



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 10, 2026

## Automatic Draft Registration Set to Begin in December

By December, eligible American men will no longer need to register for the draft themselves. The government will do it for them.

The Selective Service System (SSS), the federal agency that keeps the database of men who could be called up in a national emergency, submitted a proposed rule to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs on March 30, according to the [office's website](#). That rule would help implement the [automatic registration](#) mandate Congress approved in the fiscal 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).



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The United States has not used a draft since [1973](#). Military service has remained voluntary for more than five decades. Still, the machinery of conscription has never disappeared.

The timing has intensified public anxiety. The rule is moving ahead amid the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war against Iran. That climate has sharpened fears that a registration system long treated as dormant is being updated at a moment of real war risk.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt [told](#) reporters last month that such a draft is “not part of the current plan” — but President Donald Trump “wisely keeps his options on the table.”

### The Law

The U.S. draft system is governed by the Military Selective Service Act ([pdf](#)), which authorizes the federal government to require registration and, if activated, conscription. Implementing regulations are codified in [32 CFR Part 1615](#). Why is it needed? [Per the SSS](#),

Registration is a way our government keeps a list of names of men from which to draw in case of a national emergency requiring rapid expansion of our Armed Forces. By registering all young men, Selective Service System ensures that a future draft will be fair and just.

Under current law, most men ages 18 to 25 must register. That obligation applies to U.S. citizens, dual citizens, and noncitizens living in the country. The agency explains,

Virtually all men must register with Selective Service, even those who believe they'll be exempt from serving.

The process itself is simple. Individuals can register online, by mail using a registration form, or through certain state and federal processes such as driver's license applications in participating states.

Registration is not optional. Failure to comply can carry [criminal penalties](#), including a fine of up to \$250,000 and/or five years imprisonment. The registration is also required to access “state-funded



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student financial aid and employment in many states [and] most federal employment.”

## **Automatic Registration**

Congress has now moved to replace the model that relies on individual compliance. In the [agency's words](#):

On December 18, 2025, the President signed the FY 2026 NDAA into law, mandating automatic Selective Service registration. The Agency engaged with Congress throughout the NDAA process regarding the automated legislative proposal. This statutory change transfers responsibility for registration from individual men to SSS through integration with federal data sources. SSS will implement the change by December 2026, resulting in a streamlined registration process and corresponding workforce realignment.

Under the new system, eligible men will be registered automatically, generally around the time of their 18th birthday, based on federal data.

Automatic registration is one of three core initiatives that will shape the potential conscription, standing alongside “Technology Modernization” and “Workforce Optimization” as defining priorities.

Technology plays a key role:

The Agency will modernize legacy conscription applications to ensure secure, reliable systems are ready in the event of a national emergency.

It has already secured \$6 million in funding to do so.

At the same time, the organization itself is being reshaped:

SSS achieved its Agency [Reduction in Force, or RIF] and Reorganization Plan (ARRP) headcount target twelve months early through active workforce shaping, position consolidation, and controlled hiring. The Agency will adjust this optimized posture while implementing automatic registration.

Taken together, these steps point in one direction: The system is being streamlined for readiness.

## **Readiness and Data**

Critics argue that this goes beyond efficiency. Journalist and activist Edward Hasbrouck [reported](#) on the change back in December at [anriwar.com](#). He identified automatic registration as “the largest change in Selective Service law since 1980.” He continued,

More importantly, it will move the USA closer to activation of a draft, or at least to being able to claim to be ready to activate a draft “on demand” of Congress and the President, than at any time in the half century since draft registration was suspended and [draft boards](#) were deactivated in 1975.

That is the deeper significance of the shift. The law does not activate a draft by itself. Congress must still authorize conscription. But it strengthens the underlying machinery. It gives the government a



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more direct way to identify, register, and track those it may one day seek to induct.

To make that possible, the agency must build a far more comprehensive dataset than it currently holds. That is where the problem begins.

“The SSS ‘already knows who needs to register, supporters contend,’” Hasbrouck wrote. “That’s not true.” Whether an individual is required to register depends on several factors defined by law. These include sex, age, citizenship or immigration status, and whether the person is residing in the United States. Those facts are not consistently captured across federal databases. As for address data, the government has no legitimate business demanding constant awareness of where people live. As Hasbrouck notes, “U.S. citizens ... aren’t normally required to report to any Federal or state agency when they change their address.”

The likely result is error.

Old addresses persist. Records conflict. Key attributes may be missing or misclassified. A person may be wrongly registered, wrongly excluded, or flagged for additional scrutiny. Hasbrouck’s warning is direct: “The ‘automatic’ registration process will be intrusive and error-prone, and the list will be highly vulnerable to misuse.”

## **Surveillance and Misuse**

The risks do not end with error. They expand with scale.

The SSS can obtain information from other federal and state agencies, and it can also require individuals to provide information needed to determine registration status or complete the registration process. That authority aligns with a broader trend.

In recent years, the federal government has moved toward more aggressive data aggregation and integration. Under the second Trump administration, agencies, acting under the DOGE-driven “[AI-First](#)” [push](#) to make computer systems “[talk to each other](#),” sought to perfect and fuse data across federal “silos” and create more comprehensive digital records on Americans. Once that technical groundwork [had been laid](#), the administration [enlisted Palantir Technologies](#) to help expand large-scale data integration and analysis across government.

Within that context, automatic draft registration adds another layer to the construction of centralized, cross-referenced datasets. First, the government compiles a list of draft-eligible men tied to identity, citizenship status, and location. Once assembled, that data can also be linked to other federally held records, including health information, tax filings, employment data, immigration records, and educational history.

That raises a broader question: What could a tyrannical government do with detailed information on able-bodied men of military age?

In a narrow sense, the answer is straightforward: It enables faster mobilization in a “national emergency,” meaning the state can more quickly identify young men, process them, and, if ordered, throw them into war, including wars fought far from home and for causes they might reject.

In a broader sense, the implications are darker. A government with detailed, integrated records gains enormous leverage. It can find and monitor those young men more closely, pressure them more easily, and reduce the practical space for resistance.



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