

Conscientious Objection Check List

One can only get the status of conscientious objector after one receives a draft notice. Congress must first pass legislation authorizing the beginning of inductions. Because the date of induction could be 10 days or less after receipt of a draft notice, it is critical to prepare in advance.

A conscientious objector must meet three criteria:

1) Object to participation in war in any form:

- This is key, the inability to participate, based on beliefs, not on philosophy or political reasons.

2) Base his objections on “religious training and belief” (which can include moral or ethical training and belief):

- Can come from participation in a traditional peace church.
- Simply believing in God & being a member of a church is not sufficient. Must demonstrate that one would have “no rest or peace” due to these beliefs if required to participate in war.
- Can come from moral or ethical beliefs which occupy the same place in the life of the applicant as the belief of a traditional deity holds in the life of traditionally religious person.

3) Demonstrate that their position is “sincerely and deeply held”:

- Ability to point to the length of time the feelings have been held, e.g., participation in peace events, choice of classes, jobs, interests, (see the link to Building a Conscientious Objection). Document everything.
- If the feelings crystallized at a certain point, that should be documented.
- Write out how you got these beliefs & how they affect your life.
- Gather support letters. All should be from someone who knows you well and can speak to your beliefs and actions stemming from your beliefs, e.g. teacher, pastor, counselor, relatives, classmates, friends, etc. It’s also important to have letter by someone who doesn’t agree with your beliefs, but is convinced of your sincerity. Letters should include:

- Character reference: e.g., you are an honest person who means what you say
- Cover the nature & length of the relationship
- The belief that you are sincere in your CO claim.
- Demonstrate your actions & how deeply your beliefs are held.
- Brief & to the point is best—one page, typed & on letterhead when possible

Your CO file should include:

- What you believe.
- How you came to believe it.
- Evidence of your sincerity.
- Actions that show you believe what you do.
- Your file can include articles, news clippings, and similar material you have found useful.

Draft boards award CO status if they are convinced of your sincerity by your written materials and your personal appearance before them. There is an alternate service requirement for those who successfully win this status.

This material prepared by Carol Van Houten, CO & draft counselor in the all volunteer program of CALC, Community Alliance of Lane County. For more info, call CALC, 485-1755, x205, Draft and CO Counseling Program. Individual free consultations about developing your CO case can be arranged by request. Sessions in Spanish by request. Hay información en Español disponible, pero necesita ser pedida con anticipación.