

SHOULD THE UNITED STATES REQUIRE A YEAR OF NATIONAL SERVICE?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

SHOULD WE MAKE MILITARY SERVICE MANDATORY IN THE USA?

America From Scratch | July 27, 2018 | Video

8:13 minutes

Toussaint Morrison delves into the idea of mandatory military service and compulsory national service and asks if the United States were to start from scratch today, would we make military or domestic service a requirement?

- Morrison starts that for about 182 of the 240 years that America has been a country, we have been at war. There has been one day of armed conflict for 75% of the nation's history
- Morrison pointed out that warfare has directly impacted fewer and fewer Americans. The number of Americans with military experience shrank from 18% in 1980 to 7% in 2015 and is expected to shrink to 3.5% by 2040.
- Colonel Erik D. Sutcliffe states that part of the reason for shrinking numbers is the military does not need as many people.
- Most experts agree that mandatory military service in America doesn't make sense financially or practically.
- Morrison suggests promoting domestic service like AmeriCorps and Peace Corps Programs. Often, these programs have enough people who want to participate but not enough positions and funding to allow everyone to serve.
- Anna Maura Connolly, president of the Voices for National Service, thinks national service should become a common expectation and would improve on how we come together as citizens to solve problems in our communities

THE POWER OF NATIONAL SERVICE

Emerging Issues Forum | November 27, 2018 | Video

8:37 minutes

Parc Smith, CEO of American Youth Works and Serve Austin, explains how a year of national service can become a pathway to greater civic engagement and economic advancement for low-income youth. He shares heartfelt stories as proud examples.

- Smith says that service years typically were pitched to college graduates across the country and adds that these opportunities should be made more accessible to local youth and people of color.
- Smith states that service years can be an innovative method to help people obtain employment, higher education, economic prosperity and lifelong civic engagement.
- He shares his personal experience leading young AmeriCorps members and helping them earn their high school diplomas while they worked to preserve public lands.
- Smith observed that reinvolvement in AmeriCorps later in life is common, which shows that community involvement can become habitual for young people.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

FEDERAL PANEL CONSIDERING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANDATORY NATIONAL SERVICE

NPR | January 23, 2019 | Audio

3:39 minutes

A federal commission is tasked to review national service. This commission is dedicated to finding ways to attract more people to public service and making service a universal expectation.

- For the first time in our nation’s history, a bipartisan congressional committee will review the Selective Service system along with military, national and public service. One of the main goals of the commission is to attract more people to public service, whether it is military or other types of national service.
- A discussion point on their agenda is if women should be required to register for military service. People have very clear-cut and divided opinions on this issue. The broader concern is the decline in public service. The commission’s goal is to establish a standard national expectation for service.
- Fourteen more public hearings are scheduled in the coming months. The commission also will prepare a final report with recommendations due next year.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Civil service
- Compulsory
- Commission
- Register

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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