HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES October 5, 2004

Reject Draft Slavery

Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose HR 163 in the strongest possible terms. The draft, whether for military purposes or some form of “national service,” violates the basic moral principles of individual liberty upon which this country was founded. Furthermore, the military neither wants nor needs a draft.

The Department of Defense, in response to calls to reinstate the draft, has confirmed that conscription serves no military need. Defense officials from both parties have repudiated it. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has stated, “The disadvantages of using compulsion to bring into the armed forces the men and women needed are notable,” while President William Clinton’s Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera, in a speech before the National Press Club, admitted that, "Today, with our smaller, post-Cold War armed forces, our stronger volunteer tradition and our need for longer terms of service to get a good return on the high, up-front training costs, it would be even harder to fashion a fair draft."

However, the most important reason to oppose HR 163 is that a draft violates the very principles of individual liberty upon which our nation was founded. Former President Ronald Regan eloquently expressed the moral case against the draft in the publication *Human Events* in 1979: “...[conscription] rests on the assumption that your kids belong to the state. If we buy that assumption then it is for the state--not for parents, the community, the religious institutions or teachers--to decide who shall have what values and who shall do what work, when, where and how in our society. That assumption isn’t a new one. The Nazis thought it was a great idea .”

Some say the 18-year old draftee “owes it” to his (or her, since HR 163 makes woman eligible for the draft) country. Hogwash! It just as easily could be argued that a 50 year-old chicken-hawk, who promotes war and places innocent young people in danger, owes more to the country than the 18 year-old being denied his (or her) liberty. All drafts are unfair. All 18 and 19 year olds are never drafted. By its very nature a draft must be discriminatory. All drafts hit the most vulnerable young people, as the elites learn quickly how to avoid the risks of

combat. Economic hardship is great in all wars. War is never economically beneficial except for those in position to profit from war expenditures. The great tragedy of war is that it enables the careless disregard for civil liberties of our own people. Abuses of German and Japanese Americans in World War I and World War II are well known. But the real sacrifice comes with conscription--forcing a small number of young vulnerable citizens to fight the wars that older men and women, who seek glory in military victory without themselves being exposed to danger, promote. The draft encourages wars with neither purpose nor moral justification, wars that too often are not even declared by the Congress. Without conscription, unpopular wars are difficult to fight. Once the draft was undermined in the 1960s and early 1970s, the Vietnam War came to an end. But most importantly, liberty cannot be preserved by tyranny. A free society must always resort to volunteers. Tyrants think nothing of forcing men to fight and serve in wrongheaded wars. A true fight for survival and defense of America would elicit, I am sure, the assistance of every able-bodied man and woman. This is not the case with wars of mischief far away from home, which we have experienced often in the past century. A government that is willing to enslave some of its people can never be trusted to protect the liberties of its own citizens. I hope all my colleagues to join me in standing up for individual liberty by rejecting HR 163 and all tempts to bring back the draft.