

The Unethical Right to Decline a Promotion Board.

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The Unethical Right to Decline a Promotion Board

Given that in today's Army, with slipping retention rates and numerous conflicts across the globe, it's imperative that the most qualified senior noncommissioned officers (NCO) lead and train the Army's future leaders. Under these circumstances, is it ethical for Master Sergeants (MSG) to decline having their records reviewed for promotion to Sergeant Major (SGM)? Is it ethical for SGMs to decline having their records reviewed for appointment to Command Sergeant Major (CSM)? Using the Army values, I am going to show why I believe it is unethical to decline a promotion board to SGM or appointment to CSM.

Before each decentralized promotion board to SGM and appointment to CSM, MSGs are given the opportunity to decline having their records reviewed for promotion. Some may say this is good. Who wants to promote someone, if they didn't want to be promoted? I disagree for two reasons. First, I would argue that it is better to promote someone who doesn't wish to be promoted than promoting someone who is less qualified. Secondly, by declining the promotion board, NCOs are not upholding the Army values.

Every year the Army is directed to promote a certain number of eligible Soldiers to SGM and appointment to CSM. Promotion boards rate the eligible NCOs using a number system from 0 to 54. The higher the number, the more qualified the NCO is for the promotion. When the number of NCOs to be promoted is released, the board will start by selecting the NCO with the highest number and continue counting backwards until they've met the promotion requirement. When a highly qualified MSG or SGM declines, it increases the chances of promotion for less qualified NCOs. To clearly picture this, let's suppose that every NCO that declined still had their

record reviewed. The panel is instructed to promote ten NCOs to the rank of SGM. Three of the top ten have declined the board. Once the panel pulls the NCOs records from the stack because they declined consideration, less qualified NCOs will move up, improving their chances for promotion. This example showed how the Army could possibly promote a less qualified NCO to SGM or appointment to CSM.

The Army stresses that Soldiers live by the Army values. As NCOs it is our duty to uphold these values. The Army values are described using the acronym L.D.R.S.H.I.P. This acronym represents: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. When NCOs choose to decline, they have gone against the very values they uphold. I will illustrate this by using the Army's definition of each term. This will also show why it is unethical to decline.

Loyalty: Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other Soldiers. When NCOs decline a promotion board they are not being loyal to other Soldiers by not giving them the best possible leadership they can have. By declining the board they have hurt the Army by not allowing it the opportunity to promote the most qualified from all eligible NCOs. A NCO's loyalty is shifted to his or her own agenda once he or she has chosen to decline.

Duty: Fulfill your obligations. It is unethical for NCOs to decline a promotion board if they are putting the Nation's welfare ahead of their own. The Nation may need the NCOs at the next higher level. By allowing the option of declining, the Army may possibly be promoting the less qualified NCOs for the job.

Respect: Treat people as they should be treated. It is unethical for NCOs to continually train and mentor their soldiers so they can be promoted, while at the same time declining their own promotion board. The impression this could leave in a junior soldier's mind is that the ranks

of SGM and CSM are not worth achieving, or do as I say and not as I do.

Selfless Service: *Put the welfare of the nation, the Army, and subordinates before your own.* When NCOs decline a promotion board they are looking out for their own welfare. The Army has invested time and money in training its NCOs as they progress through the ranks. The Army has done this so it can have highly trained future leaders. Is it ethical for NCOs to put their own agenda ahead of the Army's? Perhaps, but only if they have decided they are no longer going to be in the Army.

Honor: *Live up to all the Army's values.* It is unethical for NCOs to deny the Army the opportunity of promoting them into a position, where they can best serve the Army's needs.

Integrity: *Do what's right – legally and morally.* Integrity is not only what one says but what one does. NCOs dedicated themselves to serving the nation as part of the Army's team when they took the Oath of Reenlistment. When NCOs decline a promotion board they have to be honest with themselves by asking the question, am I still doing everything I possibly can to help the team? By declining the board the answer can only be no. They have made a decision to no longer support the Army team.

Personal Courage: *Face Fear, Danger, or Adversity (Physical or Moral).* Moral courage is doing what is right when it doesn't fit your personal agenda. The Army has to be able to promote the most qualified NCOs for SGM and appointment to CSM. When senior NCOs decline promotion boards, they have taken that opportunity away.

America needs and deserves the finest SGMs and CSMs to train, mentor, and lead its Soldiers in defending the Nation. To accomplish this, SGMs and CSMs should be the most qualified and experienced NCOs in the Army. Many highly trained NCOs will decline a promotion board with 6 years left to retirement. Is this ethical? It is if you want the Army to choose from a pool that is only three quarters full. Some may think senior NCOs should be

given the opportunity to decline so their children can finish school. That's nice for the family but the Army is an organization whose mission is to defend this Nation. The senior NCOs who decline so their children can stay in school are no longer supporting the needs of the Army.

The original questions asked if it is ethical for Master Sergeants to decline having their records reviewed for promotion to Sergeant Major, or Sergeants Major for appointment to Command Sergeant Major. I've shown how I believe it is unethical to decline a promotion board to SGM or appointment to CSM while upholding the Army values. To eliminate the possibility of senior NCOs making an unethical decision, the Army should no longer give the option to decline any promotion board. It should only give NCOs selected for promotion the option to leave the Army within six months, if they elect to not accept the rank of SGM or CSM.