



Written by [John F. McManus](#) on October 23, 2018

Our Military Has a Problem Finding Qualified Recruits

Many years of federal control of education in the United States has produced a large number of Americans who can hardly read or write, don't comprehend elementary mathematics, and have little or no appreciation of honest history. Books have been written about this very serious problem. One of the finest is [Crimes of the Educators: How Utopians Are Using Government Schools to Destroy America's Children](#) (2014) by Samuel Blumenfeld and Alex Newman.



A few decades ago, a government-funded assessment of our nation's educational system concluded that a disaster had occurred. One conclusion reached after having studied the products of 12 years of schooling concluded that if a foreign power was discovered to be responsible for the miserable results, its efforts could have been deemed "an act of war."

America's employers in virtually every field of endeavor have complained that today's young job seekers are unable to perform minimal tasks. The potential employer most affected by this situation happens to be the U.S. military. As weaponry becomes increasingly complex, the need for educated individuals to put it to use has become obvious. Finding qualified or even teachable candidates among the recruits has become a huge problem. But deficiencies in educational competence combined with obesity, drug usage, and criminality worsen the chances of finding qualified recruits.

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Military, intelligence, and foreign affairs writer Mark Perry addressed the growing challenge of finding qualified recruits in an article for *The American Conservative* entitled "[The Recruitment Problem the Military Doesn't Want to Talk About](#)" (August 15, 2018):

The Army set its 2018 recruiting goal at 80,000 soldiers.... In April, the Army revised that number — downwards. Instead of recruiting 80,000, it announced that it would recruit 76,500. But even that number might be too high, as the Army notes that it's recruited only 28,000 in the first six months of the year. The problem, it seems, isn't that young people don't want to join the Army — or any of the services — it's that they can't.

"While the U.S. military represents the best in America,... it doesn't actually represent America," according to Perry. For the latter to be true, he points out, "two thirds of our military would have to consist of obese under-educated former drug users and convicted criminals."

Perry summarized the dire situation facing current recruiters:

Here's the arithmetic: one in three potential recruits are disqualified from service because they're overweight, one in four cannot meet minimal educational standards (a high school diploma or GED equivalent), and one in 10 have a criminal history. In plain terms, about 71 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds (the military's target pool of potential recruits) are disqualified from the minute they enter a recruiting station: that's 24 million out of 34 million Americans.



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While all of these scary statistics aren't attributable to poor schooling alone, the problems of obesity and criminality would likely be diminished if teachers were not saddled with curricula that are boring, nonsense-filled, and devoid of fundamentals. Yes, stronger families would help. But the schools where Americans are forced to send their offspring are the largest part of this problem.

The federal government's role in education cannot be found in the U.S. Constitution. Its cost continues to rise while its quality continues to plummet. If fedgov were removed and its cost left at state and community level, changes would follow and the problems noted above would be increasingly dealt with. Then America would have a military arm sufficiently able to dissuade those who would attack our nation with their better educated, healthier, and more law-abiding personnel.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#).



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