

# Homeschool Military Enlistment just got more Difficult

by Howard Richman

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On October 1, 2004, the military changed its policy regarding military enlistment. For six years, the military has been enlisting homeschool graduates on the same basis as graduates of traditional high schools. In the meantime, the military has been conducting a study of the attrition rates of the homeschool graduates. The results are now in, and they are very bad for homeschooling. Homeschool graduates do not stick in the army as well as the graduates of traditional schools.

There is one ray of hope, however: Those homeschoolers who score above average on the military's aptitude test (the AFQT) have 12-month attrition rates on a par with those of traditional school students. Pennsylvania Homeschoolers Accreditation Agency (with the help of Congressman Joe Pitts) and the Home School Legal Defense Association (with the help of President Bush's White House staff) have been trying to arrange a compromise with the Pentagon so that those homeschoolers who score above average will be accepted on the same basis as the graduates of traditional schools.

The problem is that in many states there are no requirements for either homeschooling or for homeschool graduation. Students who would otherwise drop-out say that they are "homeschooling" because that makes their resumes look better. And there is nothing in many state laws to say that they actually have to do anything in order to "homeschool."

The scores obtained by the military show that they are dealing with a very different sort of homeschooled graduate than those from the organized homeschooling community. These "homeschooled" recruits, on average, score no better on the military's AFQT exam than school graduates, but graduates of the organized homeschooling community usually score above school graduates whenever they take standardized tests. Similarly, the "homeschooled" recruits into the Navy tended to have a higher than average incidence of legal waivers for misdemeanors and felonies than traditional school graduates. I would be very surprised to learn that the children of the organized homeschooling community are arrested more often than school graduates.

There are three tiers of recruits. Tier 1 includes traditional high school graduates and those who have completed one or more semesters of college. Tier 2 includes those who have passed the GED or obtained a correspondence school diploma. And Tier 3 solely includes drop-outs. As a result of the new study, military recruiters have moved homeschool graduates from Tier 1 to Tier 2. At times of war, the military will recruit some Tier 2 recruits in order to fill up their quotas. But when they can be choosy, the military will only recruit Tier 1 recruits. Homeschool graduates who definitely plan a career in the military can move up to Tier 1 simply by completing a full semester of college.

So far the negotiations with the Pentagon have been progressing. Hopefully, homeschool leaders can arrange a compromise with the military that will allow above-average-scoring

homeschool graduates into Tier 1. This would at least help those homeschooled graduates who score well on standardized tests.

However, the best solution to the problem would only occur if other states were to do what we are doing in Pennsylvania -- if homeschooling communities in other states were to adopt standards for homeschool graduation in order to protect the reputation of their diplomas.

[UPDATE! In January 2006, this problem was resolved through a law enacted in Washington as a result of the lobbying efforts of Home School Legal Defense Association. [Click here to read HSLDA's announcement of the law change.](#)]