

The Best of the next Generation Says “Here Am I. Send Me.”

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Update on Sam Wright

9.0--Miscellaneous

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying. Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I. Here am I. Send me.” *Isaiah*, chapter 6, verse 8 (*King James Bible*). *Isaiah* is the 23rd book of the Old Testament.

On Memorial Day, it was my honor to attend “U.S. Senator John Cornyn Salutes the Class of 2020” at the Freeman Coliseum in San Antonio, Texas. I attended with my good friend Colonel D. Ladd Pattillo, USA (Ret.), a past National President of the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) and a member of Senator Cornyn’s Service Academy Selection Board.

In this annual event, Senator Cornyn recognizes the Texas members of incoming classes of the United States Military Academy (West Point, New York), the United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, Maryland), the United States Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colorado), the United States Coast Guard Academy (New London, Connecticut), and the United States Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point, New York). Senator Cornyn recognizes not only those that he has nominated for the service academies but also those nominated by Texas’ other Senator and by Texas’ United States Representatives and the young men and women selected for service academies by means other than congressional nomination.

Colonel Pattillo served as the Master-of-Ceremonies at this impressive annual event for the 12th time in the last 13 years. In the other year, he was on active duty in Iraq. Senator Cornyn’s 2016 event honored 33 incoming members of the United States Military Academy, 40 for the United States Naval Academy, 31 for the United States Air Force Academy, 3 for the United States Coast Guard Academy, and 10 for the United States Merchant Marine Academy.

It has now been almost two generations since Congress abolished the draft and established the All-Volunteer Military in 1973. I have long been concerned about our nation’s ability to recruit and retain a sufficient quality and quantity of young men and women to serve in uniform and defend our country. The statistics are disconcerting.

Only one-half of one percent of our country’s people has served in uniform since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. [Pew Research Center, *War and Sacrifice in the Post-Modern*

Era, available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/chapter-6-a-profile-of-the-modern-military/>] More than 75% of young Americans in the 17-24 year old cohort are disqualified from military service because of medical issues (especially obesity and diabetes), use of illegal drugs and certain prescription medications (like those prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), felony convictions, educational deficiencies, and other problems. [Mission: Readiness Press Release, November 5, 2009, <http://cdn.missionreadiness.org/NATPR1109.pdf>.]

Only one percent of young Americans in the 17-24 cohort are both qualified for military service and willing to consider enlisting. The services need more than one-third of that one percent to meet their recruiting goals each year. [*Wall Street Journal, Recruits' Ineligibility Tests the Military*, June 27, 2014, by Miriam Jordan, available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/recruits-ineligibility-tests-the-military-1403909945/>.]

I remain concerned, but I was greatly reassured by attending Senator Cornyn's 2016 event and meeting and speaking to many most impressive officer candidates and their proud parents on Memorial Day. At least here in Texas, we are sending our best and brightest into our nation's armed forces for the next generation, as we have in every generation since 1845.