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HEADLINE: Some people fear the military draft will be reinstated

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BODY:

SUSAN MCGINNIS, anchor:

The US military is so busy these days, some experts say the only way the Pentagon can meet its commitments is by bringing back the draft. There are a lot of parents who don't want to hear about that. Richard Schlesinger reports.

Unidentified Children: (In unison) Bye, Mrs. Cocco.

RICHARD SCHLESINGER reporting:

Beverly Cocco has spent most of her life protecting children in Philadelphia.

Ms. BEVERLY COCCO (Pennsylvania Voter): (Directing traffic) Hold on a second. They're not paying attention.

SCHLESINGER: She usually worries about other people's kids.

Ms. COCCO: Do all your homework.

Do you want to get your sister?

Where's your mommy?

SCHLESINGER: But as Election Day approaches, it's her own two grown sons who Beverly is most worried about.

Ms. COCCO: I go to bed every night and I pray, and I actually get sick to my stomach. I'm very worried. I'm scared. I'm absolutely scared. I'm petrified.

SCHLESINGER: Beverly is petrified about a military draft, and she's not alone. Mass e-mails are circulating among worried parents. But neither President Bush nor John Kerry has said he will reinstitute the draft. In fact, they both say they will not.

Senator JOHN KERRY (Democratic Presidential Candidate): I will give us a foreign policy that absolutely makes it unnecessary to have a draft for this country.

SCHLESINGER: Kerry says he'll try to get allies of the US to send troops that could relieve American soldiers in Iraq. The Bush administration says that is pure fantasy. The president wants to train more Iraqi troops to take over for the Americans.

President GEORGE W. BUSH: The war on terror will continue. It's going to take awhile. And no, we don't need a draft.

SCHLESINGER: But Beverly's not buying it. She's a Republican, but she's also a single-issue voter.

Would you vote for a Democrat?

Ms. COCCO: Absolutely. I would vote for Howdy Doody if I thought it would keep my boys home and safe.

SCHLESINGER: In fact, there are at least three votes in this house riding on the draft: Beverly's and her sons', Carmen and Nick.

Are you guys worried about being drafted?

Mr. CARMEN COCCO (Beverly's Son): Sure.

Mr. NICK COCCO (College Senior): Yeah. It's the talk. The talk's there. And though people aren't actually coming out and saying it, it's there.

SCHLESINGER: The machinery for a draft is already in place, and the acting director of Selective Service believes he could start drafting people quickly.

Mr. JACK MARTIN (Selective Service System): I think that we could do it in less than six months if we got the call.

SCHLESINGER: This time, there would be no long deferments for college students, and a lot more people could be eligible for the draft than ever before. Men and women aged 18 to 26 could be called up. Of course, there hasn't been a draft since 1973. But that's not much comfort to Beverly Cocco.

Ms. COCCO: (Directing traffic) All right. Come on.

SCHLESINGER: So she's keeping a sharp eye on the political traffic. She's a Bush supporter today, but if she doesn't like what she hears between now and November, Beverly could easily cross over.

Ms. COCCO: So good to see you.

SCHLESINGER: In Philadelphia, I'm Richard Schlesinger for Eye on America.

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