

## The Vietnam War, the Draft, and the 2-S Deferment

At various times in its history, the United States has instituted a military draft. Young men eighteen and older were required to register for the draft and were issued draft cards. The government had the right to then call these young men into military service.

During the Vietnam War, the draft was instituted. Young men could apply for a deferment if they were full-time students. As long as they maintained good grades and were attending school—generally college—full-time, they would not be drafted. Young men who could not afford to attend college or who were not eligible to attend college did not obtain a deferment and were usually classified 1-A. These were the young men who had the greatest chance of being drafted. A classification of 4-F was given to males who were deemed physically or mentally unfit to serve in the military.

In the late 1960s a draft lottery was put into place. Once a year the lottery was held. In a large container were folded slips of paper each containing a date from January 1 to December 31. A drawing was held and the dates drawn were numbered in order beginning with "1." As an example, if June 19 were the first date drawn, it would be assigned "1." All young men who had this birthday were first in line to be drafted the next year unless they had a deferment. Tense young men and women (and parents) held their collective breaths during the lottery as the dates were drawn. The higher the number a birthday was assigned, the less chance there was of being drafted that next year. Most young men felt "safe" from the draft if their birthday was assigned a number of "250" or higher.

During this time, it was common for young men who finished college to immediately apply to attend graduate school, dental school, law school, medical school, etc. By doing this, they were able to avoid the draft as their 2-S student deferments were extended until they finished their advance studies.