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Patriotism is a concept that is often used to define the citizens of the United States, but is itself difficult to define. Regardless of whether it is a belief, a feeling or emotion, an action or obligation, patriotism is a vital element in the makeup of the diverse American population, a source of unity where it is difficult to find a common thread among any sample or demographic. While it is a desirable characteristic for a nation's people to possess and foster, it cannot be required of a citizen to feel patriotic. Requiring citizens to volunteer their services, whether in the military or other areas, will not encourage patriotism, but instead create resentment in the current economic and social climate.

The example of the United States military draft is one that not only reflects the American people's attitude towards mandatory military service, but provides indication as to how they would respond to other types of required service. Despite the size and constant activity of the United States military, its soldiers are volunteers and have been since 1973. It is considered the best military in the world, which is the result of motivated, qualified individuals being trained to perform tasks they are capable of. In "Myths of the All-Volunteer Force: Rethinking Military Recruitment and the Fate of the Citizen Soldier," Richard Krebs proposes that "the American people would likely not support a draft for secondary, and arguably imperial, objectives," citing specifically concerns for the class inequities experienced from the old system as well as not providing sufficient numbers of highly skilled, technically trained personnel (2). With warfare continually becoming more sophisticated and reliant upon technology it is essential that

individuals with the proper skill set and mentality be recruited. Requiring service will inevitably result in individuals in crucial positions that do not want to be there and therefore may not act with the proper conviction and discipline to ensure the optimum performance of the military and jeopardize lives of other soldiers and potentially civilians.

The concerns expressed by Krebs, lack of qualified individuals and concern for social inequality, can be applied to other branches of potential mandatory service or required volunteerism. Consider the examples of the current United States environment as well as the education system. While a significant number of volunteers could benefit the environment if properly motivated, an apathetic or resentful portion of these individuals could render the efforts as useful as those of a highway clean up crew comprised of drunk driving offenders, doing as little as possible to fulfill requirements. Or suppose an under educated, apathetic citizen is assigned mandatory service in a school tutoring or mentoring students. It is difficult enough to find qualified people that are willing to work with students for a paycheck, let alone those that want to do it for free. Dispersing a force of undereducated, overzealous tutors and mentors upon our elementary and secondary students could have negative results both short term and long term. Students may recognize the incompetence of such volunteers and simply dismiss them as well as future individuals that may try to help them, while the volunteer may become resentful towards the student or frustrated due to their own academic shortcomings. Neither of these scenarios would likely result in a heightened sense of patriotism in the citizens involved.

While the current economy certainly helps create the need for volunteers in many aspects of our society, it also has created the need for one other important thing, jobs. Unemployment was at 9.6% in September, according to the United State's Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. This need raises two points of contention for proposed required government service, people cannot afford to volunteer and volunteers may eliminate potential jobs. There is a long standing debate between liberals and conservatives in regards government jobs. While some liberals see government appointed jobs as an effective way to boost an economy in trouble, conservatives often disagree and feel that creating government jobs simply takes resources away from private corporations and small companies that create more jobs and more resources for the economy. The concept of required volunteerism will negatively impact those on both sides of the argument. In his article "Growth in Jobs Beats Estimates, Easing Concerns", Motoko Rich points out that significant numbers of state and federal employees are being laid off (1). Volunteers could eliminate potential jobs for these workers, which would not result in economic recovery. And yes, volunteers would definitely provide a threat to the private labor force, which is already shrinking and competing with illegal immigrants for what few jobs remain (2). In the same article, Rich quotes Jan Hatzius, the American chief economist for Goldman Sachs as saying the current 1.5% increase on Wall Street is only half of the at least 3% needed to put a dent in the current unemployment situation (2). This indicates that a change in unemployment will be gradual, and the population does not have the patience to support programs that potentially eliminate jobs, from either the government or private sectors. An issue that threatens either side of the American

bipartisan political system usually creates resentment among its followers, so it seems that an issue that threatens the economic philosophy of both sides would serve to create more resentment than national pride.

Before any sort of legislation requiring government service is proposed, it is necessary for the proposer(s) to examine current volunteer trends in the United States. Once again the Bureau of Labor Statistics provides useful data on this topic, revealing that not only are volunteer efforts on the rise since 2006, but that the number of men and women volunteering is nearly equal with women holding a slight edge. Why tamper with a trend that is positive? Instead reward those that perform such services and encourage other equally or better qualified individuals act in a similar manner. Not only are total numbers relevant, but a percentage breakdown showing how many people volunteer in which agencies or categories. Religious organizations represent the largest volunteer category at 34%, followed by educational or youth service at 26%. From here the disparity is extreme with environmental and hospital or health care combining to only 10%. When examining those volunteering for religious organizations or purposes, Rich points out that 47.1% of these individuals lack a high school diploma (2). The statistical reality that those who are most available may have the least to offer will hold true if citizens are forced to perform duties of service, there will be a lack of individuals qualified to do the necessary jobs. This is not to undermine the incredible influence and accomplishments of religious organizations and the individuals that work with them. Lacking a diploma does not render one useless and there are no doubt countless stories of such citizens that have achieved great things while unselfishly helping others. But their

success is because they are acting willfully in a manner that is rewarding to them and that they are able to excel in. The fact that individuals volunteering for government agencies numbers around 2% is an indication that the American people don't feel patriotic about serving their government.

It seems evident that the current social and economic situations in the United States would cause a plan to require government service in an attempt to create patriotism among its population would back fire and cause resentment. The need for volunteer services will no doubt outweigh the available resources, the reality of a capitalistic economy. But hoping to foster patriotism through required service will fail, just as hoping to fix any of the problems in our society will if we try to force solutions on people. In regards to patriotism and government service or volunteering, let's hope that our citizens continue to respond to natural disasters and poverty and other tragedies that serve to inspire us and truly create the undeniable sense of patriotism that exists in the citizens of the United States.

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