

Are Your Students Getting A Balanced Education About the Military?

A Military Recruiter's Job Is To Sell the Military

Does your school let military recruiters on campus? Most do. Recruiters are salespeople with a quota to meet. If students are learning about the military from recruiters alone, they're getting only part of the story. Their education is being shortchanged.

From guidance counselors' displays to recruiters' presentations in classrooms to use of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, the Pentagon sells the military to high school students. Twenty-five hundred high schools pay for JROTC military training programs (half of whose graduates will enlist).

The Military is Controversial

The military portrays itself as a benign entity that offers opportunities to students eager for options. But the reality is more complex. The military provokes controversy among conservatives who are skeptical of the U.S. becoming the world's police force; civil rights groups who protest patterns of bias and harassment in the military; liberals who oppose some wars; civil libertarians who are critical of the denial of rights to military personnel; and pacifists who oppose killing.

The military trains all recruits to employ deadly force, yet recruiters rarely discuss the dehumanizing process of basic training, the horrors of war, or the psychological costs of killing. They never mention the debilitating illnesses suffered by atomic veterans, veterans exposed to Agent Orange, and those suffering from Gulf War mystery illnesses.

The Military is Not an Effective Training Program

The advertised economic benefits of joining the military are largely a myth. According to the Veterans Administration, veterans from recent eras are two to five times more likely to be homeless than non-veterans. On average, veterans earn less than non-veterans (Crane & Wise, 1987; Bryant and Wilhite, 1990). As Secretary of Defense Cheney admitted, "The reason to have a military is to be prepared to fight and win wars...it's not a jobs program." Even the GI Bill is misleadingly advertised. To become eligible for GI Bill benefits, enlistees have to pay a non-

refundable \$1200 fee — yet only 35% of all GIs have received any benefits at all. The new GI Bill is not an effective education benefits program but that doesn't stop military recruiters from selling it to students and parents. (See *Joining the Military is Hazardous to Your Education* at objector.org/before-you-enlist.html.)

Equal Access is Required by Law

Federal district and appellate courts have repeatedly upheld the principle of equal access, which enables students to get information on both sides of controversial issues.

In *San Diego Committee v. Governing Board of Grossmont Union High School District* [790 F.2d 1471 (9th Cir. 1986)] the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, "The Board cannot allow the presentation of one side of an issue, but prohibit the presentation of the other side.... Here, the Board permitted mixed political and commercial speech advocating military service, but attempted to bar the same type of speech opposing such service. Accordingly, the Board violated the First Amendment." (See also *Searcey v. Crim* [815 F.2d 1389 (11th Cir. 1987)] at objector.org/recruiting.html.)

As the 9th Circuit Court stated: "It has long been recognized that the subject of military service is controversial." When schools create a forum for the proponents of the military, they must, under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, provide equal access for those with opposing points of view. Simply put: if you allow military recruiters and/or military literature in your school, the law requires you to provide equal access to critics of the military. If you fail to provide equal access, your district is subject to expensive and controversial lawsuits.

To find out how you can make sure the students in your school get balanced information on these important issues, please contact us. We'll be glad to send you free sample literature.



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