

## *SUSAN ESTRICH: What is JAMRS?*

*This is a syndicated column. These are often posted before appearing in the paper and with minimal editing.  
copyright, Creators Syndicate*

The government sent my son a \$2 bill. And they promised him another \$5 if he would spend 15 minutes filling out a survey.

If you ask me, they should spend the money on young men and women with untreated Traumatic Brain Injuries.

The envelope said JAMRS. I thought it must be some engineering school we'd never heard of. My son is a senior in high school. He scored at the very top on all the math tests and checked engineering as his interest. He gets more mail than you could imagine. My daughter did equally well in English, but never got this kind of mail. Now that he's narrowed down his choices, most of it gets tossed.

JAMRS? I looked at both sides of the envelope. No explanation. When he opened it, the \$2 bill fell out. Forget about a penny for your thoughts.

The survey was a dead giveaway. Had he considered a career in the military? Did he come from an area with high unemployment? Was he concerned about the cost of a higher education? Was he worried about his job prospects? What would his parents say if he told them he was interested in the military? If he were interested, which branch would it be?

Me, I kept looking to see who JAMRS was. They never said. Not on the front, not on the letter to give to your parents if you were under 18, nowhere.

It all rubbed me wrong. The government doesn't need to pay my son \$7 for his opinion. Frankly, they can't afford to.

They don't need to ask him what I think. I'll tell them. For free.

When I got to my computer and Googled JAMRS, I learned that it was the "Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies." But of course.

How about some English and some honesty here? If you want kids to put their lives on the line, tell them who you are. JAMRS "conducts marketing efforts -- under the Today's Military brand -- to enhance and extend the individual Services' communications efforts with a variety of branding and advertising initiatives."

The "Today's Military brand"? Is serving your country a brand? Do we need branding initiatives to "market" service? Are these people trying to turn us off, or is it just by accident? I have nothing but respect for young people who choose to serve in the military. In my experience, it's a choice that is certainly affected by economic conditions and educational opportunities (the primary subject of the survey). But at its core -- and the reason I respect it so much -- it's a choice to serve this country. It's about patriotism and love of country.

Why is it being “sold” behind an unknowable acronym for an organization that makes it sound like what’s involved is a choice between soaps or cereals?

Where is the dignity in paying kids seven bucks to check off some answers?

Where is the pride, the respect?

If the Department of Defense has cash to burn in sending out who knows how many \$2 bills to young people, why not spend it taking care of the young people who already said yes and came home suffering serious long-term injuries that, according to media reports, are going undiagnosed and untreated? If the JAMRS folks want to enhance the conversation with parents about service, which is what their website says, why not do so by promising to treat our kids as the precious and irreplaceable lights of our lives that they are?

On the other hand, if they think they’re better off hiding behind some marketing acronym, not to mention throwing cash money around, then all the branding in the world won’t help our military fulfill its mission.

JAMRS? No thanks.

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/406107/carol-boone/2010-10-06/susan-estrich-what-jamrs>