Draft to Call Lottery Nos. 1–366

Rick Fitch

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"We're going to be breathing down the back of every individual available. I have no doubt that men with the number 3 66 will be drafted."

—Col. Arthur Holmes
State Director,
Michigan Selective Service

WASHINGTON—President Nixon accompanied the unveiling of the draft lottery with an announcement that those whose birthdays fell in the first third drawn (1–122) stood a "high probability" of being drafted in 1970, those in the second third (122–244) stood an "average probability," and those in the last third 244–366) stood a "relatively low probability."

More than a month after the dates were picked in capsules from a bowl before a national television audience, even the National Selective Service Headquarters concedes Nixon's forecast was mistaken.

"I doubt anyone with a 1-A classification is safe," says one national officer. 1-A men not drafted by December stand a good chance of not being drafted at all, but the possibilities are very slim that they can escape (from having their number come up)."

Selective Service directors in seven states have flatly predicted they will reach all 366 numbers during the course of the year.

Col. Holmes in Michigan says his office has been scraping the bottom of the 1-A barrel for the past five years to meet induction quotas, and since the anticipated 1970 Michigan quota is 15,000—the same as past years—he sees little chance that any with 1-A classifications will escape the draft.

Holmes says that students who plan to drop out of school will have to take their chances in this year's pool: "We'll welcome them into the pool. And we'll probably induct 'em."

Col. Clifford Hall, Delaware Selective Service director, says his state will not only draft 19-26-year-olds classified 1-A; it will have to draft some 1814–19 year-olds. "With my knowledge of the 1970 draft call, I will have to tell local boards that they can go down the list to number 100, just for January," he says.

Col. Byron Meaderx of New York State's Selective Service estimates that, "If our draft calls are at the levels of the last three years, we expect to exhaust all numbers from one to 366 ... by May or June."

Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and North Dakota also predict they will use up all lottery numbers during 1970. In addition, spokesman for eight other states and the District of Columbia told an Associated Press survey that those with high lottery numbers are definitely not safe from conscription. 29 states said it was too early to make projections.

State spokesman in only four states—Alaska, Colorado, Kansas and Utah—say those with high lottery numbers are unlikely to be called.

The variance in the projected manpower needs of different states raises questions as to the methods employed by the National Selective Service Headquarters to meet the national draft quotas.

According to Capt. William Pascoe, chief information officer for the Selective Service, each month each local board compiles a "report of availability" that gives the number of physically and mentally qualified 1-A men in its jurisdiction. The report is sent to the state office, which formulates a state report.

The national office receives all the state reports, and assigns a percentage to each of the 50 states plus Washington, D. C., Guam, the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and New York City. The percentage represents the number of qualified 1-A men living in that state as opposed to the national total.

The state and local quotas are established as follows, explains Pascoe: "Say for a particular month Maryland has 1,9 per cent of the 1-A's and the national call that month was for 20,000 men, 1.9 per cent of 20,000 is 392, so that number of inductees would have to come from Maryland. Maryland has 66 local boards. Say board 10 has 2.83 per cent of all the 1-A's; then it would be called upon to supply 2.83 per cent of 392."

Pascoe says if it turns out that one local board is drafting a middle lottery number while another is drafting a low number, it will be due mainly to three variables: the number and distribution of volunteers, number of deferments, and chance geographical distribution of birthdays.

There are over 4,000 local boards, each of them in an area with a different socio-economic make-up, he says, and a board in an affluent area might be calling high numbers ahead of most other boards because many youths who otherwise might be drafted are able to afford college, A state director, he says, is empowered to maintain eveness in the calling of lottery numbers by withholding the assignment of a quota to a board that is using up the numbers faster than other boards.

In North Dakota, one local board was found to have 294 as the lowest lottery number: Those states, along with Utah and California, are reported to have decided tentatively on systems of evening out the calling of numbers.

If those with low numbers enlist in the Navy, Air Force, Marines, National Guard or Coast Guard to "make the best of their military experience," Pascoe says, the higher lottery numbers will be reached sooner. Similarly, if some with high lottery numbers who are planning to enlist reverse their decision because they think they're fairly immune from being drafted, the vacuum in military personnel will have to be made up by draftees.

Pascoe says that in light of the variables, students shouldn't drop out of school to gain entrance to this year's pool. A recent Selective Service decision makes it mandatory for a full-time student to be classified 2-S, so it is necessary for a student to drop out of school to receive a 1-A classification.

There are other "variables." The re-enlistment rate in all services is down, and the absence-without-leave rate, desertion rate, number of people leaving for Canada and

number of people going to prison for refusing induction are up. Draft resistance is currently the fourth largest crime in the U.S.; nearly 10 per cent of all federal court cases involve the Selective Service. All this diminishes the possibility that a person with a high lottery number will avoid the draft.

But the single most important variable is the Vietnam war. If it is escalated—and Vice-President Agnew said his New Year's Resolution is to "Win the War"—then no one is safe. If it is toned down, then 1970's projected military manpower needs of 225,000 men may be decreased.

The number of inductions for the last nine years reflect to a great extent the U.S. commitment in Vietnam:

1960—86,602
1961—118,586
1962—82,060
1963—119,265
1964—112,386
1965—230,991
1966—382,010
1967—228,263
1968—296,406
1969—265,000

Only President Nixon, who controls the scale of the war, can really tell what draft prospects the future holds—not the local draft board.

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