

Another Dimension of Service to the Nation
Or
The Chicken and the Egg
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America is at war. Success in war requires commitment of the people and their willingness to make the sacrifices required to be successful. There are indicators which suggest that the commitment and willingness of the American public is in decline. As during many previous difficult periods in our history, one measure of the people's willingness to prevail is their willingness to send their children in harms way. This manifests itself today in the difficulty with which our military forces have in recruiting (and retention).

This condition generates some questions. Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring the freedom of this great country, as we have known it for our lifetime? Who is responsible for ensuring that our citizenry understands what it takes to maintain the freedom that most of them enjoy and take for granted? Certainly, I believe that the answer to both questions is we, the citizens of these United States. I submit that we have a chicken-and-egg issue in understanding the nature of freedom and maintaining freedom. Which comes first? Can you have one without the other? I submit that we have both the chicken and the egg right now so it doesn't matter which came first so long as we understand the process. If we nurture the chicken, it can lay another egg and if we care for the egg right, it will hatch into another chicken and we can perpetuate the process.

I think that what **we** are trying to do in this country is to enjoy the fruits of freedom without understanding the nature of freedom and what it takes to both gain and maintain it. America takes her freedom for granted because the majority has always known freedom but have not done anything to earn it beyond inheriting it. There is a lot of inertia in freedom. Once that freedom train is slowed down, it takes a long time and a lot of energy, sacrifice, and dedication to get back up to speed. This I call the physics of freedom. We are trying to recruit from a population that has no particular desire to be recruited. Nor do the parents of those we strive to recruit want their children to be in uniform, and particularly, in harm's way. Each service is in competition with other services and with other life attractions and opportunities. We are feeding the chicken a bit (though not enough) but we are not hatching the next egg.

So I suggest that there may be a natural division of labor between these two tasks as follows. Largely leave

the feeding of the chicken (resources for maintaining the current force structure) to the senior echelons, lobbies like NGAUS, and congress; though this is not to say that we in the field should completely abandon efforts in this arena. Focus the attention of the National Guard soldiers on contributing to hatching the next egg (helping our citizenry understand what it takes to maintain the freedom that most of them enjoy). We might call this re-bonding America with her Army.

My postulate is that America has lost contact with her Army; and her Navy and her Air Force. And yes, even the Marine Corps has missed recruitment goals as a result of the War On Terrorism. It appears that America has lost its **sense of service**. People and groups have competing agendas, which dilute and distort trends, which inhibit reliable prediction of favorable outcomes. I won't quote here the recent record of various services and components' disappointments in recruiting goals nor attempt to speculate at what the increase in recruiting costs have been, associated with their efforts.

One can manipulate statistics endlessly and conclude about anything that is desired. But no matter how one plays with the numbers, a general trend will emerge, which is, that relatively few Americans have served their country in a military role¹. Perhaps one in a few hundred Americans under 40 years of age today has served their country in uniform. If you examine the biographies of our Congress you will find some interesting facts such as: only 29% have ever served in uniform; 41% of the Senate and 26% of the House. These are good percentages compared to the populous, but in my view, not very good for the services. Most young men and women of recruitment age today do not have an uncle or aunt or cousin or older sibling or parent or teacher or neighbor or hero who has served and who has instilled a **sense of service** in the young people of America.

When I was an adolescent I would attend a family reunion and especially during the latter stages of WWII, and Korea, many uncles and cousins would not be present. They were "in the Service." This is a phrase that has fallen into disuse and has largely lost its meaning in the big picture of this country. Too many people, I fear, view "service" as a job or a career or an

¹ I understand that many people do serve their nation and community in ways other than wearing the uniform of their country and I applaud those. But being part of some community service does not normally carry the risk associated with wearing the uniform of our country and being deployed to combat.

adventure. And of course it is all of that too; but perhaps it was more meaningful when it was done in the spirit of service; when it was viewed as a responsibility to serve.

Young America's knowledge of the services comes from exciting, compelling, intriguing, but unreal movies starring Stallone, Schwarzenegger, Norris, and Segal. Hollywood! Occasionally a "Saving Private Ryan" comes along and is realistic enough to give us food for thought. Occasionally there is a unique real-life situation that we can revel in with great satisfaction such as when the professional football player from the Arizona Cardinals, Pat Tillman, gave up his athletic career to become a Army Ranger in response to 911. But America's attention span is short and vulnerable. We need an effort to bring both reality and stability to the task of sharing knowledge of our services and attracting young people to commit to a **sense of service**. The effort needs to have no termination date but be maintained in perpetuity as a living program.

The baseline for understanding what it means to serve selflessly is essentially zero for the young people we would like to recruit. But it is not their fault. They are super people, these "X-Generation" citizens and "net-generation" citizens. I call them the "smart-generation." We don't attract them with the same stale sales pitch. Different things motivate them. They motivate themselves. We need to instill in them a **sense of service** and educate them to appreciate the physics of freedom. In future years we can expect the number of congressional members who have walked the walk in our boots to go even lower than the percentages mentioned above. Perhaps the same can be said of the "staffers" who provide the members so much of their perspective. Someday there may be no members (or staffers) who understand first hand the concept of selfless service, which is so basic to our entire way of life under our constitution. In future years we can expect that the "next-generations" will grow further and further from selfless service and lack any appreciation for the physics (inertia) of freedom; unless someone does something about it.

This someone is us; and we should do this now. We cannot depend upon Desert Storms and Operation Iraqi Freedom coming along at the right intervals, accelerating the train of freedom, and rekindling patriotism and nationalism. I suggest that instilling a **sense of service** in young America is a task that the National Guard is well suited for and geographically distributed to accomplish the task.

Of course I cannot logically exclude the other Reserve Components from this task. I focus on the Guard

because I spent 44 years there and because of their size and level of influence which points to their suitability to lead this concept for the DoD; and for the country.

Simply what I am proposing is that we design a program to get the Company Grade soldiers into the schools across the country as occasional lecturers in conjunction with appropriate Social Sciences courses such as Civics and History. We should do this after carefully crafting strategy and content and preparing our Guard Soldiers for success as they interface with the schools in a thoughtfully structured program. We should begin with a metricized pilot program, make adjustments based on analysis, and drive on with a large enough scale and with a level of professionalism and continuity that it will make a positive impact on the future-think of our future citizens and soldiers. We must become "evangelistic" for the cause of instilling a **sense of service** in our future populace and maintaining the inertia of the freedom train.

This is not about politics nor partisanship, nor social engineering, nor religion, nor interest groups; it is about ensuring freedom. There is an urgent, legitimate, and compelling need to influence minds with the noble cause of **service to the country** while they are impressionable. No one is more qualified nor better positioned than the Guard to play a leading role in this effort, with well thought out participation by the other Reserve Components (RC). All together the RC is geographically distributed in over 3000 communities across this country. The RC is uniquely postured and capable of making this concept a reality and re-instilling the lost **sense of service** in our citizens, both young and old.

No one is going to seek us out and give us a program to accomplish this. This is something that we must take the initiative on, continually improve on through assessment and redesign, and commit the energy to across the country. I submit that this proposal and the follow-on activity that can surely make it a reality is simply another dimension of **service to the nation**. This will not be a one or two-year effort, after which we will have fixed the problem. This will be a long-term commitment; it will be an investment for the future which has the potential to reduce the energy required for recruiting in the future. The outcome should not be focused on the Guard strength, but the strength of all services. The Guard can do this. The Guard should be enabled to do this.

I ask the reader to consider the merits of the concept and begin a dialogue that might lead to a supporting resolution through the National Guard Association of the United States or other venue that would turn the

concept into action. Over literally thousands of years, various leaders and philosophers of vision have uttered the caution that may be paraphrased to something like “The best way to avoid war is to be prepared for it.” Part of being prepared for war, thus ensuring peace, is having a populous that is willing to commit themselves to the service of others. This commitment will not come without knowledge and understanding of what it takes to maintain the freedom that most of them enjoy and take for granted. The Guard’s commitment must be to lead this charge to give future America that knowledge and understanding so that they may be motivated to selfless service and the preservation of the freedoms that we all enjoy. The Guard membership represents a powerful voting block. If ever there was a deserving concept against which to apply the lever of votes, which is non-partisan, not for profit, in support of our constitution, and arguably the right thing to do for all concerned, **sense of service** is such a deserving concept. Congress and DOD should underwrite such an initiative.

Of course there will be those groups who will stand up and decry the legitimacy of schools attempting such influence on their children; and we must have the courage and tenacity to respond to their writs and defeat them. Gay rights, Sex education, and a host of other subjects that were once considered the prevue of the family and home are now “accepted subjects”; why not **sense of service**? There is legitimacy to this effort and it comes from the Constitution.

The Constitution provides Congress the power to:

- a. Provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States;
- b. to raise and support Armies;
- c. to provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union;
- d. to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing powers.

The preceding paragraph is of course extracted from the constitution and must of course be considered in the context of the sections from which it was extracted. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is sufficient authorization for the Congress to craft the means to support a effort of **Sense Of Service (SOS)** along the general lines as posed herein. The Constitution does not tell us how the Congress shall accomplish the tasks for which it is empowered, only what it must do. Additionally, with the Patriot Act in place, inserting language into this Act to facilitate SOS should be a first consideration.

Complimentary outcomes, thus reason for SOS, relates to the universal decline in the interest in science and technology in our young population. I was told recently by a corporate officer in a very large defense industry that in the next 5 years, 70% of the “tribal knowledge” in his corporation will be lost in retirements with little prospect to backfill it at the pace necessary to maintain that defense proficiency. The SOS program would be yet another tool with which to influence young people towards careers in this industry.

The first step should be a thorough analysis to identify those obstacles to be overcome in order to be able then to assemble a team of capable leaders and people of experience and innovation and craft a plan for execution. A limited trial program would then be implemented, reviewed for propriety and effectiveness, and modified as analysis suggests.

It is the long view that ultimately matters. We must recognize, and act upon, the need to maintain the foundations of our society through carefully planned and dedicated execution of programs, however controversial they may be to those who are not thinking beyond their own lifespan.

Throughout the text of this piece I have used the term **we**. I am no longer a member of the National Guard but my commitment to the roles and mission of the National Guard remains firm and I wrote the paper from the perspective of being a National Guardsman.

Finally, I ask you to examine the acronym: of Sense Of Service...SOS; and recall

The reply of the Delphian Oracle, when asked what Sparta had most to fear, was one word----Luxury.