REGISTERING WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM AS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR TO WAR

You should not wait for a draft to declare yourself a conscientious objector. A conscientious objector (CO) is a person who has a sincere, deeply held moral, ethical, or religious conviction that prevents that person from participating in war of any form - all war. A CO believes that bearing arms or participating in military violence in all wars is fundamentally wrong due to training and belief - it is not merely political, sociological or philosophical.

STEP 1: REGISTER WITH THE SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM (SSS) – MALE ONLY

If you are under the age of 18 or not assigned male at birth, skip to STEP 2. Building your record of beliefs early is the most important thing you can do regardless of age or gender. However, please take the time to understand who must register with the SSS according to U.S. law.

A **Who must register?** All individuals assigned male at birth, residing in the U.S., between ages 18-25 – including U.S. citizens (even when living abroad), documented immigrants, and undocumented immigrants. Transgender women (AMAB) must register. Register within 30 days of your 18th birthday to be in compliance with the law - or not, with an understanding of the penalties. *If your conscience does not allow you to register, please get in touch with a qualified counselor by calling the Center on Conscience & War.*

B **Get a physical form — DO NOT register online for CO documentation purposes.** Online registration offers no way to document CO beliefs. You can also find and print out the form on the SSS website. While you cannot "pre-classify" as a CO, you can try to register as a CO! *Automatic registration with the SSS will begin on 12/18/2026 - this first step to CO documentation will change!*

C **Write your CO declaration on the form.** Before mailing in the form, write clearly in black ink across the face of the form: "I am a Conscientious Objector to all war." The SSS will still process it as a standard registration — but you will have a record of trying. Remember, you can only legally be declared a CO by the government in the event of a draft. This is just the beginning of documenting your sincere and deeply held beliefs as a conscientious objector, which must happen before an actual draft. Take action now!

D **Photocopy the form(s) before submitting.** Make at least three photocopies of your completed, annotated SSS Form 1. Remember, you have written: "I am a Conscientious Objector to all war" on this form. Keep one copy in your personal CO file - this will be discussed in STEP 3. Mail one to yourself so it is time & date stamped - leave unopened. And then give one to your LOCAL faith/peace community. Do this also with SSS Form 3B (Registration Acknowledgement and Change of Information), which you will receive as confirmation of registering - write "I am a Conscientious Objector to all war," return and make photocopies/organize as detailed above. The SSS expects that if you move you keep your address updated within their system - this is another opportunity to declare your objection to war.

STEP 2: WRITE AND DATE YOUR BELIEF STATEMENT AS A CO – ALL GENDERS

A **Write a formal, signed, dated statement of your PERSONAL beliefs prior to your 18th birthday or ASAP.** This is the foundation of your documented beliefs as a conscientious objector - you will need this in the event of a future military draft. Use the Four Personal Pillars below as your outline. Date and sign it. Keep one copy in your personal CO file. Mail one to yourself so it is time & date stamped. And then give one to your LOCAL faith/peace community - check-in with your faith/peace community to see if they have any additional resources. Keep in mind the legal definition of a conscientious objector written at the top of this document!

B **Personal Pillar 1 — Nature of Deeply Held Beliefs** State explicitly: "I am sincerely and deeply opposed to participation in war in any form." This must be opposition to ALL war, not a specific conflict - Gillette v. U.S. (1971). Describe how this belief is connected to your values and life choices. Stay focused on long-held beliefs, and not on current cultural and/or political events. Stay on topic!

C **Personal Pillar 2 — Source and Development of Beliefs Due to Training** Explain specifically how and when you acquired these beliefs: "Through my [faith tradition] upbringing beginning at age ___." / "Through reading [specific text] at age ___, which taught me…" Specificity is credibility. These can be religious beliefs, but also moral or ethical - U.S. v. Seeger (1965) & Welsh v. U.S. (1970).

D **Personal Pillar 3 — Demonstration of Beliefs** Describe how these beliefs affect your daily life: religious attendance, peace community involvement, conscious choices, volunteer work, etc. A Local Review Board looks for consistency between words and actions. Reflect on how you avoid or mitigate exposure to the many violent aspects of our culture based upon your deeply held beliefs.

E **Personal Pillar 4 — Use of Force** Clearly state: your objection is to organized, state-sponsored warfare – war. It does not have to be to all use of force in every circumstance (or it could be). The law permits COs to believe in immediate personal self-defense, but you must be prepared to defend this position given your beliefs, training, and life choices. Take time to think about this section - in the event of an appearance before a Local Review Board (if there is a draft), they may ask probing questions around this specific topic. *If this "Use of Force" section is challenging, please focus on Personal Pillars 1-3 and contact your faith/peace community or get in touch with a qualified counselor by calling the Center on Conscience & War.*

A PROJECT OF: Stony Run Friends Meeting
A QUAKER MEETING IN BALTIMORE CITY

STEP 3: BUILD YOUR CO DOCUMENTATION FILE & RELATIONSHIPS – ALL GENDERS

Your file may include:

- Photocopy of annotated SSS Form 1 (SSS registration form) as well as sealed time & date stamped copy sent to self via postal service – leave unopened. Remember to keep an unopened copy too for reference!
- Photocopy of annotated SSS Form 3B (Registration Acknowledgment and Change of Information) as well as sealed time & date stamped copy sent to self via postal service – leave unopened. Remember to keep an unopened copy too for reference!
- Your signed, dated belief statement; and sealed time & date stamped copy as well - leave unopened. Remember to keep an unopened copy too that you can reference! You should update this yearly to build up your documentation file of beliefs.
- Dated journals or essays on peace/nonviolence
- Letters from adult mentors/witnesses confirming your beliefs and long-standing community involvement in issues related to peace. Letters should include 1.) Relationship and length of relationship; 2.) Attest to sincerity; 3.) Is your conduct consistent with beliefs; and 4.) Are your beliefs as a conscientious objector deeply held?
    - You should be prepared to bring up to three witnesses to a Local Review Board if drafted - **local relationships are important!**
- Proof of membership/attendance: faith community, peace organizations
- Any other dated writing that reflects your values (school essays, social media posts, letters to lawmakers, etc.)
- Yearly certificate from a "Conscientious Objection & Selective Service System" training

Have your faith/peace community:

- Officially record your CO statement in Meeting/ church/ organizational archives
- Write an institutional letter of support (signed by a "leader" and dated)
- Hold formal "draft counseling" sessions and keep attendance records, to include providing a certificate
- Register youth CO statements for independent archiving
- Review your documentation yearly and assist in keeping everything up-to-date

For additional and more detailed information and support, please visit:

Center on Conscience & War
NSBRO - NISBCO - CCW

The Center on Conscience & War is a non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of conscience, opposes military conscription, and serves all conscientious objectors to war.

Keep paper copies - copies for yourself and copies for your faith/peace community. ***Also, organize documents digitally.***

STEP 4: *IF* A DRAFT IS DECLARED & *YOU ARE INDUCTED* (DRAFTED) – TIMELINE

10 days	**File SSS Form 9 — Claim for Conscientious Objector Status** From the date on your induction notice, you have exactly 10 days to file Form 9. This formally initiates your CO claim. Do not miss this deadline — it may forfeit your right to claim CO status. Make sure your CO documentation file is in order and contact your witnesses for appearance in front of the Local Review Board. The outcome of a CO claim filed by an undocumented immigrant is uncertain given our current environment.
10 days	**File SSS Form 22 — Documentation of Beliefs** After filing Form 9, you will be mailed Form 22. You have 14 days to return it. Use your established documentation to answer its questions: (1) Describe your beliefs. (2) How did you acquire them? (3) How do they affect your daily life? Attach supporting documents from your CO Documentation File..
Next	**Appear before the Local Review Board** Bring up to three witnesses (parent, faith leader, teacher, mentor, etc.), an advisor as needed, and your complete file. The Board evaluates sincerity, consistency, and your documentation. If denied, you have the right to appeal to a District Appeal Board. This is why you want your "CO File" to be complete, and to have *already* connected with a LOCAL faith/peace community as they will be most situated to provide support as a witness.

KNOW THE LAWS

CO Classifications: Class 1-O = Alternative Civilian Service | Class 1-A-O = Noncombatant Military Service

Legal standards set by: U.S. Constitution, First Amendment; Military Selective Service Act of 1948; U.S. v. Seeger (1965), Welsh v. U.S. (1970), Gillette v. U.S. (1971)

Failure to register: Federal felony — up to 5 years prison, up to $250,000 fine, barred from federal jobs (50 U.S.C. § 3811). Additional state penalties that may affect driver licences, employment and financial aid

WHAT DISQUALIFIES A CLAIM

- Objecting to only one specific war - claiming you would have fought in some wars but not this one
- A sudden claim made only after a draft is declared — with no prior documentation
- Inconsistency between stated beliefs and daily life
- No corroborating witnesses — faith leaders, teachers, or community members who can testify to your sincerity

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STAY UP-TO-DATE: *Stony Run Friends Meeting of Baltimore, MD will hold a yearly up-to-date "Conscientious Objection and the Selective Service System" training on the first Sunday – First Day – after every International Conscientious Objector on May 15th. Check-in with Stony Run yearly - put it on your calendar now! Make sure to visit our webpage to view 2026's presentation: https://stonyrunfriends.org/co/*

Document Your Beliefs. Know Your Rights. Take Action.

INFORMATION EXPIRES: Dec 18, 2026 due to the implementation of automatic registration! - no Step 1! Stony Run will have updated information available on this date at: https://www.stonyrunfriends.org/CO Remember, this document is simply a starting point.