

The Alternative Service Program



So all
may serve...

Few people know that the mission of the Selective Service System is twofold. In addition to the delivery of manpower to the Armed Forces, the Selective Service will administer an Alternative Service Program for conscientious objectors in any return to conscription.

(Military Selective Service Act (50 U.S.C. App. I 451 et seq.))



CO repairing the window of a school in Vienna damaged during World War II.

Conscientious Objectors

Conscientious objectors, or COs, are persons who, based on their religious, ethical, or moral beliefs, refuse to participate in war in any form. America's history with conscientious objection can be traced back to our early settlers, some of whom were pacifists fleeing persecution in Europe for their beliefs.

Among them were the Amish, the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers. We have come to know them as "historic peace churches."

Future conscientious objectors will be representative of the multitude of religious, moral, and ethical beliefs held by Americans.

Alternative Service

Alternative Service is a 24-month term of civilian service, comparable to the term of service of those conscripted into the military. COs, as alternative service workers, contribute to the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest.

The types of service appropriate for alternative civilian service are work in;

- educational services
- environmental programs
- health care services
- social services
- community services, and
- agriculture

Alternative Service Employment Network (ASEN)

A major peacetime duty of the Selective Service is to develop the Alternative Service Employment Network. The network is populated with groups and organizations who agree to abide by Selective Service rules and regulations while employing Alternative Service Workers (ASWs).

ASEN members can be:

- Not-for-profit organizations (religious or secular); and/or
- Federal/State/Local Governments



CO working with children of migrant workers in Florida.

Agency Goal

"Our goal, in any return to conscription, is to provide a 24-month term of fully supervised alternative civilian service to any man classified as conscientiously opposed to both combatant and noncombatant military training and service. Our pledge to America is that in fulfillment of their citizen's obligation, the alternative civilian service of conscientious objectors will benefit the Nation's health, safety, and interests. We simultaneously pledge to conscientious objectors that their right to productive, fair, and honorable alternative service will be protected."

*William A. Chatfield
Director, Selective Service System
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CO patching a wall in a school damaged during World War II in Vienna.



For more information about conscientious objection, the Alternative Service Program, or to become a member of the ASEN, please contact:

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Photos provided by the Brethren Historical Library and Archives.