

# *Are you a conscientious objector?*

## *How can you prove it?*

### *What is a conscientious objector?*

A conscientious objector (CO) is someone who is **personally opposed to participation in war**. The importance of this question increases with the possibility that Congress may pass a bill allowing the Selective Service to draft young men and/or women to serve in the armed forces.

### *How do I know if I'm a CO?*

Your objection must meet three requirements:

1. It must be based on "moral, ethical, or religious belief."
2. You must be "opposed to participation in war in any form."
3. Your claim must be "deeply held" or "sincere."

### *What does that mean "legally?"*

Some US Supreme Court rulings help define these requirements:

1. It must be "based upon a power or being, or upon faith, to which all else is subordinate or upon which all else is ultimately dependent" or, if not, "does the claimed belief occupy the same place ... as an orthodox belief in God?"
2. It is not for political or selective reasons. In other words, it "must amount to conscientious opposition to participating personally in any war and all war."
3. It is "deeply held," sincere, and—in legal terms—well documented.

### *How do I claim a CO exemption?*

Currently, no draft exists, though Selective Service registration does for all 18-year-old men. Because the registration form has no place to indicate CO status, the following steps are recommended: (1) write between the lines that you are a CO; (2) have two witnesses sign it; (3) photocopy your form; (4) send the original to Selective Service; then (5) fold the photocopy as you would a business letter, with the blank side exposed; (6) seal it with tape; and (7) mail it to yourself.

When you receive the photocopy, make sure the postmark is legible, and file this official record of your registration (validated by the US Postal Service) with other documentation of your conscientious opposition to participation

in war. (See Web sites below for more specific information.)

### *Is it that easy?*

No, and it's no guarantee, but it is a first step. The rest depends on you, your documentation, and a local draft board, if a draft is reinstated and you are called.

### *How else can I document my beliefs?*

Keep a file that through time speaks to your beliefs and how they developed. Keep a journal, read or write about peace, attend peace events, etc. If the belief is deeply held and sincere, it begins with you.

### *Haven't there been some COs in the military?*

Yes, some choose Class 1-A-O status, which exempts them only from training and service as a combatant. This person enters the military but is not trained and does not carry a weapon. He or she might serve as a medic, chaplain, or in some other non-combatant function. Class 1-O exempts from all training and services in the military. This person does not go into the military but generally performs two years of alternative service, such as in a mental hospital, prison, etc.

### ***Where can I get more information?***

There are several Web-based resources. In North Carolina, you can go to [www.CORegistry.org](http://www.CORegistry.org). Nationally, go to [www.nisbco.org](http://www.nisbco.org), or just use Google.

Also, a complete set of lesson plans and handouts can be downloaded for free from [www.FGCQuaker.org](http://www.FGCQuaker.org).

Scroll down and click on the Peace link, then click on ***Raising Conscientious Objector Consciousness Among Our Youth*** by Curt Torell and Alice Carlton.

Or contact us directly at [choices@bellsouth.net](mailto:choices@bellsouth.net).

**“War is not the answer.”**

— Martin Luther King Jr

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## ***Are you a conscientious objector?***

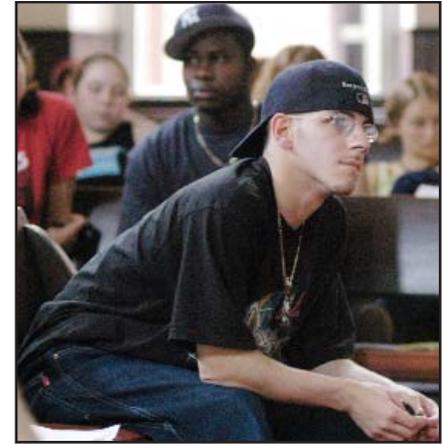


Photo courtesy of AFSC

## ***If you object to participation in war as a matter of conscience, read on.***

*This brief question-and-answer brochure will help you find answers to some important questions about your future. If your conscience is telling you to question participation in war, read on.*