misinformation.” It stated:

They’ve been able to get away with a whole lot of stuff. There hasn’t been a whole lot of uprising. But we are not going to let our young men fight a war that we don’t agree with and that we don’t want.
young people do not fear and oppose a military draft because of "misinformation." They fear and oppose a military draft because they have eyes to see and ears to hear.

The war in Ukraine between Russia and NATO has already claimed over half a million lives. Videos have circulated widely of Ukrainian conscription officers prowling the streets of Kiev and other cities and pulling young people off of public transit and out of workplaces.

Against the backdrop of this escalating war, US President Joe Biden’s State of the Union address was a warmongering rant, in which the president declared, “In January 1941, Franklin Roosevelt came to this chamber to speak to the nation. ... War was raging in Europe.” Biden made a parallel to the present, declaring, “My purpose tonight is to wake up the Congress and alert the American people.”

Last month, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Charles Q. Brown told the New York Times that the NATO military alliance will “eventually” send significant numbers of active-duty NATO troops to Ukraine, which the newspaper said meant the deployment was “inevitable.”

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, has announced that he is working to form a “coalition” of countries to send troops to Ukraine.

Commenting on an article by the Times reporting the changes to the Selective Service, WSWS International Editorial Board Chairman David North said on X:

“This @nytimes article on reinstating the draft is an example of the way public opinion is prepared for major changes in military policy. By the time it is reported that a policy is being debated, one can reasonably assume that it is well on its way to being implemented.

This year, Latvia, a NATO member, reintroduced conscription, forcing all young people between the ages of 18 and 27 to enter the services for 11 months.

While, Denmark, another NATO member, has announced that it will expand the draft to include women starting in 2026.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has pledged to reintroduce conscription if he wins the July 4 national election. Under his plan, at least 30,000 18-year-olds would be drafted into the military each year. He declared the move would “create a shared sense of purpose among young people and a renewed sense of pride in our country.”

Last month, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said, “I’m convinced that Germany needs some kind of military conscription.” He added that the country’s decision to end the draft was a “mistake.”

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact