Constituent Service, Agency Decision Making, and Legislative Influence on the Bureaucracy in the Post-Civil War Era

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between members of Congress, constituents, and the bureaucracy in the period roughly bookending the turn of the twentieth century. While most accounts of this era describe a transformation of the bureaucracy attributed to increasing independence arising from civil service reforms enacted in 1883 and expanded in subsequent years, I demonstrate that bureaucrats continued to decide cases with political considerations in mind and that increasingly career-minded members of Congress intensified their efforts to influence the bureaucracy as the appeal of personal-vote activities grew. The analysis draws from the life histories of a sample of more than 35,000 Union Army veterans, many of whom interacted repeatedly with the executive agency that administered their pensions. The results shed light on previously unexplored issues related to the nascent civil service and its relationship with Congress during the era in which the foundations of modern congressional careers were laid and speak to enduring questions about representation, casework, and legislative influence on the bureaucracy.

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One of the central storylines of American politics in the postbellum period—from the close of the Civil War through the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era—is the radical transformation of the bureaucracy from patronage-based, clerical service to increasingly autonomous and, on occasion, even innovative administration. While the precise timing of this evolution, and its consistency across departments of the executive branch, has been the subject of much recent scholarship, we know relatively little about the ways in which the trio of inter-relationships between members of Congress (MCs), the bureaucracy, and ordinary citizens were impacted. Despite a wealth of available archival material, the changing nature of inter-branch and constituency-oriented politics dealing with matters at the level of ordinary citizens has been left largely unexplored.

This paper begins to address this void in our understanding of the roots of modern politics. In examining foundational questions about representation and agency decision making, and doing so with data that is difficult to obtain even for the contemporary era, the findings speak to broad topics that are of interest well beyond the confines of this historical epoch. What was the nature of political influence on the bureaucracy? As members of Congress became increasingly career-oriented and sought opportunities to enhance their reelection prospects in the late 1800s, how did their interactions with constituents and bureaucrats change? When (and how) did legislators intervene on behalf of constituents pressing claims before a bureaucratic agency? Following enactment of the Pendleton Act and the advent of the merit system in the civil service in 1883, how did the bureaucracy’s relationship with the legislature, as well as its consideration of political context, evolve? More specifically, how did agencies respond to direct congressional intervention on individual claims? Each of these questions touches, of course, on wide-ranging matters of representation, congressional influence over the bureaucracy, and other issues that continue to be prominent today.
I pursue these inquiries in a domain that lends itself to systematic study. As the largest bureaucracy in Washington throughout much of the postbellum period, the Bureau of Pensions held enormous responsibility for administering an early forerunner to the modern social welfare state—pensions for Union Army (UA) veterans and their dependents. Pensions were the leading category of expenditure in the federal budget for a number of years, and recipients were distributed throughout the country and in every congressional district. In terms of the scope of direct contact between ordinary citizens and the federal government on a recurring basis, the Pension Bureau was probably second only to the Post Office. I will argue that despite the prevailing conception that civil service reform produced a more autonomous bureaucracy that became increasingly insulated from congressional influence, the agency persisted in administering benefits with an eye to political considerations, and over time members of Congress only intensified their engagement with the agency. One change that did occur reveals itself in the subject of influence—legislators moved beyond the traditional focus on patronage matters dealing with clerical appointments and began to play a more direct role in constituent cases that were pending before the Bureau. While such behavior on the part of MCs certainly occurred before this era, the dominant mode of MC-bureaucratic interaction that emerged in this period—characterized by an increase in intervention and apparent responsiveness on the part of bureaucrats—contrasts starkly with the conventional wisdom on the era.

Toward this end, the paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I briefly situate this work in the extant literature describing the bureaucracy and inter-branch relations in the postbellum era. I then turn to a discussion of the politics of UA pensions, which is followed by the theoretical framework that guides the analysis. The fourth and fifth sections review the data and present the analysis, respectively, while the final section concludes by highlighting the key findings and identifies some questions for future examination.
Congress and the Bureaucracy in American Political Development

Accounts of the changing nature of the bureaucracy in the post-Civil War United States typically focus on congressional and executive dynamics, with one branch working to mold the decisions and operations of executive agencies to the political disadvantage or against the policy objectives of the other.¹ Recent scholarship has also advanced a narrative in which bureaucrats with reputational diversity exercise, on occasion, a degree of independent and innovative administration.² Another body of literature considers changes in the bureaucracy arising from enactment of the Pendleton Act and the gradual expansion of the classified service.³ In each case, studies of the relationship between the branches center mostly on aggregate policy—how programmatic decisions with regard to the administration of public law get made. However, most accounts overlook the relationship between the branches, and particularly the interplay between MCs and bureaucrats, when it comes to the day-to-day work of administration—that is, the case-by-case decision making on individual-level matters pending before bureaucratic agencies. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that, prior to the civil service reforms, one might assume a natural deference to political factors resulting in advantage for the party in power.

But was such political influence present? And if so, how did it change in light of the increasing professionalization of the bureaucracy and growing careerism in Congress? The federal government prior to the 1880s is often portrayed as a distributive agent whose main task was the distribution of government largesse. The spoils system involved not only the delivery of government jobs but also preferential treatment of land claims, patents, and veterans’ pensions—all with an eye to partisan incentives. Thus, the levers of government were used by elected officials of the party in power to bring

¹ A sampling of this large body of work includes Skowronek (1982), Shefter (1994), Sanders (1999), Kornell and McDonald (1999), and James (2000).
² This view is presented in its fullest form by Carpenter (2001a); see also the exchange between Carpenter (2001b) and Kornell (2001).
³ Among the most prominent works are Van Riper (1958) and Johnson and Libecap (1994).
federal goodies back home. Over time, as the story goes, presidents and MCs lost the prerogative to control appointments and bestow preferential treatment on individual citizens with claims pending before the government as the bureaucracy became professionalized. Yet there has been little systematic treatment of the extent and temporality of these dynamics.

The sorts of activities conjured up by the preceding discussion—elected officials working for the benefit of constituents pressing a claim before the government—might be characterized by modern observers as “casework.” The classic treatments of electorally-minded MCs by Mayhew (1974) and Fiorina (1989) provide compelling accounts of the motivations for post-World War II members to pursue such activities. Yet an open question remains as to the degree to which nineteenth century legislators were influenced by the “electoral connection” (Swift 1987-88). Although scholars have demonstrated the electoral effects of some significant votes (what Mayhew terms position-taking) even in the early decades of the century, there has been little consideration of other aspects of electorally-minded behavior despite the rise in careerism that would eventually usher in the institutionalized Congress (Kernell 1977). Before discussing the motivations for constituency service during the postbellum period, it is necessary to describe the military pension system that will provide the testing ground pursued later in the paper.

The Politics of Union Army Pensions

Since the Revolutionary War, national and state legislatures have faced pressure from veterans, their dependents, and associated interest groups to provide for the well being of those who were disabled by military service or left destitute due to the death of a soldier. The federal government developed a relatively limited pension system for revolutionary soldiers and eventually broadened it to

4 On the effects of position-taking in the nineteenth century, see Bianco, Spence, and Wilkerson (1996) and Carson and Engstrom (2005). Polsby (1968) and Katz and Sala (1996) advance the argument that internal institutional arrangements—such as the seniority and property right norms of the committee system—came about as members sought prolonged service in Congress.
one that was much more reflective of the style and scope of provision to come later in the post-Civil War era (Jensen 2003). In both the Revolutionary and Civil War cases, the clamor for benefits led Congress to expand statutory law to cover more people with increasingly generous pensions in the years following the cessation of conflict. For veterans of the Civil War, what began as a modest system to provide for those disabled in the war expanded rapidly with passage of the Arrears Act in 1879, which offered considerable lump sum payments, and the Dependent Pension Act of 1890, which broadened pensions to those with a disability of any origin save “vicious habits.” The 1890 legislation was interpreted broadly in subsequent years until eventually age alone came to be deemed a disability carrying with it a pension. This interpretation was solidified in executive construction with the Bureau’s Order No. 78 in 1904 and enshrined in law by Congress in 1907. Although the veteran population began to decline after the turn of the century, additional laws were passed to provide even more generous benefits in the decades that followed.5

Despite Congress’ tendency to respond favorably with broad programmatic legislation, often motivated by partisan and particularistic interests (Finocchiaro and Jenkins 2008; Skocpol 1992), constituents also pressured MCs to intervene on their behalf in specific cases. Members responded to these demands in one of two ways: through a special act of Congress or in an advocacy role before the bureaucracy. Finocchiaro (2008) describes the considerable extent to which members of Congress introduced and advanced private bills within the legislative branch. These bills proliferated at the turn of the twentieth century, peaking in the 61st Congress (1909-11) with close to 20,000 introduced in the House alone and more than 9,600 pensions enacted by special act of Congress.6

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5 Glasson (1918) provides a detailed historical narrative of U.S. military pensions.
6 As early as the 1st Congress, the House created select committees to deal with private claims, and by 1794 created a standing committee for that purpose (Schamel et al., 1989: Ch. 6). Interestingly, Congress’ first appropriations bill funded pensions for veterans of the Revolutionary War (Stewart 1989: 73), and since the earliest days of the Republic members have not hesitated to use special pension acts to skirt public laws in favor of particular claimants.
Members of Congress also became consumed with the cases of their constituents that were pending before the Pension Bureau. The historical record describes these processes in some detail, and also offers a stylized explanation for them—that of the reluctant public servant. By all accounts, MCs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found themselves involved in a significant amount of constituent business. One indicator of the prevalence of service-related activities is the mass of correspondence between MCs and the Pension Bureau. For much of this time period, tens of thousands of written inquiries were made annually at the Bureau by senators and representatives who were chasing down information on an applicant’s status.\(^7\) White’s (1958: 70-84) treatment of congressional business with the executive departments gives a leading role to pensions and pension claims, and suggests that members, not so much by choice as by necessity, spent from one-third to two-thirds of their time on such constituent business (see also La Follette 1913: 84). An exchange reported in the New York Times between two legislators in which one describes an example of a typical letter from a constituent is telling:

“He says, ‘When you go to the Capitol next time please go in the Pension Office and get my pension increase pushed through, and then see if the Fish Commission will give us some trout seed up here. Same time see the Postmaster General and have Nils Swenson made Postmaster at Koday, and if you see him tell Secretary [of Agriculture] Wilson we all up here want plenty new cabbage next spring...That’s all now. Thanking you for past favors, yours, &c.’...[The legislator goes on to say that] lots of folks think the whole Government is under one roof and that I have only to go from one room to another to attend to their business and do up their errands” (Dec. 14, 1905, pg. 8).

In their own words, and according to the conventional wisdom, members of Congress felt burdened by this type of work and may well have preferred to do without the bother.

But the parallel history with regard to individual claims presented to Congress for legislative action is instructive. Despite repeated attempts throughout the nineteenth century to cede claims-related authority on pension matters to judicial bodies, Congress was unable (or perhaps unwilling) to

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7 The Bureau of Pensions received nearly 200,000 written communications from Congress in both 1892 and 1898. One member alone made 7,690 calls upon the Bureau over an eleven-month period in 1892 (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Pensions, 1892, pg. 69).
dispense with the growing mass of private business it faced. Members often stated a conviction that the legislative branch, being constitutionally mandated to oversee spending, could not delegate final authority to another branch. At the same time they frequently observed that the Congress was not well-suited to the examining of evidence, taking of testimony, and other requirements that one associates with proceedings of a judicial nature, particularly since the institution typically carried out these tasks on an *ex parte* basis. So from time to time, special tribunals or commissions were convened to handle large classes of non-pension claims. In 1855, Congress passed legislation establishing the Court of Claims, and the Bowman Act of 1883 and the Tucker Act of 1887 expanded the Court’s jurisdiction and allowed Congress to refer certain matters to the Court for a determination of legal validity and a recommendation for damages to be paid. Final authority rested with Congress, however, as to whether payment would be made and in what amount (Cowen, Nichols, and Bennett 1978).

Interestingly, when given the opportunity to rid itself almost entirely of private matters (particularly pension bills) in the late 1880s, the House stopped short of doing so. From that point forward, the management of private legislation stayed much the same until the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 consolidated jurisdiction in the Judiciary and Foreign Affairs Committees. It was a change in incentives, rather than the reorganization of the committee system, that according to Hill and Williams (1993) brought about the decline in private bills in the post-World War II Congress. Furthermore, the state of affairs by the 1890s served the sectional and partisan interests of many members quite well (Bensel 1984). The pensions that Skocpol (1992: 120) depicts as “fuel for congressional and party patronage” were well within their grasp, while more thorny (and often time consuming) claims were handled, at least initially, outside the institution. And because congressional action was required to finalize and pay claims heard before the courts, Congress could very simply
ignore such claims, which it often did.⁸

In much the same way that legislators might have chosen to relinquish legislative control over private matters, members of Congress might have allowed the executive agencies to move first in handing down a decision on particular cases pending before the bureaucracy. If the case was decided unfavorably, then appeal could be (and often was) made to the claimant’s member of Congress with the hope of passing a private bill that would effectively overturn the agency’s decision. Yet despite this possibility, and as described above, many constituents insisted on calling upon their member of Congress to personally inquire about their pending claim. Often this involved the MC physically visiting (or making a “call”) at the Bureau. Such personal calls were a regular occurrence in the executive departments of Washington, ranging in the tens of thousands per year through the 1880s and totaling more than 1.3 million (or an average of more than 130,000 per year) the following decade.⁹ The unrelenting press of such business occasionally led the Pension Commissioner to report the disruptive and time-consuming nature of congressional calls, which he argued only further slowed the progress of the Bureau in dispensing with the claims that were pending.¹⁰ Yet such complaints fell on deaf ears and MCs continued to press for information and resolution of constituents claims—behavior that, as noted earlier, parallels in many ways modern casework. I turn next to the consideration of the potential factors driving the acceleration in MC activity during this period.

**Patronage Bureaucracy, Congressional Careerism, and the Nature of Representation**

This meddling in the affairs of the Pension Bureau on the part of members of Congress who were in effect interposing themselves in decision making regarding individual cases raises a number of

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⁸ Between February 24, 1905 and March 4, 1915, not a single war claim was paid. Congress went most of the 1890s without any action, as well. See H. Rpt. 85, 1st session, 64th Congress, pg. 4-5.

⁹ These data were collected from the annual reports of the Commissioner of Pensions. Unfortunately, the volume of congressional correspondence was reported only sporadically after 1905.

¹⁰ See, for instance, “The Raum Investigation” *(NYT*, Mar. 9, 1892, pg. 3) and “New Pension Office Rules” *(NYT*, Mar. 13, 1898, pg. 5), as well as the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Pensions* for various years.
questions. First, if the Bureau was the prototypical patronage-rich agency that many accounts maintain (see, e.g., Skocpol 1992 and Carpenter 2001) why would this have been necessary? That is, if supportive clerks at the Bureau could be relied on to make decisions that were in the best interest of MCs and party politicians, or on the other hand if members were serving simply as trustees of their constituents’ business in Washington (as opposed to entrepreneurs looking for credit claiming opportunities), we might expect to see congressional intervention as primarily a function of aggregate pension demand. Although I will return to this matter later, the short answer is that there is some existing evidence that prior to the 1890s the Bureau was overtly political in the distribution of pensions at the individual level. Thus, MCs perhaps had less cause to take an active role in the day-to-day affairs of the Bureau. Many accounts suggest a rising level of professionalization within the Bureau by the mid-1890s with the departure of the last of the overtly political commissioners, and within a decade, as nearly every eligible veteran who wanted a pension should have had one (age alone was considered a disability), it is similarly difficult to imagine what potential positive effect might be produced by the advocacy of a member of Congress (Costa 1998: 164).

Yet as I will show below, it is after the liberalization of the law and the adoption of automatic triggers for increased pension that members of Congress, in the latter part of the first decade of the twentieth century in particular, ratcheted up their activity. So what changed? At the same time that the laws and their implementation were becoming more generous, why did the scope of congressional intervention expand? Also, to what extent did the activities of MCs matter in terms of the subsequent decision making on the part of the Bureau? Presumably, an influence-seeking MC would not make a call if he risked embarrassment at the hands of an unyielding bureaucrat. To begin to answer these questions, it is important to first consider some theoretical expectations for the linkages between MCs, bureaucrats, and constituents.
In considering the modern Congress, Fiorina (1989) argues that we should expect a particular type of behavior on the part a legislature populated by careerists. “First, that the normal activities of its members are those calculated to enhance their chances of reelection... [and], second, that the members would devise and maintain institutional arrangements which facilitate their electoral activities” (39). Perhaps the leading activity that members pursue in this regard is casework, which is essential in building a reputation-based personal vote (Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987). Although Fiorina focuses on the post-World War II era with its comparatively larger federal government, the pension system offered many of the same advantages that modern members have come to enjoy. Playing an ombudsman role is (and was) relatively uncontroversial, with the benefits directly targeted to particular constituents. Furthermore, MCs controlled the budgets of federal agencies then as now, giving bureaucrats good reason to be responsive.

While the principal/agent framework of constituency service and oversight of the bureaucracy has been applied primarily to the modern era, I argue that it also works particularly well in understanding the period examined here, when patronage transitioned into merit-based civil service. The clerks of the Pension Bureau were among the first to obtain job security with the enactment of the Pendleton Act, but this newfound “independence” did not reduce their need to cultivate support among elected officials (particularly in Congress), which would go a long way in affecting their agency’s present and future well-being. In fact, they may well have had more reason to do so in light of the new circumstances. Similarly, the members of Congress who began to make a career out of legislative service had something to gain by playing the ombudsman role in constituency matters that were before the bureaucracy. Thus, my argument departs from the conventional wisdom in the following ways. First, I would expect the Bureau’s adjudication to take account of the political context both before and after civil service reforms—diminishing perhaps only after determination of pension claims became automatic (based on age) rather than subjective (based on degree of disability). Presumably, political
considerations could be both direct, resulting from the intervention of a MC in a pending case, and indirect, with agency discretion being exercised to advance certain claimants based on characteristics such as the partisan complexion of an applicant’s home state or district. It is also possible, if the agency relationship changed, that presidential influence becomes supplanted by congressional influence. Second, if members did, in fact, become more oriented toward personal-vote seeking activities as the period wore on, then despite the apparent lack of need for intervention on what were essentially automatic pension increases shortly after the turn of the century, MCs competing for votes would increasingly engage with the bureaucracy on behalf of their constituents. After all, what better course of action than to claim credit for a benefit that could be delivered with a high degree of certainty?

While there has been no previous systematic study of these questions, historical accounts offer hints of a basis on which to build this case. Anecdotally, members of Congress believed they enjoyed some political prerogative at the Bureau, even well after the civil service reforms of the 1880s. For instance, one progressive House Republican whose influence was diminished due to the dominance of GOP stalwarts after the turn of the century eventually acceded to a constituent’s demand that the two walk across town for a personal call at the office of the Pension Commissioner. In the recounting of the New York Times, “As they walked along the broad graveled path together and approached the main entrance a great thought came to the Congressman. Two large swinging doors confronted him, and staring from each in letters half a foot high was the commanding word ‘Pull.’ ‘You see,’ said the Congressman to his constituent, ‘there is no use of my going in. It takes ‘pull’ to get on here, and you know I’m an insurgent’” (Jan. 29, 1906, pg. 8). Other anecdotal evidence documents a number of investigations into political manipulation in the Bureau, sometimes resulting in dismissals; it also reveals a continuing pattern of influence on the part of the Grand Army of the Republic (the chief interest group representing UA veterans) and observes the frequent presence of both pension attorneys and politicians
in the rooms of the Pension Bureau.\textsuperscript{11} Interestingly, in 1922, an entire section of 28 clerks—directly under the authority of the Deputy Commissioner—was still dedicated to handling claims on which MCs intervened (Weber 1923), demonstrating the long-lasting appeal of this sort of exchange. And finally, Logue and Blanck (2008) have recently documented a distinct racial bias in pension disposition—the fact that the administration of the pension system was not color-blind demonstrates perhaps better than any other piece of evidence the persistent opportunity for bureaucratic discretion.

Data and Methods

The data for this analysis are drawn from the accumulated life histories of Union Army veterans compiled by various federal agencies and now housed in the National Archives. This study is based on a sample of about 35,000 veterans, representing 303 UA companies, whose military, pension, medical, and census records from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were pieced together as part of the \textit{Early Indicators of Later Work Levels, Disease, and Death (EI)} project.\textsuperscript{12} For each veteran, the EI project identifies a host of personal, economic, family, military service, and medical characteristics at various points in his life. A component of this rich history is captured in the official records of the Pension Bureau, which documented every instance in which a veteran formally interacted with the agency by applying for an original or increased pension. These applications often required a medical exam, so repeated applications generated a series of surgeons’ certificates detailing the health of the veteran over his life span. As time passed and old age came to be considered a disability, nearly every

\textsuperscript{11} On the role of the Grand Army Republic, see Ainsworth (1995). In addition to the stories noted earlier, the \textit{New York Times} gives an example of the prominence of pension attorneys and members of Congress in calling for information on pending cases in “Bothered by Congressmen” (Apr. 20, 1892, pg. 2). The \textit{Times} also recounts the influence of clerks, and their ability to steer cases toward positive or negative disposition, in “Aged Clerks Defend Jobs” (Mar. 22, 1906) and “Women on the Pension Board” (Nov. 17, 1905). Aron’s (1987) fascinating account of life in federal offices after the civil service reforms is similarly replete with examples of dubious behavior on the part of clerks.

\textsuperscript{12} These data were produced and are managed by the Center for Population Economics at the University of Chicago (CPE). See Fogel (1993) for an overview of the \textit{Early Indicators} project, and the CPE website for the data and documentation: http://www.cpe.uchicago.edu/unionarmy/unionarmy.html.
living UA veteran had claim to a pension and was likely to be on the rolls. Furthermore, it was official practice in the Pension Bureau to document any congressional intervention in the case of a claimant. Prior to 1898, the name of the MC was recorded in the margin of the application, and from that point forward claim forms were printed with a blank for the name of the applicant’s MC should he make a call at the Bureau. While this particular information was not coded as part by the Early Indicators project due to limitations in the scope of what could be collected and stored when the project was launched, I have made a second pass through a random sample of 1,000 veterans who applied at least once for a pension to ascertain congressional contact as well as other omitted information such as the length of time it took to process the claim. The first pension claim in this sub-sample was filed in 1863 with the last coming in 1932, although the preponderance of claims is observed from 1879 to 1912. This information affords a unique opportunity to trace in a systematic way the changing relationship between constituents, the bureaucracy, and members of Congress over a lengthy period of American history within which major structural changes in the political landscape were occurring.

Because I am interested in various aspects of bureaucratic decision making I will consider an array of dependent variables, each of which requires a particular methodological approach. Ordinary least squares regression will be employed when investigating the dollar value of pensions granted by the Bureau, whereas logit is appropriate in the context of the dichotomous measure of whether an original or increased pension was awarded. Finally, in considering the length of time it took the bureaucracy to dispose of a claim, a hazard model is appropriate—in this case the Cox proportional hazards model

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13 The sub-sample is reflective of the broader 35,000-man sample in all relevant respects. States are represented roughly in proportion to their representation in the living veteran population at the time, more applications are obtained later in the time series as the frequency of applications—typically for increased pension—rose (the average per individual is about seven), and so forth. Collecting the data for the sub-sample involved identifying the soldier and relevant pension certificate numbers in the General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934 (National Archives microfilm publication T288), pulling the pension file from the bureau’s records at Archives I in Washington, DC, and then culling the collected papers for each claimant to link the existing application data from the Early Indicators project to the new material being collected.
because I do not have a particular theoretical or empirical expectation on which to base a parameterization of the baseline hazard with respect to time (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004).

**Analysis**

*Political Factors in Bureaucratic Decision Making*

At the outset, pensions for UA veterans were granted solely on the basis of death or disability attributable to service in the war. Known as the “General Law System,” the initiating legislation established a rating system for degrees of disability that was tied to loss of earning power as measured by inability to perform manual labor. For those soldiers who died in service or as a result of their injuries, pensions were extended to widows and dependents. The first major expansion of the pension system came about in 1879 with the passage of the Arrears Act. This legislation called for the payment of claims to be made retroactive to the date of discharge or death (rather than the date of application for a pension), such that those who filed for a pension (and the pension attorneys who represented them) stood to gain a considerable lump sum payment in their first pension check.

Scholars have argued that around the same time, the process of adjudicating pension claims became politicized, at least in part because of the large backlog generated by the Arrears Act. Essentially, it became impossible for the Pension Bureau to settle all applications in a timely manner, and to the degree that discretion was exercised in choosing where to focus the Bureau’s resources, that discretion was frequently exercised with partisan considerations in mind. For instance, it was not unheard of for the Bureau’s Commissioner to expend his limited resources in places like Indiana and Ohio where elections were sure to be competitive and there was no shortage of union veterans (see, e.g., Sanders 1980, Logue 1992, and Skocpol 1992: 120-124). One of the persistent challenges facing the agency was that it was forced to rely on *ex parte* evidence—medical exams, affidavits, etc.—compiled in or close to the applicant’s hometown. In addition to the clerks in Washington, the boards of examining
surgeons dispersed throughout the country were often drawn from the friendly ranks of partisan supporters, former veterans, and the like.

Thus, while previous scholarship assumes agency decision making followed at least a degree of partisan manipulation, there has been little direct examination. Skocpol (1992) notes the degree to which fraud was uncovered when government examiners probed individual cases—but such investigations were infrequent and failed to thoroughly examine recurrent claims of widespread fraud. In the first stage of my analysis, I investigate the question of partisan administration more directly by examining a large sample of applications. By linking the applications to the partisan context while controlling for a number of factors that are known to influence the disposition of a case, some light can be shed on the extent and timing of political influence on agency decision making.

Previous analysis has grappled with the same question, albeit in a limited fashion and with mixed results. Logue (1992) finds a connection between the proportion of pensioners in a county and its support for the party in the White House in the 1880s—an effect that holds for both Democratic and Republican administrations. In looking at individual pension applications, Costa (1993: 123-124) finds no evidence that the ratio of Republican to Democratic votes in the applicant’s county in the 1898 congressional elections impacted the dollar value of pension awarded. More recently, Blanck and Song (2002) report that applicants from solid Republican states (measured dichotomously) had a better chance of approval and a higher rate of pension throughout the pre-1907 (disability-based) time period, while Logue and Blanck (2008) find that applicants from swing states (also a dichotomous measure) saw an increased odds of success under the General Law system (1862-1890). No treatment of the potential effects of politics has considered the disposition of individual applications using partisan vote shares across a range of elections and presidential administrations to test the conventional wisdom that politics mattered once but was no longer relevant by the mid-1890s.
Here I consider two potential results of partisan influence on the part of the bureaucracy: the
dollar amount of the pension awarded and whether an application was granted or denied. It is
important to note that these data only allow me to speak to political influence once a file was ready for
official action by clerks in Washington—to the degree that politics might have been at work in
generating more favorable surgeons’ reports and accompanying documentation from a claimant’s local
area, the results presented may understate political machinations. The key independent variable is
*State Presidential Vote*, which is measured as the share of the statewide vote received by the
Democratic presidential candidate in the preceding election. To account for known factors that relate
to pension awards, I also include a number of statistical controls. Following previous work, I use a
dummy variable to control for *Poor Health* in that chronic disability was the key factor determining
pension qualification for the pre-1907 period. As old age came to be construed as a pensionable
disability, claimants were frequently not required to be rated by the examining surgeons so I
incorporate the dichotomous measure *No Rating*. After the turn of the century, *Age* came to be the
most significant factor in determining pension awards, and until then applicants often used an *Attorney*
to handle their claim. Finally, under the *General Law* the rules of evidence that applied were much
more stringent (disability had to be traceable to wartime service), but when an award was made it was
much more generous. For this reason, I control for the pension system under which application was
made once the disability law came onto the books in 1890.\(^{15}\)

Table 1 presents the estimates from an OLS regression of pension amount on the variables just
described. The sample is broken down into periods of one-party control of the White House in order to

\(^{14}\) This variable is conceived to tap what Washington bureaucrats would be cognizant of at the time—the degree to
which the state supported the president. It is not clear that clerks (or their superiors) would have a more nuanced
sense of politics at the county or congressional-district level. However, since many clerks were put in office with
the support of a representative or senator, I also employed a measure of the Democratic congressional vote as
well as the Democratic presidential vote at the county level and found similar results.

\(^{15}\) For the construction of the health variables and a detailed discussion of the system of disease rating, see Costa
distinguish the degree to which the bureaucracy may have operated as a political arm of the in-party.

Consistent with the historical record, prior to enactment of the Pendleton Act in 1883 and under Republican Presidents Hayes, Garfield, and Arthur, the more Democratic a state’s vote for president, the lower the level of pension. The effect was modest—varying the presidential vote from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean translates to about a 12 percent change in the level of pension (the median award during this period was $6 per month). Interestingly, even after the clerks of the Bureau were brought under the civil service system, and despite the presence of a Democrat in the White House, during Grover Cleveland’s first term the Bureau seems to have persisted in exhibiting a bias toward applicants in Republican-friendly states. This might be attributed to the fact that it was Republican clerks whose job security was guaranteed and who continued to hold positions that just a few years earlier would likely have been surrendered under a new administration. The estimated effect is about the same at ten percent, although the median pension had risen by that time to $8 per month. Cleveland’s celebrated first-term conflicts with Congress and the veterans’ lobby over private pension bills, to which some attribute partial blame for his failed reelection bid, may well have been his only success in stemming the tide of overly generous pensions based on political support. Beginning with the Harrison administration, the political context of the state no longer appears to enter into the Bureau’s decisions. While the coefficient is negative, it is not statistically significant at conventional levels. While the sign changes in the second Cleveland and subsequent administrations, it does not come close to approaching significant levels there either. The control variables generally behave as expected—early on, those with chronic diseases or physical incapacities receive a more generous pension. This effect diminishes with the passage of time and the transition of the system to one that more closely reflected an old age pension scheme, although those under the General Law system continued to receive more generous awards as expected. Interestingly, in some instances, use of a pension attorney is associated with a lower award. This may be attributable
to attorneys being used by those claimants with cases that are more difficult to prove and/or a past history of refusals, although further analysis of the specifics of these cases is warranted.

The estimates on whether or not an application for an original or increased pension was approved are shown in Table 2. The story line is similar here. While the partisan complexion of the state did not appear to matter under Republican presidents from 1877 to 1884, the pattern favoring applicants from Republican states during the Democratic Cleveland administration of 1885 to 1888 persists and even extends into the Harrison administration. The actual effect is about ten percent of the baseline probability of approval under Cleveland (slightly less than sixty percent) and falls to five percent of the fifty percent baseline under Harrison. By the mid-1890s, the effect dissipates and is not apparent in the White House tenures of McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Here again, the controls more or less display the expected impact. To sum up, in both cases—whether a claimant’s application was allowed as well as the amount of pension awarded—political considerations did seem to be involved to a degree, and that effect carried past enactment of civil service reforms in the early 1880s. However, by 1893 there is no longer evidence that the Bureau took into account the partisan politics of a state when rendering a decision.

The Transition from Constituent Service to Personal Vote Entrepreneurship

The next question I will take up centers on whether, and if so, how, the engagement of MCs with the Pension Bureau evolved as time passed. Did member intervention correspond to the workload of claims pending before the agency, or did the rate of interaction change as members became more oriented toward building an electorally useful portfolio to present to voters. If the latter is true, then we might expect to observe an increase in activity for which credit can be claimed.

Before examining these issues, it is worthwhile to describe the scope of available opportunities for members. Figure 1 presents the number of pension applications filed in each fiscal year from 1875
to 1915. These cutpoints were chosen because, although the dataset includes claims filed earlier and later, the number is small enough (less than 15 percent of the cases) that drawing much in the way of meaningful insights for individual years in the results that follow would be difficult. Original applications are those filed by a claimant who is not currently on the pension roll. Thus, as time passed, comparatively fewer of the total applications filed were original. Not surprisingly, there was a spike in the number of applications each time the pension system was liberalized—most strikingly after the enactment of the Dependent Pension Act of 1890, which offered pensions to any disabled veteran, regardless of whether the disability originated in the war. The effect of the legislation of 1907 (codifying old age alone as a pensionable disability) and 1912 (raising the rate of pension) was primarily to increase the benefits of those already on the rolls.

Figure 2 examines the relationship between the amount of time it took to process claims filed in each year—represented by the median number of days the files in my subsample were pending adjudication—and the rate of intervention by members of Congress. If members of Congress simply responded to constituent concerns about agency decision making, a principal motivation for intervention (and perhaps the most significant) would likely have been a delay in processing. Following enactment of the Arrears Act in 1879 and the later Dependent Pension Act of 1890, there were enormous holdups in decisions by the Bureau. In many cases, well over half of the claimants were left in limbo for a year and sometimes much more. However, not until the mid-1890s do MCs begin intervening in more than ten percent of the pending claims. Then, their intervention rate begins to track closely with the lag in the agency’s disposition of cases until 1903, when it departs radically upward. From 1906 to 1910, members were involved in between 60 and 80 percent of the cases filed with the Bureau, after which their participation rate falls to about twenty percent in 1911 and then around ten percent thereafter. The increased rate of intervention is particularly noteworthy given the 1907 spike in the number of applications, which rose to about 400,000 due to the enactment of the old age pension
legislation. Thus, there seems to be some evidence of a change in the behavior of members with regard to casework, as they moved from being mostly unresponsive to the plight of constituents prior to the 1890s, responsive in the 1890s and early 1900s, and then extraordinarily engaged in the last half of the first decade of the twentieth century.

Of course, the rate of intervention tells only part of the story, as the volume of work is conditioned upon the number of applications received. Figure 3 presents the predicted values from a regression of the actual amount of annual congressional correspondence received in various fiscal years on the product of the total number of applications submitted and the rate of intervention in that particular year. This allows for a rough estimate not only of the degree to which members were intervening in cases, but what that translates to in raw numbers. While I am hesitant to make too much of the extrapolation, it does appear at least reasonable to assume that the uptick after 1905 was not solely in the intervention rate but also in the volume of casework in which members of Congress were engaged.

Figure 4 allows for a more direct examination of the changing nature of both the claims agenda of the Pension Bureau as well as the choices of MCs over the type of claims on which to intervene. The upper left panel shows the proportion of all applications that were made due to an increased degree of disability and the extent to which such claims were advanced by members. The right panel shows the proportion of applications that were seeking an increase in pension that was automatic or due to a recent change in law—notably, neither of these circumstances carried with it the more subjective evaluation of disability level. And finally, the lower left panel indicates the proportion of original claims for first inclusion on the pension roll, which diminished over time for the reasons described earlier. While the “MC” and “No MC” trends are somewhat erratic early in the time series, by 1907 and

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16 The model for extrapolating the correspondence data for 1906-1913 also includes a dummy variable for the period prior to 1881, when contact was considerably lower. The results suggest a slight lag in correspondence from the time of application, and that the average number of MC contacts on these claims was about 1.6.
extending through 1911, and corresponding with the uptick in claims submitted, members engaged much more frequently on claims seeking automatic increase. Their work on automatic increases outstripped these as a proportion of all claims, and came at the expense of more difficult disability-based claims. This would seem to support the view of members who are seeking out low-cost and high-likelihood avenues of influence to market themselves at election time. In sum, the preceding results are at least suggestive of a change in the mode of casework, as members of Congress moved from being relatively uninvolved on pending issues, to following constituent demand, and finally to entrepreneurship in casework.

The fall-off after 1910 also begs explanation. The elections of 1906 and 1908 were more competitive for House Republicans, who lost seats in each case alongside growing heterogeneity in the caucus. They lost majority status to the Democrats in 1910, and during the 62nd Congress the new majority pushed through a further liberalization of pensions. Thus, the appeal of pension work may have declined for many members as it was no longer a clear one-party issue. It is also important to remember that veterans were rapidly dying off, and although the pension rolls stayed reasonably high, it was due to an increasing number of widowers entering the rolls. Further analysis of the congressional, or supply-side, of casework is certainly merited. For one, it would be worthwhile to consider the characteristics of the cases in which members took an active interest relative to those that did not receive such favor. This might reveal more nuances into the motivations that drove members to intervene. Additionally, while the sample is not large, it likely offers enough variation to study the characteristics of the members who took a more active role in pending cases. For many years, the Pension Bureau kept a ledger of every congressional call and letter. That data would be perfectly suited for just such a question, but unfortunately it must be addressed in a more limited way because a Joint
Select Committee on Disposition of Useless Papers was first to the draw and unfortunately approved dispensing with the dozens of ledger books that had been compiled.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Bureaucratic Responses to Congressional Intervention}

The third strand of inquiry pursued here focuses on the degree to which the Pension Bureau responded to the political influence of Congress in the period after which partisan presidential considerations appear to have waned. Did intervention matter in terms of a discernible benefit for the recipient? Benefits could be conceptualized as an increased dollar value of pension and a higher likelihood of acceptance of a claim (regardless of dollar value), both of which were considered earlier, as well as a reduced claim processing time on the part of the Bureau. The latter could be relevant because as time passed and pensions became automatic based on age, and as Congress become populated with more members who look like their modern counterparts, one of the most valuable efforts on behalf of constituents might well be greasing the bureaucratic wheels. In the analysis to follow, I briefly consider each of these conceptualizations of revealed influence. In order to ascertain the effects of congressional activity corresponding with the rise of constituency-driven intervention that appears in Figure 2 beginning in 1894, I restrict the sample to the post-1893 period.\textsuperscript{18}

I begin by considering the same model specification employed earlier for examining the amount of pension awarded. The only differences are the addition of the variable \textit{Congressional Intervention} which taps whether a member of Congress made a call on behalf of a constituent’s pending claim and the smaller number of observations due to the fact that this variable was collected only for a subsample of the CPE dataset. Table 3 contains the estimates from the OLS regression of pension amount on the covariates. While the coefficients related to health and exam status, age of the veteran, and pension system under which application was made are statistically significant, the role of a member of Congress

\textsuperscript{17} See Senate Doc. 236, 58\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, in the U.S. Serial Set.
\textsuperscript{18} The results are substantially the same if an earlier starting point (such as 1890) is employed.
does not appear to have impacted the ruling amount to a significant degree. Thus, similar to the post-
1890 findings regarding state-level partisanship, the Bureau did not seem to be biased due to political
influence of this kind when it came to pension amount.

However, when we turn to the likelihood of a claim being admitted, the involvement of a
member of Congress did contribute to a more favorable resolution, as demonstrated by the results in
Table 4. While the magnitude of the effect is not drastic, at more than 11 percentage points (from a
baseline level for approval of about two-thirds) it is notable. Accordingly, MCs likely had reason to
believe that their intervention made some difference, and may well have worked to translate this
influence into opportunities to build a reputation among the constituents they were able to help. As in
the previous tables, the control variables that are statistically significant behave mostly as expected.
Those who applied under the General Law system, as well as those who did not have an accompanying
medical examination, were subject to much greater scrutiny and had a lower likelihood of seeing their
claims approved. In contrast, those of more advanced age realized a greater likelihood of success,
although this is almost certainly a function of the fact that over this period the agency came to consider
age alone a pensionable disability.\(^{19}\)

The final area to consider is perhaps the closest counterpart to modern casework. When a
member of Congress calls upon an agency on behalf of a constituent, does the interaction with a
legislator speed up bureaucratic process? The full CPE dataset does not include data on when the claim
was processed, so analysis of this kind is also restricted to the subsample of 1,000 veterans. As
described earlier, the rate of MC intervention followed a course that tracks closely with the length of
time it took for the agency to dispose of claims from 1894 through 1905, at which time the two series
diverge. Because members may well have been operating under somewhat different motivations in

\(^{19}\) See, in particular, S. Doc. 235, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, “Order Regulating Pensions for Disability on Account of
Old Age,” for a review of the broadening definition of age-based disability beginning in 1893 and extending to 1904
under the act of June 27, 1890 which provided pensions for disabilities not attributable to war-time service.
these two periods, I partition the data accordingly. To the degree that members were responding to constituents’ dissatisfaction with the Bureau taking many months (and at times well over a year) to decide on claims, they would likely have received an appeal for help after a period of time in which the veteran received no word from the agency. As such, these may be the more problematic cases; therefore one might expect an ombudsman MC to display a counterintuitive pattern of lengthening the processing time. On the other hand, if members were entrepreneurial and seeking opportunities to help constituents despite the more timely work of the Bureau after 1905 (and we know that members advertised their pension-related services), then this would involve taking an active interest early on and ought to more clearly demonstrate a positive impact.

I examined these possibilities using a duration model, essentially treating every claim as “at risk” for being decided on a daily basis until it is resolved. The results appear in Table 5. In line with the lag in processing applications around the turn of the century, when a member of Congress intervened, it tended to be on claims that took longer to process. Based on the hazard ratio (computed separately), there is about a two-thirds chance that a claim without MC intervention will be processed before one with such action. It is difficult to make a causal statement, but given that the correspondence data described earlier also suggests a lag before MC involvement, it seems reasonable to assume that this effect is due to members responding to problems constituents bring to their attention. But a more detailed look at these claims would be worthwhile. Beginning in 1906, the reverse pattern holds, as can be seen in the last column of the table. If a member became involved in a case, the hazard rate increases by more than twenty percent. While this is not a stark increase, at a point when the time to completion was more often counted in days and months than months and years, this is telling. Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, as the statewide Democratic presidential vote increases from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean, this is associated with slightly more than a ten percent increase in the hazard rate. About two-thirds of the cases used to
estimate this model occurred under Democratic administrations (at times with Democratic majorities in Congress), so this may be part of the story. But this rather small effect is also worth exploring further.

To summarize the findings with regard to bureaucratic action from the 1890s through the early twentieth century, it appears to be the case that members of Congress exerted a degree of influence over the Pension Bureau. Early on, while they failed to get better pension rates for constituents, they had some success in getting applications approved. Later, as the rolls were open to nearly any veteran on the basis of age alone, MCs seem to have been able to move the claims of their constituents through the bureaucracy somewhat faster than other claims without congressional intervention.

Discussion

While there has been a considerable amount of scholarship on various aspects of bureaucratic and political change from the close of the Civil War through the Progressive Era and beyond, some key questions have received relatively scant attention. To what degree were the routine, day-to-day decisions of bureaucrats motivated by considerations beyond the “merits” of a particular claimant’s case? Furthermore, if such processes were at work, did they extend beyond the advent of the civil service system? When and to what extent did legislators intervene on behalf of constituents pressing claims before a bureaucratic agency? And how did agencies in turn respond to congressional pressure? Because the UA pension system existed throughout this significant period of American history, it had provided a unique avenue for examining questions such as these—relating to the changing motivations and behavior of MCs and the relationship between institutions of American government as the polity gradually obtained many of the characteristics that we have come to associate with the modern era.

The findings presented bring into relief some differences that allow us to begin addressing these questions. It is clear that dynamic changes were underway during this period in the mode of representation on the part of members of Congress as well as the relationship between bureaucrats and
legislators on claims pending before the executive branch. For both types of actors, motivations likely changed due to exogenous shocks to their political context, and it appears that these changes in motivation corresponded with evolving strategic behavior over time. But some key patterns emerge. First, the bureaucracy persisted in responding to partisan dynamics on the ground well after the civil service reforms of 1883. Second, the activities of members of Congress in relation to their constituents and the executive branch evolved as the legislature became more career oriented. Legislators moved from relatively low levels of engagement with the bureaucracy independent of backlogs faced by constituents, to responsive agents attempting to solve constituents’ problems, to entrepreneurial activists working to grease the wheels and advance the interests of citizens back home. Finally, a degree of congressional influence over the bureaucracy is evident from the 1890s forward. Although the form and magnitude of that influence varied, the bureaucracy appears to have been responsive to congressional calls for favorable and/or expedited resolution of constituent claims.

The results I have presented also leave some questions for future analysis and provide a basis on which to expand the analysis further. Perhaps most importantly, it will be worthwhile to look in detail at when members of Congress get involved in specific cases in order to identify case-level and political factors driving constituency service. In the process of gathering data for my subsample, the names of the relevant MCs were compiled, so exploring their political context, career trajectories, and other variables will allow me to speak more directly to the role of careerism in driving personal-vote activities. Also, it will be worthwhile to consider what prompts members of Congress to introduce private legislation on behalf of constituents, and the degree to which there was a customary route of working through the bureaucracy first or whether the two processes are unrelated. Moreover, changing pension laws and administrative interpretation around the turn of the century offer a fertile testing ground for broad theories of American political development. The wealth of data related to UA pensions thus affords a host of opportunities for students of American politics.
References


Table 1: OLS Regression of Pension Amount by Presidential Party/Administration, 1876-1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Hayes-Arthur 1877-1884</th>
<th>Cleveland I 1885-1888</th>
<th>Harrison 1889-1892</th>
<th>Cleveland II 1893-1896</th>
<th>McKinley/Roosevelt 1897-1907</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Presidential Vote</td>
<td>-5.327***</td>
<td>-8.238***</td>
<td>-1.472</td>
<td>0.972</td>
<td>0.026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor Health</td>
<td>1.497***</td>
<td>2.080***</td>
<td>1.594***</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>-0.430***</td>
</tr>
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<td>No Health Rating</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>1.335***</td>
<td>-0.440**</td>
<td>-0.508</td>
<td>0.487***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>-1.674***</td>
<td>-1.590***</td>
<td>-0.500*</td>
<td>-0.423</td>
<td>-0.242</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.082***</td>
<td>0.100***</td>
<td>0.093***</td>
<td>0.135***</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Law System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.627***</td>
<td>11.640***</td>
<td>10.348***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.398***</td>
<td>9.417***</td>
<td>4.723***</td>
<td>2.623</td>
<td>1.304**</td>
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<tr>
<td>F-statistic</td>
<td>28.57***</td>
<td>49.89***</td>
<td>90.47***</td>
<td>41.14***</td>
<td>345.39***</td>
</tr>
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<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>0.528</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4,713</td>
<td>4,251</td>
<td>8,213</td>
<td>1,413</td>
<td>6,799</td>
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</table>

Note: Dependent variable is the dollar value of pension awarded to recipient. Robust standard errors, clustered on recipient, in parentheses. * Significant at $p < 0.10$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$
Table 2: Logistic Regression of Pension Approval by Presidential Party/Administration, 1876-1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Hayes-Arthur 1877-1884</th>
<th>Cleveland I 1885-1888</th>
<th>Harrison 1889-1892</th>
<th>Cleveland II 1893-1896</th>
<th>McKinley/Roosevelt 1897-1907</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Presidential Vote</td>
<td>-0.525 (0.518)</td>
<td>-1.968*** (0.634)</td>
<td>-0.887** (0.411)</td>
<td>-0.381 (0.342)</td>
<td>-0.236 (0.169)</td>
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<td>Poor Health</td>
<td>0.210 (0.151)</td>
<td>0.236*** (0.084)</td>
<td>0.392*** (0.056)</td>
<td>0.518*** (0.111)</td>
<td>-0.118** (0.051)</td>
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<td>No Health Rating</td>
<td>0.451*** (0.149)</td>
<td>0.016 (0.092)</td>
<td>-0.700*** (0.061)</td>
<td>-0.638*** (0.111)</td>
<td>0.121** (0.056)</td>
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<td>Attorney</td>
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<td>-0.503*** (0.134)</td>
<td>-0.362*** (0.051)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.004)</td>
<td>-0.002 (0.004)</td>
<td>0.006** (0.003)</td>
<td>0.036*** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.057*** (0.004)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.333 (0.316)</td>
<td>1.290*** (0.354)</td>
<td>0.034 (0.252)</td>
<td>-2.105*** (0.423)</td>
<td>-3.291*** (0.244)</td>
</tr>
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| Wald χ² | 98.26*** | 30.24*** | 145.72*** | 88.79*** | 337.75*** |
| % Correctly Predicted | 0.590 | 0.584 | 0.545 | 0.662 | 0.604 |
| N       | 3,988 | 5,243 | 9,723 | 2,603 | 12,232 |

Note: Dependent variable is coded 1 if a new or increased pension was awarded, 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered on recipient, in parentheses. * Significant at p < 0.10  ** p < 0.05  *** p < 0.01
Table 3: OLS Regression of Pension Amount for Congressional Subsample, 1894-1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
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<td>State Presidential Vote</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.620***</td>
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<td>*** p &lt; 0.01</td>
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<td>General Law System</td>
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<td>*** p &lt; 0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>(1.751)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Summary Statistics</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
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</table>

*Note: Dependent variable is the dollar value of pension awarded to recipient. Robust standard errors, clustered on recipient, in parentheses. * Significant at $p < 0.10$  ** $p < 0.05$  *** $p < 0.01$
Table 4: Logistic Regression of Pension Approval for Congressional Subsample, 1894-1906

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
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<td>General Law System</td>
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<td>(1.043)</td>
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<td>Congressional Intervention</td>
<td>0.550*</td>
<td>(0.308)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.179**</td>
<td>(1.368)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Wald $\chi^2$ | 55.11***
% Correctly Predicted | 0.888
N | 721

Note: Dependent variable is coded 1 if a new or increased pension was awarded, 0 otherwise. Robust standard errors, clustered on recipient, in parentheses. * Significant at $p < 0.10$
** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$
Table 5: Cox Regression of the Duration of Pension Application Processing for the Congressional Subsample, 1894-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
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<td>0.339</td>
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<td>(0.338)</td>
<td>(0.306)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.096)</td>
<td>(0.181)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.110)</td>
<td>(0.165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
<td>(0.094)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.036***</td>
<td>0.013**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Law System</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>-0.286**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Intervention</td>
<td>-0.526***</td>
<td>0.202***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.092)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wald $\chi^2$ 29.42***  21.05***  
Log Likelihood -4066.82  -5402.52  
N 733  927

Note: Dependent variable is the number of days an application was pending. Robust standard errors, clustered on recipient, in parentheses. * Significant at $p < 0.10$  ** $p < 0.05$  *** $p < 0.01$
Figure 1 – Number of Total and Original Pension Applications

Source: Data collected from the annual reports of the Commissioner of Pensions.
Figure 2 - Median Number of Days Pending Agency Decision and Rate of MC Intervention

Source: Original data collected from Pension Bureau files housed at the National Archives.
Figure 3 – Annual Congressional Communications Received by the Pension Bureau

Source: The actual amount of correspondence was collected from the annual reports of the Commissioner of Pensions. Estimated correspondence is based on the interaction between actual correspondence and the rate of MC intervention * the number of applications in those years.
Figure 4 – Congressional Intervention by Application Type

Source: Original data collected from Pension Bureau files housed at the National Archives.