Q72 – It is important for all men age 18 through 25 to register for the Selective Service. Name one reason why.

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
Men must be registered with the Selective Service from age 18 through age 25. And they are supposed to register within thirty days of turning 18.

Registration simply puts a man on a list in case we need to enlarge the armed forces during an emergency. The Founders viewed a standing army as a danger – and for most of our history our army was tiny. When the Civil War began, states recruited volunteers.

As the death toll climbed and enthusiasm waned, Congress enacted the first draft – for men between 20 and 45 years of age. A wealthy man could avoid the draft by paying a fee that a poor man couldn't afford, or by hiring a substitute to fight in his place.
The backlash against this loophole sparked violence across the North, including a three-day riot in New York City that left more than a hundred people dead.
Congress created the Selective Service System in World War I – and revived the draft the year before we entered World War II – our first peacetime draft. Film footage: "Before the parade, mass draft card burning was urged." A century after the Civil War, Americans again protested the draft during our most unpopular war – Vietnam. More than 200,000 young men dodged the draft or fled the country. President Jimmy Carter later pardoned them.
Today, a well-trained, all-volunteer force of men and women defends the nation and protects our freedoms. Curiously though, only men have to register for Selective Service.