



Stages of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes

Making the connection
Recognizing personal involvement
Deciding to act
Saying yes
Saying no

1 Making the Connection ~ support for the military conflicts with our peace testimony.

Historically, Brethren, Quakers, Mennonites and Christians from many other denominations have maintained a stance of conscientious objection to participation in war in any form.

This has been most evident in refusal to join military forces. Support for the military conflicts with our peace testimony.

However, the ability of a government to wage war relies less on conscripted soldiers and more on drafted dollars to pay for advanced technology. Close to fifty-percent of federal income taxes collected in the United States are used for military purposes.

2 Recognizing that paying taxes for military purposes directly and personally involves a citizen in militarism.

“It seems artificial to distinguish between being a military warrior and paying government for the implements of war. Is it any wonder that people are agonized by the contradiction of paying for war while praying for peace?”

To insist on personally abstaining from war while paying for it with taxes suggests an ethical inconsistency.

To finance and pay for an activity is to participate in it.”

-Donald Kaufman, *The Tax Dilemma*

3 Deciding to take action.

If you decide it is a contradiction of our Christian witness to say we are opposed to war and at the same time to pay for it, then action is called for. Ultimately, the decision about what steps to take is a personal one.

We seek Christ’s leading and the counsel and support of others in the community of faith who are also struggling with this issue.

Your religious body does not advocate particular methods – that is for individual or family discernment.

“War tax resistance is not a matter of doctrine but the result of an individually changed heart, a matter between each [one] and God.”

-Elaine Crauderueff, *War Taxes, Pendle Hill Pamphlet #286*

4 Saying “Yes”: Positive actions for peace

Being a positive witness for peace and justice complements saying ‘no’ to militarism. Find ways to affirm life and work toward a just and peaceful society.

Christians are called to protect the disadvantaged, the marginalized, the suffering. Massive military budgets absorb resources needed to create an harmonious and healthy social climate

These are a few ways to say “Yes!”

- Explore your beliefs, the role of conscience in your life, and your motivations for action. Write a statement of conscience. For an outline of steps to help the process see consciencestudio.com
- **Increase your contributions to religious, charitable, and peace organizations.** Increasing contributions can decrease your tax liability. Donate as much or more, for peace as you pay for war.
- **Adjust your lifestyle and priorities so that you can live below the taxable level.** For more information, see resources at National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee: www.nwtrcc.org.
- **Work for passage of the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund bill.** Legislation for this
 - bill has been introduced in each Congress since 1972 to permit conscientious objectors to war to have their federal income taxes directed to a special fund for projects that enhance peace. To learn how to join this effort learn about the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund: www.peacetaxfund.org
 - **Join or form a support group.** A support group in your community offers opportunity for prayer, study, discernment, mutual support and action with others who are struggling to live faithfully in a militarized society. You can find some groups under “Contact” at nwtrcc.org.
 - **Witness to your faith by volunteering:**
 - ☑ **Become involved in conflict mediation, peacemaking in your school system or community.** Contact your community mediation agency, and your local school district to see about a local program. If no local program, see about a training:
 - **Conflict Resolution Information Source** crinfo.org
 - **Creative Response to Conflict** crc-global.org
 - **Mennonite Central Committee** mcc.org/learn/what/peace
 - ☑ **Short term opportunities abound** for workcamps, peace and solidarity tours, accompaniment program, and volunteer service.
 - **Christian Peacemaker Teams** cpt.org
 - **Mennonite Central Committee** mcc.org
 - **American Friends Service Committee** afsc.org
 - **Quaker United Nations Office** quno.org
 - **Friends Committee on National Legislation** fcnl.org
 - **Friends Workcamps** williampennhouse.org/WilliamPennQuakerWorkcamps
- ☑ **Specific projects to increase communication, justice and trust or to meet human needs** can be found through many of these organizations:
 - **Church of the Brethren** brethren.org
 - **Mennonite Central Committee** mcc.org
 - **American Friends Service Committee** afsc.org
 - **Fellowship of Reconciliation** forusa.org
 - **International Fellowship of Reconciliation** ifor.org
- ☑ **Internships are also available from many of these faith organizations**
 - **Quaker United Nations Office** quno.org/opportunities
 - **Friends Committee on National Legislation** fcnl.org/updates/summer-internship-33

5 Saying “No”: opposing taxes for military purposes

Ending one’s own contribution to the war system is a consistent step to take along with positive actions for peace. Working for a long-term change does not relieve anyone of responsibility for the present. Expressing conscientious objection to military taxation can be done in many ways.

Seek to discern your calling. Be aware of potential consequences, especially when you choose steps which are not legal. Prayerful consideration of alternatives within a context of supportive community is encouraged.

Some means for military tax witness are:

- **Support the war tax resistance of others** by participating in a resisters’ penalty fund. For more information contact: War Tax Resisters Penalty Fund, 1036 N. Niles Ave, South Bend, IN 46617, wtrpf.org.
- **Refuse to pay the federal tax on local telephone bills.** For updated information on this tax, see the website for National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee. nwtrcc.org/programs-events/hang-up-on-war/
- **Pay federal income taxes under protest.** Write “paid under protest” on your check and enclose a letter of explanation. Send a copy of the letter to your elected officials [see box].
- **Pay the tax due with check made out to a government agency other than the IRS,** such

as the Dept. of Health and Human Services, where they prefer their money is spent. Checks written to any agency end up in the general fund. Some protesters have experience of the checks being cashed. Share the story of your witness with your congressional representatives [see box].

- **File your income tax form with IRS, correctly reporting your total tax liability** without writing comments on the tax form itself. A letter enclosed giving your reasons for conscientious refusal of symbolic amount may then be copied to the addresses above, and others such as your congregation.

In addition, act on one of the following:

- Refuse to pay a symbolic amount of the tax due,**

OR

- Refuse to pay the military portion of the tax due.** The Friends Committee on National Legislation analyses the military budget. fctl.org War Resisters League produces an annual pie chart flyer showing military spending percentages. warresisters.org/resources

OR

- **Refuse to pay the entire tax,** recognizing that a large percentage of any payment will be spent for military purposes.
- **Redirect your unpaid military tax or symbolic withholding** to a community justice or peace organization, a war tax resistance alternative fund, a humanitarian or environmental

group, or to UNICEF or another charity.

Many communities organize an April 15/Tax Day witness where pooled resisted taxes are publicly redirected. As a conscientious objector to military taxes you want to make your civil disobedience clear and distinct from tax evasion.

When IRS takes steps to collect, you may want counsel from an experienced war tax resistance organization. Experienced counsel and information about local war resister support groups are available from

**National War Tax Resistance
Coordinating Committee**
800-269-7464

PO Box 50553,

Brooklyn NY, 11215

The website includes a list of counselors: nwtrcc.org

In all of these options, a piece of the discernment is learning about and accepting the possible consequences.

For discernment support, contact your local congregation, faith community or conference.



 **Representative _____,
US House of Representatives,
Washington DC, 20515**

 **Senator _____,
US House of Representatives,
Washington DC, 20510**

 **President, The White House,
Washington DC 20500**

Stages of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxes

"Do not usurp the judgment and kingdom of Christ, for Christ alone is the ruler of conscience, and besides God there is none other. Let God be your Emperor in this matter and God's holy word your edict, and you will soon have enough of storming and slaying. You must harken to God above the emperor, and obey God's Word more than that of the emperor. "

Menno Simons, 1539

"Therefore we, as his disciples, desire with all diligence to follow and perform his command, and not to oppose the government in this. But where taxes are demanded for the special purpose of going to war, massacring and shedding blood, we give nothing. This we do neither out of malice nor obstinacy but in fear of God, that we make not ourselves partakers of other men's sins. "

Peter Ridemon, 1565

"To refuse the active payment of a tax which our Society generally paid was exceedingly disagreeable, but to do a thing contrary to my conscience appeared yet more dreadful. When this exercise came upon me, I knew none under like difficulty, and in my distress I besought the Lord. "

John Woolmon, 1755

*It's been said in many,
many ways.*

"For the sake of my four children and my grandchildren, I can no longer participate in this madness which, in the words of Dwight Eisenhower, is 'spending the sweat of our labors, the genius of our scientists and the hopes of our children. ' ... I continue to believe that God calls us to seek security in the love of Christ and not in gods of metal. It is a violation of the law of love to build and use weapons of destruction in the name of national security. Our souls are hungering for a Spirit of Love."

Patricia Washburn, 1988

"We call on congregations to place high priority on study and discussion of war tax resistance, including Biblical examination of the Christian responsibility to civil authority. Further, we ask our members to consider the refusal to pay a portion of their taxes used for militarism. We also affirm that open, non-evasive withholding of war taxes is a legitimate witness to our conscientious intentions to follow the call of discipleship to Jesus Christ. "

Church of the Brethren
Annual Conference, 1980

"We recognize as a valid witness the conscientious refusal to pay a portion of taxes required for war and military efforts. Such refusal, however, may not be pursued in a spirit of lawlessness nor for personal advantage but may be an occasion for constructive response to human need. "

Mennonite Church General
Assembly
Statement on Militarism and
Conscription, 1979

"We are accountable to God for the use of our financial resources and should protest the use of our taxes in the promotion and waging of war. We stand by those who feel called to resist payment of that portion of taxes being used for military purposes."

General Conference
Mennonites, 1971

"More people are conscientious objectors than would explicitly identify themselves or be recognized as such. Unfortunately, our movement has the tendency to treat conscientious objection as something over which people of a certain affiliation (religious pacifists, etc.) have ownership. This tendency has limited the appeal of our work and has caused us to set our sights rather narrowly. In the present societal context of proliferating violence, conscientious objection may be more relevant than ever. "

Harold Jordan
American Friends Service
Committee, 1995

Early versions of Stages were produced as early as the 1970s. Since then, it has been kept in production by Friends, Mennonites and Brethren, working in partnership.

This 2017 update includes up-to-date organizational and contact information. Stages is available online at nwtrcc.org (click on "Downloadable Flyers" under the Resources menu). Copying by individuals is allowed with attribution included.

Questions about Stages can be emailed to National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org.