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STATEMENT OF
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FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND COMPENSATION DIVISION

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COURTS, CIVIL LIBERTIES
AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

ON



119032

THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM
PEACETIME DRAFT REGISTRATION PROGRAM

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss our evaluation of the draft registration program and the degree to which young men are not registering.

In sum, for the three years in which some form of draft registration has been required, we found that 93 percent of those young men required to do so have registered, that some of this success is due to the surge in registration that occurred early this year as a result of publicity and the no-prosecution grace period, that current registration rates are falling below the 93 percent level, that there have been no major problems in the manner in which the registrations have been organized and

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conducted, and that in total, some 700,000 young men to date have failed to register.

Registration of young men with the Selective Service System was resumed in 1980 after a 5-year suspension. Peacetime draft registration of young men born in 1960 and 1961 was conducted in a 2-week period in July 1980, and a subsequent registration of those born in 1962 was carried out in a 1-week period in January 1981. Since then, the Selective Service has conducted continuous registration whereby young men are required to register at the post office within 30 days of the date they reach 18 years of age.

Concerning the impact of the recent publicity, only about 1 million, or 70 percent, of the 1.5 million young men who should have registered during the first 10 months of 1981 had done so. Thus, about 400,000 "late" registrations resulted from the President's January 1982 decision to continue draft registration and from the media coverage that followed concerning possible prosecution of nonregistrants at the end of a 2-month grace period.

Concerning this year's on-going registration program, statistics prepared by Selective Service show that young men registered at a high rate during the early part of the year but that this rate has not been sustained in recent months. During January through March, almost 100 percent of the young men required to register in these months did so.

However, the volume of subsequent registrations shows that only about 78 percent of the persons who should have registered during April through June have done so.

Concerning the manner in which the registrations have been organized and conducted, we did not find any major problems. In our view, the Selective Service's estimate of the universe of 18-year-old males that should have registered was reasonable (although there were some deficiencies in the data used), and the inventory of registration cards recorded on computer files was correct.

However, the estimate of the registrant population size for both 1980 and 1981 did not include young men in the U.S. territories and possessions. As a result, registration compliance rates were overstated by about 2 percent. At our suggestion, the Selective Service is now including persons outside the United States in its estimates of the registrant population size.

Countering the problems of nonregistration is of concern to GAO, as well as the Selective Service System, and we agree that actions other than prosecution may be necessary. For example, in our April 1982 report 1/ on registration, we concluded that one alternative would be a return to the time-limited registration programs of 1980 or 1981 which had greater

1/ "Alternatives To Current Draft Registration Program Needed Unless Level of Compliance Improves," FPCD-82-20, April 19, 1982.

success, due in large measure to the concentration of publicity which preceded the registration periods.

We recognize, however, that lack of knowledge about the registration requirement is only one of several possible causes for widespread failure to register. Other possible reasons are that the nonregistrants: (1) think they will not get caught, (2) see older peers who were not required to register and are resentful, (3) know others who had not registered and were not penalized, (4) plan to register only if the country is threatened.

Selective Service officials suggest other alternatives for raising compliance. These include: (1) adding paid advertising to existing free public service advertising, (2) increasing the number of registration locations by adding high schools, Federal employment offices, and private sector personnel offices to post offices, (3) registering people through the use of existing Government computer files, (4) registering only those in the prime age zone (i.e., 19 and 20 year olds) either with continuous or one-time registration, and (5) increasing the enforcement effort, the main focus of today's hearing.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal statement. My colleagues and I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.