

Military: Many Americans unfit to serve

WASHINGTON (AP) - Uncle Sam wants YOU, that famous Army recruiting poster says. But does he really? Not if you're a Ritalin-taking, overweight, Generation Y couch potato — or some combination of the above.

As for that fashionable "body art" that the military still calls a tattoo, having one is grounds for rejection, too.

With U.S. casualties rising in wars overseas and more opportunities in the civilian work force from an improved U.S. economy, many young people are shunning a career in the armed forces. But recruiting is still a two-way street — and the military, too, doesn't want most people in this prime recruiting age group of 17 to 24. Of some 32 million Americans now in this group, the Army deems the vast majority too obese, too uneducated, too flawed in some way, according to its estimates for the current budget year.

"As you look at overall population and you start factoring out people, many are not eligible in the first place to apply," said Doug Smith, spokesman for the Army Recruiting Command.

Some experts are skeptical.

Previous Defense Department studies have found that 75 percent of young people are ineligible for military ser-

vice, noted Charles Moskos of Northwestern University. While the professor emeritus who specializes in military sociology says it is "a baloney number," he acknowledges he has no figures to counter it.

"Recruiters are looking for reasons other than themselves," said David R. Segal, director of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland. "So they blame the pool."

The military's figures are estimates, based partly on census numbers. They are part of an elaborate analysis the military does as it struggles each year to compete with colleges and companies for the nation's best and brightest, plan for future needs and maintain diversity.

The Census Bureau estimates that the overall pool of people who would be in the military's prime target age has shrunk as American society ages. There were 1 million fewer 18- to 24-year olds in 2004 than in 2000, the agency says.

The pool shrinks to 13.6 million when only high school graduates and those who score in the upper half on a military service aptitude test are considered. The 30 percent who are high school dropouts are not the top choice of today's professional, all-volunteer and increasingly high-tech military force.

Other factors include:

- the rising rate of obesity; some 30 percent of U.S. adults are now considered obese.

- a decline in physical fitness; one-third of teenagers are now believed to be incapable of passing a treadmill test.

- a near-epidemic rise in the use of Ritalin and other stimulants to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Potential recruits are ineligible for military service if they have taken such a drug in the previous year.

Doctors prescribe these drugs to about 2 million children and 1 million adults a month, according to a federal survey. Many more are believed to be using such stimulants recreationally and to stay awake longer to boost academic and physical performance.

Other potential recruits are rejected because they have criminal histories and too many dependents. Subtract 4.4 million from the pool for these people and for the overweight.

Others can be rejected for medical problems, from blindness to asthma. The Army estimate has subtracted 2.6 million for this group.

That leaves 4.3 million fully qualified potential recruits and an estimated 2.3 million more who might qualify if given waivers on

some of their problems.

The bottom line: a total 6.6 million potential recruits from all men and women in the 32 million-person age group.

In the budget year that ended last September, 15 percent of recruits required a waiver in order to be accepted for active duty services — or about 11,000

people of some 73,000 recruited.

Most waivers were for medical problems. Some were for misdemeanors such as public drunkenness, resisting arrest or misdemeanor assault — prompting criticism that the Army is lowering its standards.

This year the Army is trying to recruit 80,000 people;

all the services are recruiting about 180,000.

And about the tattoos: They are not supposed to be on your neck, refer to gang membership, be offensive, or in any way conflict with military standards on integrity, respect and team work. The military is increasingly giving waivers for some types of tattoos, officials said.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

KCEP deserves to be heard

Dear Sentinel-Voice:

It was indeed good to read your "Our View" in your March 10 issue, you correctly pointed out the value that KCEP, community radio station FM 88.1, has brought to African-Americans and the broader community in Nevada as a whole, but KCEP did not do this alone.

The African-American community has made KCEP what it is today. Over the years, African-Americans have spent close to a million dollars per year supporting KCEP's fundraisers and food and toy drives; many more Black businesses and churches underwrite on KCEP, bringing in major money for this radio station.

So, the question is who has the right to sell KCEP and leave, as you well put it, "a gaping hole in the Black community."

Is it the same people who have made bad decisions for E.O.B. over the past several years? Is it the same people who continue to get rebuked by the private and public systems for losing federal contract after contract? Is it this same inept management that runs E.O.B. that now wants to squander the riches and success of KCEP, which the people built to benefit themselves and grant themselves job security for the foreseeable future?

Neither the Black community nor the staff of KCEP should be sacrificed to give job security to the management of E.O.B. I might add that the Clark County Commission has said nothing regarding giving E.O.B. \$250,000.

The fact of the matter is that only one person on the commission has called for the sale of KCEP in order for E.O.B. to receive that money, and that commissioner, Yvonne Atkinson Gates, does not live in

the area but she represents the area, which helps to explain how out of touch she is with the community that voted her into office.

If E.O.B. is to be saved — without selling the radio station — major decisions must be made quickly to help restore the credibility of the organization in the eyes of the broader taxpaying community.

The first decision should be that all management over the other civic programs should immediately receive a 25 percent to 30 percent pay cut to help save money for the organization and to be truly compensated for what they are worth.

Also, the political, civic and religious leaders in the Black community should summon either the governor or the attorney general, or both.

They should ask them to (1) block E.O.B. management from making any more rash decisions like those that have been proven to be a detriment to the community, (2) retire or fire the entire board of directors and management, and (3) temporarily, for six months to a year, hire a lone business person, someone who has a track record of managing a business with a budget of at least \$20 million and understands what the community has invested in KCEP.

E.O.B. will never have any credibility until African-Americans can, for once, show the broader taxpaying community that we are willing and able to hold our own accountable just as they do theirs.

KCEP is worth fighting for, and just because it is Black persons calling for the shut down of KCEP and not White persons, does not mean we shouldn't fight to keep what the people have built — the people's station.

Eugene Sloane

Immigration

(Continued from Page 6)

always been annoying at different times of history. "It is staggering for the federal government to stifle our spiritual and pastoral outreach to the poor, and to impose penalties for doing what our faith demands of us," Mahony said in a letter he sent to President George W. Bush.

Mahony also wrote a letter to U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a Senate Judiciary Committee member. Feinstein had spoken against a worker's program that went beyond agricultural workers.

Mahony said the guest worker program should be expanded beyond agricultural workers and that there should be some opportunity for those workers to become citizens without having to go back to their own country and wait for a decade or more.

"The whole concept of punishing people who serve immigrants is un-American," Mahony said in earlier interviews. "If you take this to its

logical, ludicrous extreme, every single person who comes up to receive Holy Communion, you have to ask them to show papers. It becomes absurd, and the church is not about to get into that. The church is here to serve people. We're not about to become immigration agents."

"It all starts with the dignity of the human person for us," Tamberg said.

The Los Angeles Archdiocese is the largest in the country with 288 parishes and 5 million members. "The underlying basis for our service to others, especially the poor, is the example, words, and actions of Jesus Christ in the Gospels," Mahony said in his letter to the president. "St. Matthews Gospel does not simply invite us to serve others in the name of Jesus, but offers such service as a requisite to belonging to the Kingdom of God."

Virginia Gaglianone writes for WAVE News.

meaning roles. That racial integrity thing has always pitted Black artists against those who financed their production, and the pain is that they could count on our support back then. When will we break the chain of this form of oppression? We need more collective action by Blacks in Hollywood, not only to reject demeaning roles, but to produce, finance and distribute positive images of Black people and Black moviegoers — not to support negative images. Maybe then the Academy will have alternatives to awarding Halle Berry as a slut, Denzel as a corrupt cop and Terrence as a pimp.

Ron Walters is the director of the African-American Leadership Institute.

Walters

(Continued from Page 11)

financiers count on is the support of the Black public, especially the young Blacks.

I was barely born when "Hi-Hat" Hattie McDaniel, born in my home town of Wichita, Kan., won the first Black academy award in February of 1940. But her role as "Mammy" in the movie "Gone With The Wind" did not make all the hometown folks proud, and the debate regarding her having accepted demeaning roles reverberated long past my adulthood.

That is why, when I came to know about the life of my favorite singer, Billy Eckstine, I was exceedingly proud to discover that one of the reasons his career did not blossom in Hollywood is that he wouldn't accept de-