

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

For more information, contact: Audry Ricketts at 605-773-8242 or [audry.ricketts@state.sd.us](mailto:audry.ricketts@state.sd.us) (South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs)

SD Department of Veterans Affairs  
Secretary Zimmerman July 2017 Column

## DRAFT OR NO DRAFT, THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE SHINES ON!

For the past few weeks, there has been a lot of buzz about the NBA draft. Strategists and newscasters chattered about the likes of Markelle Fultz, Lonzo Ball, Josh Jackson and Jayson Tatum. Who would draft them and what package would be offered? Numerous sports venues use the draft process to allocate talented players to their teams.

As I listened to that buzz word “draft” used over and over, I couldn’t help but think about our military draft. From 1940 until 1973, during both peacetime and periods of conflict, men were drafted to fill vacancies in the United States Armed Forces. At one time, 366 blue plastic capsules containing birth dates were placed in a large glass jar and drawn by hand to assign order-of-call numbers to all men within the 18-26 age range. This process was not quite as spicy as the sports draft used today, but the country was informed of the order of the numbers drawn just as today the media informs us of player drafts.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our soldiers that were drafted would receive \$20 million for a four –five-year contract?

In our military realm, we live in a world where there is no bonus if you get to the front line (play offs). There’s no superbowl ring when you win the war! There is no steak and wine after you complete your mission. No condos! No yachts! No endorsements! No audience/fans for their performance.

I wonder how many professional athletes would chow down on an MRE or live in the conditions our troops do?

For athletes it’s the game, practice, team activities, summer leagues, and community involvement. They are performing in facilities that have controlled environments ---- perhaps worrying about a hotdog wrapper or two that gets on the field or water that gets spilled on the court. Much different than the environment our service members are exposed to – blasts, IED’s, gas fumes, arm-to-arm combat, staring the enemy face-to-face at gunpoint, and deployments away from family for a year at a time or more. Sports drafts take the best of the best and trickle down to the lesser known athletes as the draft process continues, but athletes still receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in their contract.

Today's service members go in on their own for a starting pay of \$24,000. Our men and women in uniform serve to serve! Duty, honor, and country drive the enlistees to defend their country!

Thank you to all the men and women who have proudly stepped up to serve this great country.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs