



## Center for Military Readiness

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Elaine Donnelly  
President

**Memo to:** Chairman and Members, Nevada State Senate Legislative Operations and Elections Committee

**From:** Elaine Donnelly, President, Center for Military Readiness

**Re:** Consequences of ERA on Selective Service Registration and Readiness

**Date:** February 17, 2017

I am President of the Center for Military Readiness, an independent public policy organization founded in 1993, which reports on and analyzes military/social issues.

It has come to my attention that the Nevada legislature may decide to revive obsolete legislation to ratify the failed Equal Rights Amendment. After all these years, this would not be a valid action, but even if it were, it would be a bad idea for women and for national defense.

The ERA was rejected for many reasons, one of the main ones being its impact on Selective Service registration and a possible future draft. Only in extreme circumstances would there be a need to mobilize the nation to fight by re-activating Selective Service, but the Nevada legislature must consider all contingencies responsibly. If ERA had been ratified years ago, instead of failing and several states voting to rescind their ratifications, Selective Service registration requirements would apply to both men and women.

The purpose of military conscription is not to induct support troops; it exists to provide an effective way to replace casualties fallen in battle. The Selective Service system registers 18 to 25-year-old men, but not young women, for possible military service. Actual call-ups would occur only if a catastrophic national emergency makes it necessary to reinstate a draft.

Should an enemy force launch a devastating attack on America, perhaps from multiple directions, the need to fight back might exceed the capability of our All-Volunteer Force. The system is a relatively low-cost insurance policy that serves as a back-up to the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).

If Congress approves legislation to register both males and females, or if the ERA somehow were added to the U.S. Constitution, a call for draftees would have to include young women in equal numbers. The few women who meet minimum standards would be trained and ordered to serve in combat arms units such as the infantry, where the need for combat replacements is greatest.

Theories about equality break down here. Due to physical differences that will not change, the Selective Service system would have to divert scarce time and resources trying to evaluate and train thousands of women – just to find the small percentage who might be minimally qualified for fighting units such as the infantry.

Even though some exceptional women may be able to qualify, the fact remains that most women cannot meet physical standards for the combat arms while most men can.

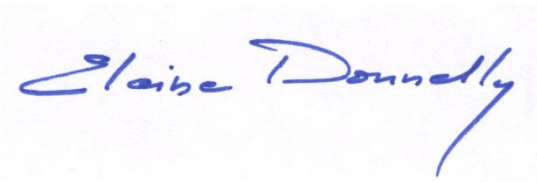
A paralyzing administrative overload would jam the induction system during a time of crisis, instead of concentrating on men who can be rapidly trained to fight in combat. Egalitarianism taken to extremes would weaken, not strengthen, military readiness in a time of national emergency.

It is important to remember that patriotic women have always served their country in times of crisis. In fact, it is an affront to women to suggest that they would not volunteer to serve in myriad ways in future national emergencies.

Updating the Selective Service system to take advantage of technology makes sense, but there is no need to create a political crisis that would weaken our armed forces at the worst possible time.

This issue is about national security in a time of catastrophic emergency, not women's rights. It remains one of the strongest reasons why the ERA should not be forced into the U.S. Constitution.

For more information, I hope you will consider this CMR Policy Analysis: [Women, War, and Selective Service](#)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elaine Donnelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

*More information is available at [www.cmrlink.org](http://www.cmrlink.org).*