

Should Military Recruiters Be Allowed in High Schools?



2006

YES

The United States has had an all-volunteer military since the draft was abolished in 1973. That means the military depends entirely on recruiters to attract an educated, highly sophisticated, and well-trained force to defend our nation and win our wars.

Visits to high schools and access to school-directory information are critical to our recruiters' efforts—particularly because our standards require new soldiers to have a high school diploma or better.

The presence of military recruiters in high schools does not force students to join the military; it simply alerts them to an option.

We want to make sure every high school student is aware of the career and training opportunities the military has to offer—everything from being in the infantry to learning how to work high-tech equipment or be a medical technician.

Using student lists, the local recruiter can contact students, discuss their goals, and encourage them to stay in school and graduate. Recruiters can then follow up with those students interested in pursuing the military as a career option.

Recruiters also visit schools to inform educators about the services the military has to offer to all students, even those not interested in the military. We have free programs to improve test-taking skills and to help students find careers that suit their talents.

Our recruiters need the same access to students as employers and colleges, so that both students and educators are informed that military service is a viable career option.

—**S. Douglas Smith, Spokesman**
U.S. Army Recruiting Command

NO

Right now, recruiters desperate for warm bodies to be shipped to Iraq are prowling selected high schools and neighborhoods across the country with sales pitches that touch on everything but the possibility of being maimed or killed in combat.

The teenagers who are the prime targets for recruitment are being told just about anything to ward off whatever misgivings they may have. Need money for college? No problem. You want to go to a nice place? Certainly. Maybe even Hawaii.

A young man who recently registered, as required, with the Selective Service System received an upbeat brochure in the mail touting the military's 30 days of annual "paid vacation," its free medical and dental care, its "competitive retirement" benefits, and its "home-loan program."

There was no mention of combat, or what it's like to walk the corridors and the grounds of



the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where you'll see a tragic, unending parade of young men and women struggling to move about despite their paralysis, or with one, two, or three limbs missing.

Because the stakes are so high we should be straight with potential recruits. The fundamental task of the military is to fight and kill the enemies of the United States, and fighting and killing is a grotesquely brutal experience.

Military recruiters do not belong in the halls of our public schools, where they are preying on youngsters who are especially vulnerable and impressionable.

—**Bob Herbert**

New York Times columnist

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