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A VETERAN WELFARE STATE: VETERANS' BENEFITS, COALITION POLITICS,
AND SOCIAL POLICY CHANGE, 1943-1973

A Dissertation Presented

by

MELINDA RAE TARSI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2014

Political Science

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MELINDA RAE TARSI

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DEDICATION

To Janet M. Hambidge and Donald T. Hambidge

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I consider myself fortunate to have so many amazing people in my life to thank for their help during my graduate education, and I am incredibly grateful for every person that has made an impact on me. I could not have finished this dissertation without them.

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Mike Kowal, Sam Stoddard, Allen Linken, Ivelisse Cuevas Molina, Kaylee Johnson, Cameron Roche (a brave soul to take on UMass Poll), Dan Kirsch, and Matt MacWilliams. I appreciate all the feedback and laughs, especially when we were supposed to be holding working group meetings. Jason Wilson, Kit Smemo, and Paul White also made a lasting impression during their time at UMass. Lastly, I owe special gratitude to Dr. Jeraldine Orlina and Cathy Anderson for their kindness and caring.

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ABSTRACT

A VETERAN WELFARE STATE: VETERANS' BENEFITS, COALITION POLITICS,
AND SOCIAL POLICY CHANGE, 1943-1973

SEPTEMBER 2014

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America's commitment to the reintegration of veterans via social policy is not a recent political development; since the end of World War II, federal and state government programs have been designed (and redesigned) to successfully transition former military personnel back into civilian life. Beginning with the 1944 Serviceman's Readjustment Act (commonly known as the G.I. Bill), the federal government has taken the primary role in this reintegration initiative, investing billions of dollars into veterans' benefit programs for education assistance, unemployment compensation, and job placement services. Even as the legislation has been renewed after military conflicts, veterans' education benefits have remained an integral part of the American social policy landscape in the post-New Deal era, providing critical tuition assistance for service members returning to a civilian workforce. As much as we know about the positive effects on American politics and economy generated by the original G.I. Bill and its successors, what do we truly know about the way that the legislation has been developed, or how it fits in with the broader set of (less popular) social policies in American history?

I argue that veterans' education benefits were supported by an unlikely political coalition (comprised of often diverging interests) that was tenuously united by the success of the 1944 G.I. Bill. As a result of this coalition's competing social policy goals, the development of veterans' education benefits siphoned political momentum away from broad-based education aid policies after 1944. Drawing on Congressional records, hearing transcripts, and archival data from over a dozen national libraries and private collections, I highlight the strategies of this "veterans' benefit coalition," as well as the ways in which the coalition worked toward expanding veterans' benefits at the expense of programs for the entire citizenry (dovetailing with conservative interests to limit the growth of the American welfare state). The inclusion of this veterans' benefit coalition – and its spillover effects – in the broader narrative of American welfare state development is a critical contribution to understanding America's "laggard" welfare system in a comparative context.

KEYWORDS: veterans' benefits; G.I. Bill; social policy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the G.I. Bill) turned 70 years old, ushering in the opportunity for reflection on the importance and popularity of the legislation whose hallmark feature was its college tuition benefits for returning World War II veterans. President Barack Obama remarked in an op-ed piece that, besides paying for college tuitions, “the GI Bill also transformed America. With the careers it sparked, the homes it helped our veterans buy, and the prosperity it generated, it paid for itself several times over and helped lay the foundation for the largest middle class in history.”¹ The G.I. Bill remains a popular fixture in American political rhetoric and politics more broadly, as the perceptions of the success of the program continue to inform current opinions. In a recent Gallup Poll, 78% of veterans reported satisfaction with the program of veterans’ education benefits in American policy, while only 16% identified themselves as dissatisfied. This outpouring of support for the program is interesting, though, because the same poll reported that 63% of today’s veterans have not used the most recent versions of the G.I. Bill benefits at all (and a full 46% in the target 18-to-49 age group claim to have never used these benefits).² Thus, even with a marginal current utilization rate, the G.I. Bill is lauded as a viable and successful social policy program.

¹ Barack Obama, “Op-Ed by President Obama on the 70th Anniversary of the G.I. Bill.” Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, June 20, 2014. Accessed July 10, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/20/op-ed-president-obama-70th-anniversary-gi-bill>.

² Gallup, “Most Veterans are Satisfied with G.I. Bill Education Benefits,” July 3, 2014. Accessed July 10, 2014. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/172082/veterans-satisfied-bill-education-benefits.aspx?ref=image>.

The G.I. Bill's distinction as the most popular, broad-based social welfare regime in American history – created and maintained during periods of flux in American welfare state development – creates two separate, but interrelated questions. First, who were the powerful architects of the G.I. Bill's several reforms, and how were they able to concentrate support behind increasing federal spending in spite of countervailing political and economic forces? Secondly, and as an extension of the previous question, to what extent did the activities of veterans' education benefit supporters affect the development of parallel broad-based social policies in development at the same time? The institution of veterans' benefits – specifically those focused on economic reintegration through education, training, and unemployment compensation – presents an important case study in American politics, allowing us to examine policy change that has remained durable through various political and economic contexts. In addition, the political actors involved in advocating for increased veterans' benefits – and their attendant strategies for influencing legislators and public opinion – provide an important glimpse into a powerful lobby that has persisted since the end of World War I. Perhaps most importantly, the institution of veterans' benefits has had “spillover effects” into other areas of public policy, having a distinct influence on parallel universal social policies addressed at economic recovery and making American education and jobs competitive at the global level.

The importance of this research question is twofold. First, in identifying the architects of the G.I. Bill system, this project illuminates the role of a coalition of political actors – as well as powerful members within that coalition – that were able to retain control over a particular policy area throughout a time of stark political and

economic change. Advocates of the G.I. Bill have been incredibly successful in maintaining the contours of the original program, as well as continuously expanding the generosity of its provisions in line with new economic realities. Understanding the unprecedented power of the coalition – as well as the changes it underwent over time – provides political scientists (and policymakers) with a useful case study for analyzing how disparate interests may achieve and maintain policy goals. Secondly, this research highlights how the veterans’ benefit coalition was able to shift American social policy development during its formative postwar years. Beyond implying a connection between the two policy spheres, I provide evidence that coalition members, still in service to either their support for or opposition to the New Deal regime, used veterans’ benefits as a means to attain their greater social welfare policy ends. The lasting impression of the veterans’ benefit coalition is not only a strong system of educational support for returning American veterans, but also a welfare state that – across several policy spheres – was reined in at critical moments through the coalition’s work. Supporters of the New Deal utilized the G.I. Bill in an effort to continue to realize Franklin Roosevelt’s vision of domestic economic intervention, while New Deal opponents saw a way to appease public pressure for more generous welfare policies with benefits aimed at a politically (and publicly) popular subset of the population. The study of the veterans’ benefit coalition is important, then, to understand not only coalition success, but also the full range of actors and political strategies employed to shape the contours of the laggard American welfare state.

I argue that the set of political actors mobilized around veterans’ benefits (and education assistance in particular) was a relatively disparate and conflicted of actors with

clearly divergent interests across a range of social policies. This “veterans’ benefit coalition,” as I identify them, was a heterogeneous and fragmented group, yet one that was highly successful at developing, reforming, and ultimately institutionalizing veterans’ education benefits, even in the face of strong political pressure and efforts at retrenchment. Moreover, this coalition was able to have an influence on parallel social policy development, effectively creating “spillover” effects in areas of policy aimed at the broader American population. In contrast to the *universal* American welfare state (which is depicted as a laggard, especially relative to other industrialized countries), the *veteran* welfare state is well developed and comprehensive. Veterans’ benefits in their current incarnation developed alongside the patchwork construction of the universal welfare state from the New Deal era, through the Great Society initiative, and even during conservative retrenchment efforts. Although prominent secondary historical accounts suggest that the presence of a veteran welfare state is somehow related to legislation for general social welfare programs,³ there is still no focused analysis of the ways in which the development of veterans’ benefits and their universal counterparts interacted at key historical and political junctures. Political scientists have not yet fully explicated the extent to which the rise of the veteran benefit regime directly curtailed the emerging American welfare state in its infancy. Proponents of veterans’ benefits argued, ultimately successfully, that generous benefits for veterans obviated the need for broader

³ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Politics of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States,” in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, eds. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Kathleen J. Frydl, *The G.I. Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Sar A. Levitan and Karen A. Cleary, *Old Wars Remain Unfinished: The Veteran Benefits System* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and G.I. Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*. (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

social protections for the civilian citizenry. As they suggested, with veterans and their dependents constituting such a large portion of the population, it was unnecessary to construct or expand universal policies available to all citizens. Veterans' interest in expanding veterans' benefits dovetailed with the VA's interest in expanding its budget and policy domain, and with Republicans' and conservative Democrats' interest in rewarding military personnel and, more importantly, limiting the growth of the universal welfare state.

In this project I analyze the political activity surrounding the development of the four major iterations of the G.I. Bill's education and unemployment compensation provisions (in 1944, 1952, 1966, and 1972), drawing on evidence from legislative hearings and reports; mass periodicals and pressure group correspondence; archival materials from presidential, legislative, and interest group archives; and secondary historical accounts of the politics of veterans' benefits (and social policy more broadly) during the time period. I pay special attention to the members of the veterans' benefit coalition, who brought often diverging interests to bear in their advocacy of education benefits for veterans. This project explicates the composition of this unlikely alliance and the extent to which members' competing interests affected not only the development of veterans' education benefits, but also the parallel development of other educational and reintegration policies around the same time. Additionally, I contend that expanding the policy feedback model to include heterogeneity in both interest group composition and feedback effects (to account for "spillover" in other policy areas) would allow scholars a more complete perspective on the development of social policy – and the American welfare state writ large – in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The American Welfare State and Veterans' Benefits in Comparative Perspective

The importance of the G.I. Bill to American social policy development is a prominent theme in work on American political history, but the broader contours of the American welfare program are more striking when compared against similar governmental regimes. America's welfare state development in comparative perspective has revealed a substantial split between the US and other developed states, as the former has been characterized as a "laggard" welfare state when judged by the standards of Western European welfare systems.⁴ Scholars have identified various mechanisms for this stunted welfare growth, focusing on how both institutional and electoral factors have eroded the potential of the American welfare state. While veterans' benefit policies may appear to be a separate policy sphere, they represent an important part of the full spectrum of the American welfare state; when benefits to veterans are accounted for, the American system becomes increasingly generous in comparison to its industrialized peers.⁵ American veteran benefits have long been a critical element of the regime of policies at work in domestic politics, and have only recently been recognized as important for not only driving the early versions of social policy,⁶ but also for a major component of its current formulation.⁷ While the current welfare state scholarship is instructive in understanding the complex "intercurrence"⁸ of various concurrent

⁴ Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990).

⁵ Christopher Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths about U.S. Social Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷ Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows*.

⁸ For a full description of "intercurrence," see Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). I use the term here to

trajectories, it potentially obscures the important role that veterans' benefits – and the politics surrounding their development – have played in shaping the contours of the current social policy landscape. The role of veterans' benefits is greater than its bottom-line contribution to federal expenditures; rather, the very political process of developing the veterans' education benefit system itself influenced the way in which other programs would take shape.

There are several potential explanations for the laggard American welfare state that do not include a role for parallel policy development. The electoral incentives for a bounded welfare state, though most recently identified in the 1970s and 1980s,⁹ have their foundations in earlier contestations over the role of labor and capital in American politics. One reason for the stunted welfare state development has been business interests to self-regulate benefits policies – dovetailing with conservative interests to prevent the New Deal policies from instantiating a rampant increase in state size – and which has led to a regime of limited public intervention and increasingly more private economic security benefits.¹⁰ These combined efforts have led to an anemic public policy regime that relies increasingly on private benefits to supplant the state provisions for healthcare and pensions. Another important factor in US welfare development has been the electoral arrangements of parties that have obscured (intentionally or unintentionally) the attempts of labor to make inroads into national discussions about income security. Standing in stark contrast to Western European states, America's increasingly powerless labor unions

generally describe the many “moving parts” of American welfare state development that, taken as a whole, have contributed to the kinds of shifts in political orders that Orren and Skowronek describe.

⁹ Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2002). For an overview of the public and private dynamic beyond Hacker's examples of healthcare and pensions, see also Christopher Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows*.

were unable to participate in the coalition politics that drove concessions in social policy provisions in other industrialized states.¹¹ The electoral changes in American politics have not only presented opportunities for change in social policies; as I explain further, they also created conditions that allowed veterans' benefit politics to shape social policy development.

The institutional structure of the American welfare state has been changed by its initial forays into economic security policies, through both Civil War veterans' benefits and early aid policies for working mothers. These policies created critical target groups of beneficiaries and also acted as prototype policies for broader schemes of state social policies.¹² However, these initial institutional arrangements presented negative examples of welfare state arrangements; in the case of Civil War benefits especially, the provisions were laid bare to abuses of the patronage system and soon formed a bloated and corrupt system of selective entitlements. Institutions have been more than blueprints for state development, however; they have also formed less-recognized facets of the welfare state that contribute to its size (and, some would argue, relative wealth when these "hidden" elements are taken into account). One such example is the American tax system, the provisions of which supply homeowners, veterans, and others with substantial tax breaks and an effective expenditure system unlike those in other industrial countries.¹³ These institutional arrangements have allowed veterans' benefits – as a jurisdictionally distinct, "parallel" welfare state – the political cover to develop alongside the American welfare state. While veterans' benefits appear to be a discrete category of social policy, I argue

¹¹ Alexander Hicks, *Social Democracy and Welfare Capitalism: A Century of Income Security Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

¹² Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

¹³ Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

that their development had enduring effects on the social policies under development at the same time. Thus, institutional arrangements have not only limited the growth of the welfare state; they have also provided the “veteran welfare state” with the space and bureaucratic power necessary to become an important player in the politics of social policy.

Of critical importance to many of these accounts of American welfare state development has been the theory of policy feedback, which has outlined the mechanisms by which initial changes in policies have reverberated through the rest of the social policy system over time. While existing research has provided important insights into the various factors contributing to American social policy development, it has currently underplayed the importance of veterans’ benefits in explaining the laggard status of the American welfare state. In the next section, I lay out the current explanations of veterans’ benefit influence offered by policy feedback theory, and offer two specifications to the model which will provide a more accurate perspective on the importance of veterans’ benefits to American social policy development.

Policy Feedback and the Case of Veterans’ Education Benefits

Policy feedback presents a compelling story of change in public policy literature, and although it finds its roots in the work of E.E. Schattschneider,¹⁴ it was not until the 1990s that political scientists began systematically analyzing and applying the concept to the political system. Within policy feedback frameworks, policies are afforded agency insofar as they can change politics through influencing both political behavior (of individuals and groups), as well as the ways in which policy is created in the future.

¹⁴ E.E. Schattschneider, *Politics, Pressure, and the Tariff* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1935).

Policy development does not occur in a vacuum; instead, it is contextualized within the political landscape shaped by policy development over time. Daniel Béland notes, “In the broadest sense...the concept of policy feedback refers to this impact of previously enacted policies on future political behavior and policy choices. In other words, policy feedback is a temporal concept that points to the fact that over time, policy can shape politics.”¹⁵ While the policy feedback model is useful for explaining repeated iterations of policy developments over time, I argue that some small – but critical – additions to the model can allow for a better incorporation of other concomitant factors (such as interest group composition and the types of feedback effects witnessed). By making these refinements to the policy feedback model – using the G.I. Bill development as illustration – political scientists may better explain instances of policy development in which seemingly divergent interests act in concert to achieve similar political ends. In the case of veterans’ benefits, their place in the social policy literature provides three major types of mechanisms of policy feedback, explaining interest group power,¹⁶ civic engagement,¹⁷ and changes in state capacities.¹⁸ While these mechanisms have been

¹⁵ Daniel Béland, “Reconsidering Policy Feedback: How Policies Affect Politics,” *Administration and Society* 42:5 (2010): 570. Béland provides a brief survey of the policy feedback literature, but for general theory development, see: Paul Pierson, “When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change,” *World Politics* 45:1 (1993): 599. For work on historical institutionalism and policy feedback, see: Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Orren and Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*; Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). For work on how policies have affected issues of race and gender, see: Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Julia S. O’Connor, Ann Shola Orloff, and Sheila Shaver, *States, Markets, Families: Gender Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

¹⁷ Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*; Mettler, Suzanne. 2002. “Bringing the State Back in to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Citizens,” *American Political Science Review* 96: 2 (2002); Suzanne Mettler and Eric Welch. 2004. “Civic Generation: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill on Political Involvement over the Life Course,” *British Journal of Political Science* 34:3 (2004).

¹⁸ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins*.

useful in explaining policy feedback effects through the 1944 G.I. Bill, additional specifications to the model will be useful for understanding the evolution of veterans' benefits following the immediate post-WWII period.

Policy Feedback, Interest Groups, and Coalition Politics

One of the most significant contributions that the veterans' benefit literature has made to political science is the addition of a case study in how policy feedback can create strong and durable constituencies that may shape future iterations of the same (or similar) policies. The policy has a generative effect, acting as the catalyst for the formations of pressure groups (or alliances of existing groups), which then become political actors in their own rights. In his articulation of policy feedback, Paul Pierson notes that, "Policies provide both incentives and resources that may facilitate or inhibit the formation or expansion of particular groups. The incentives stem primarily from the major social consequences of specific government actions."¹⁹ While policies can influence the establishment of well-funded pressure groups that can promote the maintenance (if not expansion of) the policy's benefits, more recent literature augments this story by suggesting that program popularity can make even programs for the poor politically salient to the whole citizenry.²⁰

The effect of policy feedback processes on interest group power is especially salient in the case of veterans' benefits, as extant scholarship makes persuasive

¹⁹ Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause."

²⁰ Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?*; see Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State* for a description of how Medicaid has gained popularity even though it is aimed at those of lower socioeconomic status. For more on Social Security, see Daniel Béland, *Social Security: History and Politics from the New Deal to the Privatization Debate* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2005), as well as Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State?* and Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State*.

arguments for the power of veterans' groups in not only successfully negotiating the political terrain in favor of more extensive benefits,²¹ but also in the effect of policies on generating new target groups whose levels of civic engagement are positively affected by these policies.²² However, the case of the veterans' benefit coalition offers an opportunity to add a layer of nuance to the current theory concerning how interests groups utilize the leverage provided by policies to increase political power.

While existing theories of policy feedback focus on the roles of pressure organizations, these groups are often treated as discrete entities with homogenous political goals or mutually preferred methods for obtaining those goals. In the case of veterans' benefits, for example, some accounts paint the major veterans' groups – such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled Veterans of America – with a broad stroke, portraying them as proponents of veterans' benefit legislation across various categories and time periods. Such an account is not in line with some narratives that identify rifts between the veterans' groups that go back to their origins and membership,²³ similarly, the opposing interests of business leaders and union leaders were, at least at the outset, united on the need for veterans' benefits in education and training in the original G.I. Bill, although for reasons that would attempt to undermine the opposing force's political power among workers.²⁴ The bipartisan support for increased veterans' benefits, combined with veterans' groups, business, and labor support for the legislation created a heterogeneous coalition of veterans' benefit proponents whose

²¹ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; for a discussion of veterans' benefits before the modern administration of the post-Civil War era, see Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins*.

²² Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*.

²³ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March*.

²⁴ Jennifer Brooks, "Unexpected Foes: World War II Veterans and Labor in the Postwar South," *Labor: Studies of Working Class History in the Americas*, 7 (2010).

strategic goals were contradictory to that of their fellow coalition members; nonetheless, the coalition members worked together in developing a relatively resilient institution at the federal level.

Accounting for the dynamics of political coalitions – composed of both elite and non-elite actors, as Pierson notes – is critical for identifying the potentially countervailing forces that shape the design – or redesign – of a particular institution.²⁵ While political actors form coalitions because it presents a way to maximize small groups’ interests with relatively minor cost,²⁶ participation can at often times be expensive, especially for those members of the coalition who want their interests to receive the largest share of attention.²⁷ The support of a broad coalition can signal to lawmakers that a particular legislative initiative is not only popular among invested groups, but that it enjoys broad-based popular support as well; to this extent, lawmakers may use coalition diversity or breadth as a heuristic for the universal appeal of a particular policy proposal.²⁸

The downside of coalitions, however, is twofold. First, they are susceptible to the free-rider problem, as less invested members can enjoy the benefits of membership and advocacy resources that are supplied by other members of the coalition.²⁹ Second, and more instructive for analyzing policy development over time, the fact that coalitions often arise in a conflict-drive political environment means that they remain susceptible to

²⁵ Paul Pierson, “Public Policies as Institutions,” in *Rethinking Political Institutions: The Art of the State*, eds. Ian Shapiro, Stephen Skowronek, and Daniel Galvin. (NY: New York University Press, 2006).

²⁶ Andrew B. Whitford, “The Structures of Interest Coalitions: Evidence from Environmental Litigation.” *Business and Politics*. 5 (2003): 45–64.

²⁷ Michael T. Heaney, “Reputation and Leadership inside Interest Group Coalitions.” Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL., 2004; James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).

²⁸ John W. Kingdon, 1981. *Congressmen’s Voting Decisions*. 2nd edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1981); Kevin Hula, “Rounding Up the Usual Suspects: Forging Interest Group Coalitions.” In *Interest Group Politics*, 4th ed., eds. Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1995).

²⁹ Marie, Hojnacki, “Organized Interests’ Advocacy Behavior in Alliances.” *Political Research Quarterly*. 51 (1998): 437–59.

cross-pressures, especially when the members' shared interest is not reflective of their primary individual interests.³⁰

I argue that the example of the veterans' benefit coalition provides a unique case study to analyze how the composition of the interest group coalition that benefits from the enactment of a policy can be fractured over time. The bonds that hold an interest group coalition together may be negatively affected by the policy feedback process, as reforms to the legislation force schisms in interests to the forefront and may cause members of the coalition to break away once their individual interests are more important than the ones reflected in the legislation. While extant theories of policy feedback hypothesize a homogenous set of political actors that universally benefits from the extension of benefits to a target population, the model in its current state does not account for any type of actor arrangement in which the interests pursued are not universal. While homogenous political groups may indeed become strengthened by political victories during legislative development, it is the shared interest (manifested in the policy) that reinforces this type of interest group. When the political actors in question are a coalition – and one whose members have interests outside of veterans' education benefits, as well as ones that come into direct conflict with any extension of government assistance – political scientists and policy scholars have yet to specify how the policy process necessarily strengthens the coalition. If anything, the duration of the policy process, combined with competing interests, may serve to devalue participation in the coalition and ultimately lead to coalition fracture or even member exit from the group. Such a change would destabilize the former support system for the policy regime, leaving it

³⁰ Whitford, "The Structures of Interest Coalitions."

without critical advocates or vulnerable to attempts at reform that could significantly alter the policy from its origins.³¹

Thus, while the policy feedback model presupposes homogenous political actors that are reified through the enactment of a policy, research on political coalitions suggests that the veterans' coalition diversity and diverging interests may leave it susceptible to coalition fracture (or even breakdown). From this juxtaposition, I make two interrelated – but theoretically discrete – contentions concerning the composition of the veterans' benefit coalition:

Contention 1: The veterans' benefit coalition was heterogeneous, and composed of diverging political interests.

The veterans' benefit coalition was comprised of disparate veterans' organizations, labor unions, postsecondary institutions and their representatives, business lobbies, Democrat and Republican lawmakers, Presidential administrations, and the Veterans' Administration. The sheer diversity in the types of political actors in the coalition is enough to suggest that their interests were not unified outside of the scope of veterans' education benefits; however, their attendant ideological biases and constituent groups only further exacerbate the potential fault lines in the coalition. Integrating an analysis of coalition politics into the policy feedback model allows us to further specify the conditions under which legislative change could potentially strengthen the group (and induce further participation or compliance), as well as identify which differences could eventually be too much for the group to overcome.

³¹ On the reform process, see Eric M. Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk: What Happens after Major Policy Changes are Enacted* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Another important component of these coalition politics is the role that individual coalition members can take at varying points of policy development. While the coalition was heterogeneous throughout the postwar time period (and through the Vietnam era), this is not to say that its power was distributed equally among members of the group; rather, certain members of the coalition were able to leverage the influence of the coalition and harness its political influence in Congress even when the rest of the coalition members were not actively striving toward a particular end. The best examples of this phenomenon are individual legislators on the veterans' committees of both the House and Senate. At varying points in G.I. Bill development, these legislators were able to mobilize support for increasing or diffusing veteran's education benefits even with only tepid support from the veterans' interest groups, VA, White House, or other coalition members.

The willingness of these legislators to move ahead on G.I. Bill benefits with or without the express support of the rest of the coalition invites the question: why would these particular legislators take the inherent risk to develop policies without the directive of the other coalition members, especially the increasingly powerful veterans' lobby groups? While electoral incentives may explain initiative from legislators in particular districts,³² it is insufficient to provide insight into those representatives without significant military or veteran populations among their constituents. In concert with the potential electoral benefits is the broader issue of the way in which veterans' benefits, up to WWII and beyond, have been constructed within American politics. From the notion of "deservingness" originated within the first set of Revolutionary War pensions through

³² David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

the WWI-era struggle over the adjusted compensation “bonus,”³³ veterans’ benefits have become a valence issue as America moved from the post-WWII period into the Cold War era. The fact that veterans’ benefits are so universally popular make them, paradoxically, less open to public scrutiny or censure; moreover, the “deserving” veteran is contrasted with the “undeserving” welfare mother or criminal.³⁴ Such widespread support for veterans’ benefits ensures that legislators can take reasonable risks on the behalf of the veteran population and be met with little resistance (even without the explicit consent of the veterans’ organizations or other veterans’ benefit coalition members). Lastly, the enduring legacy of the New Deal is, I argue, a compounding factor in explaining the actions of these legislators within the coalition. Whether seeking to extend New Deal policies for social welfare or limit them through offering veterans’ benefits to the population in trade for civilian benefits, the architects of the G.I. Bill program reveal through historical evidence that the specter of the New Deal was still alive and well in the decades following its inception.

Thus, an explanation of the heterogeneity of the veterans’ benefit coalition also entails a discussion of the motivations of those actors who do step forward within the group and attempt to advance legislation without the coalition’s urging. Taken together, the literature on coalitional development and the explanations for individual legislators’ policymaking attempts suggest that the coalition’s uneven distribution of power left certain members in more influential roles than others. Such a view also suggests that the

³³ For veterans’ benefits during the Revolutionary War, see Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins*; Laura Jensen, “Constructing and Entitling America’s Original Veterans,” in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*, eds. Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005). For an overview of veterans’ benefits in the interwar years, see Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March*.

³⁴ Anne L. Schneider and Helen Ingram, *Policy Designs for Democracy* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1997), 5-6.

veterans' organizations, while cast by legislators and presidents alike as holding the ear of certain members of Congress, may in fact have taken a backseat to the political ambitions of a select group of legislators during critical moments of policy development.

Contention 2: The process of developing and reforming the G.I. Bill strained the alliances between and among members of the veterans' benefit coalition.

The ideological and political divisions between members of the veterans' benefit coalition could be superseded, at least in part, in pursuit of the original goal of postwar economic development in 1943-1944. The G.I. Bill and veterans' education assistance did not, however, end after its original tenure, and instead was reformed and systematically amended in the following years. The process of legislative reform and the iterative nature of delineating educational benefits for veterans' meant that the coalition's members' interests would be once again thrown into conflict as the veterans' benefits regime grew. While the policy feedback model presumes that policy change will strengthen the policy's proponents (through the increased resources of the policy's target population), this effect is based on the assumption that the target population is necessarily also the constituent population of the interests groups.

Put simply, the policy feedback model assumes that the interest groups will benefit because their members will be the ones reaping the benefits of the policy change. Given the disparate interests of the veterans' benefit coalition – especially with respect to their support for broad-based social and economic programs – each coalition member would not necessarily benefit (or at least, not equally) from a strengthened veteran base. Therefore, between the strain of interests that can no longer be subordinated to the

universal goal of the coalition and the unequal benefits to groups based on their veteran membership, the policy feedback model may incorrectly assess the long-term reification of interest groups involved in the policy process.

Policy Feedback, State Capacities, and Effects on Parallel Policies

Changes in interest group influence, while an important element of the policy feedback literature, are not the only political changes that can be introduced by policies over time. Extant scholarship in political science, sociology, and history has addressed the important role that veterans' benefits have had in American political development, and specifically in shifting state capacity and affecting the interactions between various institutions and actors across the different levels of government.

Policies can help to expand the existing conception of not only what the state is, but also what it is capable of providing to its citizenry; policies can alter the landscape of bureaucratic politics such that certain agencies and elite actors can later capitalize upon this power for future political gain.³⁵ The changes produced by policy developments can empower bureaucrats to take on the administration of new programs in the future, especially those that naturally stem from the creation of the current policy. Additionally, these shifts in the relationship between legislators, bureaucrats, and pressure groups can realign the way in which policies can lay the groundwork for future expansions of social policy in the future.³⁶

The case of veterans' benefits has been a critical one for explaining changes in state capacities. Beginning with soldiers in the Revolutionary War, the American state

³⁵ See Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; for an overview, see Béland, "Reconsidering Policy Feedback."

³⁶ Pierson, Paul. "When Effect Becomes Cause."

(however fledgling it was at the time) was committed to making reparations to those citizens who had taken up arms in service of the nascent union. The first set of government entitlements can be attributed to these early systems of veteran benefits, because it represents the first instance in which the American government undertook a concerted effort to identify and reimburse a particular subset of the population for its service. Jensen argues, “As the original opponents of Revolutionary officers’ pensions predicted, selective entitlements fostered the concentration and purposeful application of central state capacity to privilege particular interest at the expense of more collective concerns.”³⁷

Similarly, the case of Civil War pensions is acknowledged as an early American welfare state that would ultimately shape future iterations of similar social policies. Skocpol contends that the early system of Civil War pensions for Union soldiers represented the country’s first large-scale attempt at creating social policy. While the decentralized nature of the benefits system laid it bare to the potential abuse of patronage politics, the Civil War pension system still acted as a prototype for the possibilities of American social policy. Though opponents saw the corruption that ravaged the Civil War pension system in its later years as the result of any attempt on the part of the state to bear economic risk, Skocpol argues that these benefits instilled an important ethic in American culture: namely, that of reparations for a deserving population of citizen-soldiers for whom protections should be offered (if not administered as the Civil War pension system had been).³⁸ Similarly, The WWI era system of veterans’ benefits saw the distinct breakup of the former veterans’ benefit system, with the functions of the veterans’ benefit

³⁷ Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins*, 235.

³⁸ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

structure being split into jurisdictionally distinct bureaus in an attempt to put Progressive-era ideals of objective bureaucracies into action.³⁹ The experience of the G.I. Bill in 1944 would soon overshadow this previous history as a milestone in American social policy development, and a marked change in the federal government's reach into economic insurance for a large portion of the population.

While current policy feedback theories have been critical to understanding how welfare development occurred as an effect of entitlement programs (such as those for veterans), the connections between policies in different spheres are less studied.⁴⁰ The ways in which policies may not only lay the groundwork for future iterations of similar policies, but may actually “spillover” into parallel areas (where their influence can be either a stimulant to a hindrance) is as yet understudied in both political science and public policy studies. While extant literature suggests that the creation of the original G.I. Bill may have stunted the development of other social welfare programs (in a “Second New Deal” attempt),⁴¹ less work exists on the extent to which the development of veterans' benefit continued to affect the development of parallel programs after the mid-1940s. Moreover, rather than thinking about the effects of policy development linearly, a focus on “spillover” could expand the boundaries of the feedback process to include contemporaneous changes in parallel fields.

Such an addition would allow the existing literature to account not only for expanding social programs as a result of prior explorations into policy development, but also for the ways in which policy development in one area may siphon momentum away

³⁹ William Pyle Dillingham, *Federal Aid to Veterans, 1917-1941* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1952).

⁴⁰ Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State*.

⁴¹ Amenta and Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal”; Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*; Levitan and Cleary, *Old Wars*.

from that of similar areas. Thinking about public policy in “zero sum” terms, the development of policy in one area could potentially foreclose policy options in a related area during the same timeframe; alternatively, the “open window” of policy development could allow for policy entrepreneurs in related areas to utilize the concurrent policy development to their advantage.⁴²

Contention 3: Coalition politics caused both “spillover” and “spillback” into related areas of universal social policy development.

While the policy feedback model assumes that the feedback process is often a generative one (and frequently positive at that), the reform process may actually lay the groundwork for interactions with other policy fields.⁴³ Policy entrepreneurs can utilize open policy “windows” to their advantage, exacting multiple and interrelated benefits from this fruitful period and achieving more of their individual agendas.⁴⁴ Moreover, veterans’ benefit policies, with the express intent of generating economic growth for veterans and civilians alike, necessarily places them in a potentially transformative position with respect to parallel social policies. Coalition members’ influence can “spillover” into related areas, bringing similar provisions of veterans’ benefits into other policy areas where they can take hold.

Conversely, members’ influence may actually stunt development in related areas of policy development, either by siphoning political momentum away from those policies (and toward veterans’ education assistance), or by obviating the need for broad-based

⁴² John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (London: Longman Publishing Group, 2002).

⁴³ Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk*.

⁴⁴ Kingdon, *Congressmen’s Voting Decisions*.

policies with the extension of veterans' benefits. Borrowing from the literature on European integration,⁴⁵ I use the term "spillback" to refer to efforts to prevent the liberalization of social policies aimed at addressing education and income security (the two areas in which veterans' education benefits were proposed to assist returning service personnel). By introducing and subsequently reforming veterans' education benefits, veterans' benefit coalition members were able to directly or indirectly restrict the policy landscape for advocates of more expansive social policy benefits at the national level.

Moreover, coalition members were successful at delineating veterans' benefits as a discrete policy regime that, while it could influence other related policies, would remain nonetheless insulated from changes to the administration of other similar policies. The VA was able to retain its sole discretionary authority over veterans' education benefits, without oversight from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (or later the Department of Education). The ability of the VA to resist pressures to share its administrative responsibilities with agencies ostensibly more capable to deal with particular policy programs suggests that powerful coalition support offset pressure from interest groups and legislators to make critical reforms to the way in which veterans' benefits were handled. In addition, the VA's protected status reveals that the agency may be more politically salient than it is normally credited with being. Therefore, influences from the veterans' education benefit reform process could have effects for similar universal policies, though the developments of these policies for civilians did not have a parallel influence on veterans' benefits. Accounting for these "spillover" and "spillback" effects in the policy feedback model provides a critical specification for the effects of

⁴⁵ Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, "Eurozone Crisis and European Integration: Functional Spillover, Political Spillback?" *Journal of European Integration* 35:3 (2013), 361-373.

revisions to public policies. Additionally, increasing the potential scope of policy influence to include parallel policy areas helps identify ways in which policy reform may be able to drive potentially contradictory changes in other policies in particular political contexts.

Data and Methods

Analyzing the development of veterans' benefit programs requires a careful approach to the use of qualitative data; recent advances in qualitative methods help hone the analysis of historical materials into an approach that is both rigorous and theoretically sound. My approach is best defined as a "detailed historical narrative" form of process-tracing, based on the typology of George and Bennett.⁴⁶ Researchers focusing on intensive revisions to policy regimes have utilized this method of analysis to best address not only the differences in policy development over time, but to identify the causal mechanisms at work in particular stages of policy development.⁴⁷

The basis for this type of historical analysis is often attributed to cross-national studies in comparative politics,⁴⁸ though it can be equally useful for analysis intra-state change in policies. Hacker notes that scholars can disaggregate complex policy regimes to offer comparisons between policies that appear similar on face, but in reality feature significant variance that can be attributed to temporal elements (as well as the actions of

⁴⁶ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005). See Chapter 10 for a detailed discussion of process-tracing.

⁴⁷ For examples, see Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State*; Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line*; and Daniel Carpenter, *Forging Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*.

⁴⁸ For overviews, see Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," *Diplomacy: New Approaches to History, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Paul Lauren (New York: Free Press, 1979); George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*; for an application to the American case, see Hacker, *Divided Welfare State*, pgs. 65-66.

particular political agents). For example, his research compares the public and private elements of the American healthcare and retirement systems over time; while not offering cross-national comparisons, his analysis is framed as a comparison of the same policy regime at different stages (and thus, with significantly different features and institutional arrangements).⁴⁹ Similarly, scholars of reform to existing policies take the original policy and post-reform policies as comparison points, and analyze the political mechanisms that affected the post-reform outcomes.⁵⁰

Such an approach is particularly useful in modeling policy feedback cycles, wherein researchers are most concerned with the particular pathways through which initial policies affect politics at a later time.⁵¹ The major contribution of this method of “historically detailed process-tracing” is that it allows for a more refined filtering of the major elements driving institutional and policy change. This approach is in line with the method of “historical explanation” best exemplified by Roberts.⁵² While Roberts notes that historians may take alternative approaches to offering these types of detailed narratives, the driving concern of such an analysis should be what specific actions or events precipitated the event or change in question;⁵³ in line with proponents of process-tracing in political science, this type of historically-informed isolation of causal processes provides not only rich detail in potentially understudied political events, but also the potential alternate explanations for the effects under study. Process-tracing, then, is more concerned with answering the question of “why?” in policy change over time, than it is

⁴⁹ Hacker, *Divided Welfare State*

⁵⁰ Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk*

⁵¹ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

⁵² Clayton Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

⁵³ Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation*, as quoted in George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, pg. 226.

with comprehensive narratives; though, when analyzing policy development, the temporal element remains of primary concern.

In each of the subsequent chapters, I identify the causal pathways to each of the three effects that I hypothesize: the differentiation of the veterans' benefit coalition; the degeneration of the coalition; and the side effects on parallel social policies during formative moments. Using the historical materials and secondary sources, I map out the process of legislative development for each of the first four G.I. Bills (and specifically their education benefit provisions). I identify the key members of the veterans' benefit coalition in their actions surrounding the bill's development, as well as how this process (and the actions of this particular group) contributed to the cohesion and effectiveness of the veterans' benefit coalition. In addition, I isolate the key changes in the veterans' education benefit policy regime that allowed for the veterans' benefit coalition to actually influence civilian social policy development – in ways that were either helpful or harmful to the expansion of those programs.

To assess the changes in both the veterans' benefit coalition and its affects on parallel policies, I utilize archival materials for any discussion of motivations, strategy, legislative intent, or statements about any of the other members of the veterans' benefit coalition that can be used as evidence of activity within the coalition affecting benefit legislation. I supplement these archival materials with Congressional testimony and reports that focus on changes to these veterans' programs, as well as secondary historical narratives concerning the political climate in which the changes to the benefits systems were taking place. Moreover, I also include an analysis of major news publications (via LexisNexis and proprietary archives of individual publications) to indicate the extent to

which media attention was following particular legislative developments, as well as to capture any statements made to the press or public by a member of the veterans’ benefit coalition. A complete table of archival sources can be found in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Archival Sources Utilized

Presidential Archives	Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library
	Harry S. Truman Presidential Library
	Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library
	John F. Kennedy Presidential Library
	Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library
	Richard Nixon Presidential Library
	Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library
Legislative Member Archives	Edith Nourse Rogers Collection
	Champ Bennett Clark Collection
	William Springer Collection
	Olin Teague Collection
	Elbert Thomas Collection
Institutional Archives	Legislative Studies Center, National Archives and Records Administration
Personal Collections	William Atherton Collection
Congressional Testimony, Hearings, and Committee Correspondence	Congressional Quarterly Database
News Media Coverage	<i>New York Times</i> archives; <i>Boston Globe</i> archives; LexisNexis database

I focus on the first four iterations of the G.I. Bill following WWII, which were signed into law in 1944, 1952, 1966, and 1972. Each of these pieces of legislation dealt expressly with veterans’ education benefits as a result of military service, though various secondary programs were also often included alongside the education provisions in each. I constrain the timeframe from 1943-1973 for two key reasons. First, the first four iterations of the G.I. Bill are the most similar in their program structure (that is, a federal system of VA-administered payments for higher education); however, there is still variance across the cases in terms of program provisions and the concurrent social policy developments that were advancing alongside those of the veterans’ benefits. Selecting

cases which feature some varying characteristics will allow me to highlight the ways in which veterans' benefit coalition influence directly led to the instances of variances between the pieces of legislation.⁵⁴

Second, the first four iterations of the G.I. Bill occurred during America's Selective Service program, the official conscription regime. After the establishment of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in 1973, veteran's benefits were indeed still offered, though their program structures shifted to voluntary contribution models (as in the 1984 Montgomery G.I. Bill). Restricting my analysis to a pre-AVF military allows me to control for the variable of voluntary military service, which could have driven the veterans' benefit coalition in different directions had their membership been concerned with programs for individuals who selected military service in an open labor market.

Plan of the Project

In Chapter 1, I begin with the genesis of modern-day reintegration programs: the 1944 G.I. Bill. Immediately following WWII, veterans' benefits (via the GI Bill) represented the most impressive social policy legislation in American history, designed to help returning veterans integrate back into the economy while simultaneously stabilizing an economy that was still in its recovery stages. Plans for demobilization that began before the end of the war (and were focused on broad-based social policies) quickly shifted to a focus on the effective integration of veterans back into the economy. This chapter identifies a veterans' benefit coalition and why they were able to shift national

⁵⁴ For a discussion of variance and the risk of selection bias in case studies, see David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics*, 49, 1 (October 1996), 56-91. For a response to the most common quantitative critiques of case studies, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, especially Chapter 4.

focus away from what conservative lawmakers touted as an unnecessary expansion of government (and “more of the same” as the New Deal era) to an exclusive focus on veterans; moreover, I suggest that the 1944 bill was as much a product of previous demands from veterans’ groups as it was a response to the demobilization needs of a post-WWII economy. The G.I. Bill was able to shift legislative attention away from broad-based education and unemployment insurance policies in exchange for offering a corrective for a demobilizing American economy (most notably, an influx of semi-trained labor), through coalition members’ influence over the National Resource Planning Board and Roosevelt’s acquiescence to veteran groups’ demands.

Chapter 2 focuses on the benefits afforded to Korean War veterans as a product of the burgeoning national security state as well as the previous experiences with the 1944 G.I. Bill. The Veterans’ Adjustment Act of 1952 featured fundamental changes to both education assistance and unemployment compensation, and creates a political debate about the size of the federal government and the organization of its agencies. The investigation of the Hoover Commission – and its plans to consolidate the veterans’ benefit program and combine it with other civilian federal programs – creates a potential point for policy change that is ultimately missed on the part of reformers, and helps illustrate the power of embedded veteran interests. Most importantly, though, the act ushers in major changes to the American higher education system, as it codifies the use of accreditation standards for federal education funding, and draws both public and private post-secondary schools into a heated debate about the market of higher education. The investigation of the previous G.I. Bill, as well as the fracture of the veterans’ benefit coalition over the 1952 legislation, creates a field of contestation over Korean War

veterans' education benefits, as well as the reliance on educational training over broad-based income security measures for domestic economic development.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the Vietnam era and the effects of major definitional changes in "veterans" within existing veterans' benefit legislation. In 1966, the U.S. undertakes a major shift in its conceptualization of veterans, including those military personnel who had served exclusively during peacetime under the category of veterans. This change follows on the heels of the Great Society initiatives and President Johnson's attempts to radically reform the American social policy system. While the Veterans' Readjustment and benefit Act of 1966 enables peacetime veterans to access federal benefits, conflict arises among the Johnson Administration, veterans' groups, and key administrators who disapproved of the new policy as well as the reductions in veterans' benefits. The fractures that had occurred during the development of the 1952 legislation continue to act as a wedge between various sets of conflicting members of the veterans' benefit coalition; moreover, several members of the coalition begin to identify with the rising conservative backlash (and its attendant racial animus), driving the coalition into further conflict.

The rise of conservatism and end of conscription is at the center of Chapter 4, which encompasses the period of 1967-1973. During this era, veterans' benefits still increased under both Nixon and Ford, despite administrations' pressure to hold benefits levels constant and make reductions to particular programs. Moreover, even though the Vietnam War G.I. Bill benefits were far less generous than those offered to WWII veterans, the access rate for these benefits among returning Vietnam veterans was higher than that of those who had fought in WWII. Even as Republican legislators pushed for

major cuts to the American welfare state, they remained supportive to the veterans' benefit system, going to far as to depart from the White House's position on the Readjustment Act of 1972. This chapter investigates how educational benefits regained some of their momentum – even as unemployment compensation came under fire – as well as how veterans' benefits maintained a privileged spot among even some of the more vocal proponents of fiscal austerity measures at the federal level. The veterans' benefit coalition remains loosely connected through its common goals, but its alliances are stressed further as the changing nature of war and society's response upends the expected responses to veterans' education benefits and the responsibility of the country toward former military personnel.

The concluding chapter reflects on the case of veterans' benefits and the lessons that it carries for scholars of institutional development, social policy (particularly in the areas of education and unemployment insurance), and American political development. I also reflect on programs that could be used as comparison cases, and how research on the G.I. Bill can help scholars in other policy fields explain changes to monumental policy legislation over time.

The influence of veteran's benefits on American social policy development carries important lessons for scholars of public policy and welfare state development; however, policymakers across different policy areas can also take heed from (or comfort in) the narrative of veterans' benefit development and its influence on comparative social policies. The ways in which the heterogeneous veterans' benefit coalition not only fractured under the strain of repeated veterans' education benefit reforms, but was able to then affect other universal social policies' development trajectories, suggests that

political coalitions may have more power than they realize, even when allied with their political adversaries. Moreover, such an account changes the traditional explanations for the rise and eventual stagnation of the American welfare state. Affording an explanatory role to the veterans' benefit regime and its supporters helps explain the maintenance of a "veteran welfare state" in the face of efforts at retrenchment and austerity, as well as the connections between veterans' benefits and parallel social policies. The story of the G.I. Bill, its supporters, and its influence on the American welfare state, all suggest a need to reevaluate our current models of social policy development and our current perceptions of the American welfare state's development trajectory in the post-WWII era.

CHAPTER 2

THE 1944 G.I. BILL, AN UNLIKELY COALITION, AND THE ROOTS OF POLICY INFLUENCE

*“Our greatest potential wealth is in the ability and resourcefulness of the young people who will be demobilized. The structure for their reallocation must be efficient and complete, but we know that no matter how vast may be the blueprints, how dynamic the execution of these plans, these young people will soon take this bomb-pocked world on their able shoulders and carry it far beyond any goal we may envision.”*⁵⁵ – Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, *Administrator of Veterans Affairs, 1945*

World War II marked the first American military conflict in which extensive economic and policy preparations for the postwar economy began before the conflict had ended (and when, to some extent, the outcome was not guaranteed). In assessing the realities of the American labor market and need for economic restructuring following the end of the conflict, President Franklin Roosevelt, legislators, bureaucrats, and policy entrepreneurs began the painstaking process of designing a set of policy prescriptions that had no prior model in either magnitude or intention. As policies for returning veterans took shape, the implications of this unprecedented social policy development were clear: a sweeping social welfare program like the G.I. Bill would fundamentally change the relationship between war and American society while establishing a new, discrete welfare system for the American veteran.⁵⁶ Federal government funding for postsecondary education was the most visible feature of the landmark legislation, and the one that not only strained the relationships of veterans’ benefit supporters, but also have significant

⁵⁵ Frank T. Hines, “The Human Side of Demobilization,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 238 (March 1945), 8.

⁵⁶ Theda Skopol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Politics of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

implications for the American education system and post-New Deal social policy planning.

The need for preparing for some 16 million veterans to return to American society became apparent to lawmakers. The educational attainment of military personnel during WWII had vastly outpaced that of WWI, and shifted the emphasis of education assistance programs from high school completion programs and short courses to postsecondary education. At the end of WWI, only two of every ten service personnel had obtained education at higher than the grade school level; by 1944, that figure had swelled to seven in ten. Twice as many service members had high school educations upon entering the military in WWII than had in WWI, and officer educational attainments continued to outpace that of enlisted personnel.⁵⁷ The increased levels of educational attainment among the service personnel returning from war in 1945 – some sixteen million of them – meant that the plans for comprehensive reintegration of former service members would necessarily focus on higher levels of postwar education.

While the idea of supporting veterans' educational goals seems ephemeral in retrospect, in reality it was part of a broader political construction that originated with plans to extend Keynesian economic policies into the Cold War era. These generous social benefits would never come to fruition, and their demise in nascent planning stages is often attributed to fear of government largesse or fatigue in a post-New Deal era, the role of the veterans' benefit coalition and its divisive politics ultimately played a hand in contributing to removing an extensive income security program regime from the table in 1944.

⁵⁷ Earl J. Mcgrath, "The Education of the Veteran", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 238 (March 1945), 77.

The creation of the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act (or G.I. Bill) serves as the starting point for a complex interaction among varying political actors in society. As Roosevelt pressured executive committees and members of Congress to begin preparing for veteran reintegration before the end of the war, varying interests soon found themselves allied behind a similar policy goal. While these interests eventually coalesced behind the final version of the G.I. Bill, their disparate policy goals outside the realm of veterans' benefits meant a constant tension within the coalition. Moreover, the coalition's work to advance benefits for veterans was at the expense of broader education and unemployment compensation policies for the entire citizenry.

Heterogeneity at the Beginning of the Veterans' Benefit Coalition

The veterans' benefit coalition – composed of actors and organizations from the federal government, veterans' groups, business, and labor – was unintentionally created through the emerging needs of the postwar economy. As political actors and policy entrepreneurs grew attentive to the failure of New Deal-era proposals and the increasing pressure of the veteran population, various elements of the veterans' benefit coalition were pulled into tacit engagement with one another in an effort to establish a generous education assistance program for returning military personnel. The various members of the coalition, though at first blush appearing to be synchronized in their policy interest of veterans' education benefits, were in fact deeply divided on the necessity and propriety of a distinct system of benefits for veterans. Moreover, members of the coalition were to some extent pulled into the coalition in defense of their own proprietary goals and interests, and were not primarily concerned about demobilizing American service

personnel. The composition of the veterans' benefit coalition by 1943 would have as much to do with the eventual structure of the G.I. Bill's education assistance program as it would with each member's navigation of the Roosevelt-era political climate (and the subsequent alterations to their political interests and methods of attaining their goals for their constituents).

The Roosevelt Administration

After Hebert Hoover's strict reaction to the Bonus Expeditionary Force and the veteran protesters seeking their adjusted compensation, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 signaled a potential political sea change for America's veterans. No longer forced to contend with Hoover's seemingly callous response to calls for government provisions, veterans turned out for Roosevelt in the general election and arguably aided significantly in his electoral victory.⁵⁸ Roosevelt, for his apparent sympathy toward the Bonus March and for the struggling working classes, did not endorse a view of the veteran population that held it as distinct or somehow more deserving of assistance than the rest of the population. Known for contending that veterans should not enjoy a special set of social rights as a result of their military service, Roosevelt was not immediately supportive of expanding veterans' benefits because he believed that a comprehensive set of social policies would benefit all citizens, veterans and non-veterans alike. He utilized his expansive executive order discretion to apply significant cuts to veterans' benefits following the National Economy Act of 1933, reminding veterans that, "the regulations issued are but an integral part of our economy

⁵⁸ Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and G.I. Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*. (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

program embracing every department and agency of the government to which every employee is making his or her contribution.”⁵⁹ Although he later rolled some of these measures back when they appeared to be too draconian in their scope and effects, Roosevelt’s administration came under fire early in its tenure for what appeared to be a sharp change in its sympathy toward the veteran population.

Roosevelt’s attitude toward veterans’ benefits grew more amenable during America’s involvement in WWII, especially as plans for demobilization began in 1938. Roosevelt actually had an outline of a plan for returning military personnel, which he discussed in one his “fireside chats” aired on July 28, 1943. In his speech he called for a “mustering out” plan for former military personnel that addressed various issues of job training and unemployment compensation. The six points of his outlined initiative included “an opportunity for members of the armed services to get further education or trade training at the cost of their Government.”⁶⁰ The Roosevelt Administration had made a rather significant change in its approach to dealing with the issue of returning veterans, one that had been jumpstarted by the political process of attempting to secure broad-based demobilization programs for the entire citizenry. The Roosevelt Administration would enter into the legislative process having already had its ambitious goals subdued by the machinations of other members of the veterans’ benefit coalition. Indeed, the one agency in which the Roosevelt Administration had likely entrusted an undue amount of political potential (the National Resources Planning Board) would soon prove to be a source of disappointment.

⁵⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Message to Veterans," April 1, 1933. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14605>.

⁶⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Fireside Chat.," July 28, 1943. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16437>.

The importance of the executive branch to the veterans' benefit coalition did not rest solely in the Oval Office: one of the most important elements of the executive branch in the G.I. Bill's development started as a very unlikely source of political potential. The Natural Resources Planning Board began in 1939 as a centralized agency for the assessment of the postwar American economy. The Board's original charter was focused on analyzing America's strengths in natural resource production, and identifying the latent potential for production both at home and abroad. The board and the Federal Security Agency were two of the victories that Roosevelt won in his attempt at executive reorganization.⁶¹ The NRPB also acted as a safe-haven for some of Roosevelt's staunchest supporters and New Deal allies, the most prominent of which was his uncle, Frederic Delano. While Delano had not garnered significant public attention in his role as chair of the National Planning Board under the Department of the Interior, his experience in business and planning did help shape the contours of the New Deal era work programs. Delano brought with him his vice chairman, political scientist Charles Merriam, whose credentials in public policy were also desirable for the NRPB's slated goals.⁶²

William Haber, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, headed the Committee on Long-Range Work and Relief Policies. Administrators from the Farm Security Administration, American Public Welfare Association, Department of Labor, and Federal Security Agency, and VA administrator also contributed to the group's research. The culmination of the NRPB's efforts was *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*,

⁶¹ Kathleen J. Frydl, *The G.I. Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65.

⁶² Glenn Altschuler and Stuart Bumin, *The G.I. Bill: A New Deal for Veterans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 40.

released in December 1941.⁶³ By and large, the NRPB recommendations in 1941 focused on public works programs supplemented by educational assistance for young Americans; this as prior attempts at public works like the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration ended several months later in 1942.⁶⁴ The NRPB recommendation that the full regime of all public aid policies fall under the administrative authority of one agency – effectively layering in more federal control over social policies and furthering government largesse – was immediately rebuked by Southern legislators.⁶⁵ In its 1941 report, the NRPB did not include veterans’ benefits in their discussion of public aid at all; rather, the report focused solely on programs directed at the entire citizenry.⁶⁶

Moreover, the NRPB recommendations that did not delineate between civilians and veterans (and instead recommended programs to benefit the entire postwar labor force) were in contrast to the growing emphasis placed on reintegrating military personnel as a necessary precondition to American economic recovery. Kathleen Frydl argues that, “in giving an early voice to postwar aims, the Board sounded as ambitious as it did detached from wartime demands. Such boldness had a welcome home in the United Kingdom, where the Nazi bombs raining over Britain had diminished the distinction between military personnel and civilians.”⁶⁷ Charles Merriam, who sat on the Board from

⁶³ Committee on Long-Range Work and Relief Policies, *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*, National Resources Planning Board, December 4, 1941 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office).

⁶⁴ Edwin Amenta and Theda Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal: World War II and the Development of Social Provision in the United States,” in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, eds. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 89-94.

⁶⁵ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 124; see also Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*

⁶⁶ National Resources Planning Board, *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*, 9; see also Amenta and Skocpol, “Redefining the New Deal,” 89-94.

⁶⁷ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 67.

its first iteration as the National Planning Board in 1933, expressed publicly that he believed the NRPB recommendations to have served as the basis for the UK's Beveridge plan of postwar reconstruction. Although the Beveridge Plan was released prior to the NRPB's report, Merriam noted that the ideas that were so harshly criticized in the American plan found support in the UK.⁶⁸ The NRPB recommendations seemed to connect back to the beginnings of the slowly-dissolving programs of the New Deal era, and the plans were met with a complete lack of funding for federal work programs.⁶⁹

However, the NRPB soon changed its tack and turned its focus to the personnel aspect of demobilization, drafting a report on demobilization of the armed forces following the end of the war.⁷⁰ Merriam argued that the NRPB's reports served as the "basis" of the G.I. Bill that was "adopted enthusiastically by Congress."⁷¹ Whereas previous reports had focused more on the general population, the NRPB's recommendations soon narrowed on the sixteen million returning service personnel as the prime target for government assistance.⁷² Based on recommendations from the Conference on Post-War Adjustment of Personnel (chaired by Floyd Reeves, a professor of education and administration, then at the University of Chicago), the NRPB called for the full slate of unemployment compensation, vocational training and rehabilitation, and educational assistance that would later be featured in the G.I. Bill. The G.I. Bill was to

⁶⁸ Charles E. Merriam, "The National Resources Planning Board: A Chapter in American Planning Experience." *American Political Science Review* 38:06 (1944): 1075-1088. 1083.

⁶⁹ Amenta and Skocpol, "Redefining the New Deal," 89.

⁷⁰ National Resources Planning Board, *Conference on Postwork Readjustment of Civilian and Military Personnel* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944).

⁷¹ Merriam, "The National Resources Planning Board," 1083-1084.

⁷² Altschuler and Bumin, *The G.I. Bill*, 40-41.

help veterans in “picking up the broken threads of interrupted education,” and a means to help them successfully enter the labor force after their compulsory service.⁷³

Although the NRPB report initially represented the best chance for Roosevelt to extend his New Deal policies into the early 1940s, the inability of the board to successfully position work assistance programs as viable responses to the postwar economic planning debate only further hampered any hope that the New Deal coalition had in restoring the efforts of the “alphabet agencies” like the WPA. The NRPB recommendations would be one of the most important points at which coalition members were able to limit the field of viable policy options for postwar economic planning, even for a Congress that was ready to take decisive action.

Congress

Although New Deal policies had thrown ideological divides into sharp relief during the prewar period, the need for reintegration policies brought both Republicans and Democrats to the table in Congress. At issue was how both sides would reconcile their competing perspectives on federal intervention, as well as the extent to which income security policies would feature prominently for a demobilized society. As with the broader veterans’ benefit coalition, the Congressional allies of veterans would come from opposing sides of the aisle, but with a common goal of providing educational benefits for returning military personnel. Their own personal agendas regarding the New Deal, combined with the widespread popularity of assisting veterans upon their return, made for similar policy goals among legislatures, even as their individual perspectives on social welfare policy differed widely.

⁷³ Merriam, “The National Resources Planning Board,” 1084.

One of the most critical figures in the House was Rep. John Rankin, a Mississippi Democrat whose racial animus was well-known his political dealings. Rankin chaired the House Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation (the precursor to the modern-day Veterans' Affairs Committee), and was known for being amenable to veterans' benefit issues in general. However, his concern with a potential readjustment program lay squarely in the question of state control: how would a major federal economic intervention for returning veterans affect southern states' autonomy?⁷⁴

Another important player in the House was Rep. Edith Nourse Rogers, a Massachusetts Republican who had worked with disabled veterans in the Red Cross. Although Rogers despised New Deal largesse and federal intervention, she was especially concerned with issues related to veterans (most notably healthcare concerns, although later her interests would extend to broader issues of reintegration).⁷⁵ Thus, two of the most important advocates for veterans within the House were united against a major federal intervention in social policy, though for different reasons. Rankin's concerns were focused on the potential national-level administration of a major social welfare program (even if it was directed only at a "deserving" subset of the population), while Rogers' concerns were with reining in the potential for another New Deal era response to threats of large-scale unemployment and the need for skilled workers in a new labor market.

The list of power players in the Senate regarding veterans' legislation was more difficult to determine. Legislation concerning veterans' benefits was split among the Finance and Labor and Public Works Committees in the Senate; without a devoted standing committee, different portions of veterans' benefits were often assigned to either

⁷⁴ Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White*; Frydl, *The GI Bill*.

⁷⁵ Marcy Kaptur, *Women of Congress: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1996).

committee. However, Elbert Thomas (D-UT) was on both the Military Affairs and Education and Labor Committees. Thomas was a former professor of political science at the University of Utah, and had been nominated by the Utah Democratic State Convention to challenge (and ultimately defeat) Reed Smoot in the 1932 election.⁷⁶ A loyal supporter of Roosevelt and the New Deal initiatives, Thomas was also the chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor, and characterized by a calm and steady attitude that would stand in marked contrast to more bombastic legislative personalities (like Representative John Rankin).⁷⁷

Thus, while the House held conservative Democrats and Republicans prepared to assist veterans for reasons more amenable to conservative voters, the main driver in the Senate was a New Deal Democrat with prior experience in education policy and labor policy (having supported the establishment of the National Labor Relations Board). Despite their opposing agendas, these Congressional leaders figured prominently in the policy process surrounding the 1944 G.I. Bill. Moreover, the distinct differences between and among these legislators highlights the competing interests at work in the veterans' benefit coalition. Legislators across the aisles would soon find themselves aligned with the powerful veterans' organizations, which had their own agendas regarding how veterans should be treated upon their return, as well as how the federal and state governments should construct the policy regime to support these reintegration plans.

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, "To Run Against Smoot: Professor E.D. Thomas Named for Senate by Utah Democrats," September 4 1932; *New York Times*, "Smoot Upset Ends 30 Years in Senate," November 10, 1932.

⁷⁷ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 122.

The Veterans' Organizations

As the plans for the postwar economic recovery programs began to take shape, the veterans' groups were poised to make large demands of legislators and Roosevelt – and potentially achieve their goals. The ability of the groups to mobilize a large and relatively captive membership (some of which was cross-listed among more than one veterans' group, depending on prior military service) was one element of their political power. The rest of it lay squarely within the American Legion's legislative prowess, relative efficiency, and the dearth of truly competitive plans in late 1943 and early 1944. The veterans' groups would soon emerge as one of the most important – if not the most critical – member of the veterans' benefit coalition, and the ones whose policy proposals would eventually help drive a wedge in between many of the other members.

The political strength of the veterans' groups became most apparent during the interwar years, as veterans of WWI struggled to deal with the same economic pressures as the rest of the country and began to mobilize for adjusted compensation, or what popularly became known as a “bonus.” Though framed by opponents as an extra incentive for military service, the Legion, VFW, and other veterans groups framed the adjusted compensation as repayment for the opportunity cost of military service borne by WWI veterans. Veterans' groups were able to mobilize alongside Progressive reformers – the same ones who earlier had decried the excesses and corrupt administration of the Civil War benefits system – and influence key Congressional supporters to push an adjusted compensation measure through the legislature. The Bonus March, in which veterans (mobilized by various veterans organizations) camped out in Washington D.C. in protest, only furthered to establish veterans as an important social and political group

within American society. The politics of the bonus were critical to the establishment and success of these organizations, as they further reinforced their political efficacy. The mobilization for the bonus was even able to bring together the more conservative Legion with other veterans' groups in an alliance supporting further benefits for veterans.⁷⁸

The American Legion, founded by a group of officers who had served in the American Expeditionary Force, was established in 1919 with the expressed purpose of providing a vehicle for the mobilization of WWI military personnel:

The American Legion was in no sense a 'spontaneous expression of purpose by those millions of Americans who helped crush autocracy.' On the contrary, it is evident that it was intended to circumvent any such spontaneous organization on the part of ex-service men. An organization of ex-service men seemed inevitable at the close of the War. The morale of the American army after the armistice was unsatisfactory. A small group of high ranking military officers in the American Expeditionary Forces was called together to devise ways and means to overcome this lack of morale. The American Legion not only promised a means to improved morale through providing an avenue of wholesome diversion for ex-service men but it also provided an organization along lines acceptable to the prevailing leadership.⁷⁹

The Legion, then, was from its inception a more elite-driven organization than its fellow veterans' groups, having been created by the officer class and representing some of the most powerful business leaders after their return from military conflict. Throughout its early years, the Legion continued to galvanize its membership around the issue of veterans' benefits, using existing federal and state benefits as inroads to criticize government care of veterans and lobby for more generous benefits.⁸⁰ The Legion would

⁷⁸ Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March*.

⁷⁹ William Gellermann, *The American Legion as Educator* (New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938), 19.

⁸⁰ Gellermann, *The American Legion as Educator*; Thomas A. Rumer, *The American Legion: An Official History* (New York, NY: M. Evans and Company, Inc., 1990); Marquis James, *A History of the American*

emerge during the legislative battle over the G.I. Bill as one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the country, and would ultimately add construction of the G.I. Bill – as well as the passage of the veterans’ education assistance program – to its credits.

The membership of the American Legion in 1943 – at some 1,750,000 members – established it as the largest of the major veterans’ organizations. Content with Rankin’s leadership in the House, the Legion was willing to let the Committee on World War Veterans’ Legislation (the predecessor to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs) handle the development of veterans’ benefits for returning service personnel.⁸¹

Likewise, the smaller Veterans of Foreign Wars (at about 500,000 strong) was willing to place its faith in Rankin’s committee. VFW Commander in Chief Charles Schoeninger remarked in testimony before the committee that, “Enemies of veteran legislation have often accused this committee of being too far out in front of the Congress and the people in approving the obligation of public funds for veteran benefits.”⁸² At their national encampment in September 1943, the VFW had adopted a ten-point plan for the reintegration of World War II veterans into the American economy. Their second point included federal educational aid to honorably discharged military personnel who could not complete their education due to their military service. Interestingly enough, the VFW called for independence of the VA for medical, vocational, and disability programs for

Legion (New York, NY: William Green, 1923); William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1989); Thomas B. Littlewood, *Soldiers Back Home: The American Legion in Illinois, 1919-1939* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

⁸¹ Warren H. Atherton. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation, United States House of Representatives, October 14, 1943 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

⁸² Charles Schoeninger. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation, United States House of Representatives, October 14, 1943 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

veterans, but made no specific recommendation as to whether the agency should also be in charge of the education assistance program.⁸³

Veterans groups continued to remain politically salient through the debate surrounding the G.I. Bill as well, and were instrumental in the legislation's creation and content. The process of developing the Bill would, however, throw their minor differences into harsh relief, as the groups' membership bases and interests collided during the legislative process. Moreover, the groups' politics – namely, those of the American Legion – would be the catalyst for major disagreements about how the veterans' education assistance program would work on the ground. The veterans' groups would ultimately side with conservative Democrats and Republicans – as well as business lobby groups – to help curtail the influence of pro-New Deal legislators and executive agencies (like the NRPB). Moreover, the groups would provide the necessary political muscle to maintain the VA's sole discretionary authority and administration of the veterans' benefit regime, even as calls for alternative administrative arrangements came from various actors and institutions. The veterans' groups, then, were poised to be one of the most important – and divisive – members of the veterans' benefit coalition as the G.I. Bill came into development.

The Veterans' Administration

As WWII drew to a close, the VA was facing its first demobilization crisis as a unified body. Following the pension corruption of the Civil War era, the VA had been

⁸³ Veterans of Foreign Wars, "Ten-Point Post-War Veteran Welfare Program Adopted by the 44th National Encampment of the VFW," September 30, 1944. Reprinted in Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation, United States House of Representatives, October 14, 1943 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

split into discrete agencies that dealt with pensions and war risk insurance separately through the end of World War I. By 1931, however, the Veterans' Bureau had been reintegrated into a single unit, with the hopes that a unitary processing system would help allay much of the backlog and claim mismanagement that had plagued the administrators of the modest WWI veterans' benefit programs.⁸⁴

Though recently reformed, the VA was not insulated against the New Deal-era governmental realignment. Roosevelt had attempted, in fact, to remove the centralized control of the VA to the proposed Department of Welfare in his original 1937 executive reorganization plan. However the failure of Roosevelt's "packing" attempt and alienation of conservative Democrats from the party established a strong opposition to any further encroachment of executive power on the Roosevelt Administration's behalf.⁸⁵ Additionally, the threat of the VA being transferred into a new Department of Welfare set the veterans' organizations on the defensive, and they lobbied heavily against any proposed changes to the independence of the VA.⁸⁶

The VA was able to maintain its independence by virtue of the veterans' groups being so invested in the agency's success (as their mouthpiece to not only the President, but Congress as well). In fact, by June 1943, Administrator Hines was seeking more influence for the Veterans' Administration than what the White House was willing to offer. In a memo to Roosevelt, Bureau of the Budget Director Harold Smith noted that Hines was pressing for "full military status" for the VA, in line with the Departments of the Army and Navy. The Administration tried to placate Hines by offering to station

⁸⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the evolution of the VA from the post-Civil War era, see Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

⁸⁵ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 64.

⁸⁶ Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization, 1936-1939*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 80-81.

active-duty personnel at VA hospitals as workers (thereby allowing Hines a supervisory position over active military personnel), but Hines ignored the offer. Smith offered to Roosevelt to let Hines “take his problem to Congress without any commitment as to its relation to your program.”⁸⁷

Organized Labor

Though under-referenced in the discussion about the G.I. Bill, the role of organized labor was an important one during the debate about postwar veterans’ benefits. While both labor unions and veterans’ groups looked ahead to swelling membership, both also had to be concerned about the changing political contexts in which they would soon have to exert power. While veterans’ groups concerned themselves with VA autonomy and securing a comprehensive set of benefits for their anticipated constituencies, organized labor had other concerns; namely, how would the unions utilize postwar veterans’ benefits to increase their influence in the American workforce, and could they leverage the new veteran population to their advantage in this initiative?

Leadership within the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) recognized the growing importance of an alliance (or at least the semblance of one) with the returning veteran population; taking any position on veterans’ benefits that would appear to run counter to the liberalization of education and employment services would paint labor unions as “callous to the sacrifices and needs” of the returning service personnel.⁸⁸ Indeed, labor’s apparent antipathy toward the American war effort in the past – and the

⁸⁷ Memo to Roosevelt from Harold Smith, Bureau of the Budget, June 22 1943. White House Central Files, Veterans’ Administration (VA). Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁸ Jennifer Brooks, “Unexpected Foes: World War II Veterans and Labor in the Postwar South,” *Labor: Studies of Working Class History in the Americas*, 7 (2010), 33.

increasing reliance on the heuristic of military service as the only acceptable form of contribution to the wartime economic effort – placed it in a precarious position as national attention turned toward expanding the veterans’ benefit regime.

To help establish the beneficial connection to the veteran population, CIO president Philip Murray and members of the executive committee formed the CIO Veterans Committee in 1943. The committee was especially concerned with disseminating information on employment guidelines to CIO affiliates, but would later become more vocal in Congressional testimony on the G.I. Bill.⁸⁹ In addition, the utilization of white veterans from the South to campaign on behalf of the CIO’s Southern Organizing Committee (SOC), a membership and organizing drive (called “Operation Dixie”) designed to increase the CIO’s presence within Southern industry. As the SOC director Van Bittner noted, “at least if a young man had spent three or four years in the South Pacific, in Europe or in Asia...nobody could accuse him or them of attempting to destroy American because they happened to be members of the CIO organizing staff.”⁹⁰ The necessity behind securing veteran support lay at the heart of the strategy behind the CIO’s “Operation Dixie,” though the campaign was effectively stalled by 1946 as the more radical and communist elements were purged from the SOC and CIO more broadly. Though CIO leadership thought that an increased share of the veteran population could make up the difference of the purged radical element, the failure of Operation Dixie to establish the CIO’s presence in southern industrial sectors would eventually be tied (at least in part) to the inability of leadership to successfully mobilize the veteran workforce

⁸⁹ Brooks, “Unexpected Foes”; Anastasia Mann, “All for One, but Most for Some: Veteran Politics and the Shaping of the Welfare State during the World War II Era” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2003).

⁹⁰ Quoted in Brooks, “Unexpected Foes,” 36.

in the South.⁹¹ This failure on the part of the CIO to gain membership (and moreover, credibility at the national level among a leery American public) was a direct result of the process of developing the G.I. Bill benefit program: a costly investment for the CIO and American labor more broadly.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was differently situated as the process of veterans' benefit reform gained national attention. AFL leadership was characterized as more conservative, or certainly less progressive when compared to that of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) especially after William Green succeeded Samuel Gompers in its leadership.⁹² Like the CIO, the AFL had begun an aggressive campaign to recruit new members in the South; however, unlike the CIO, the AFL was less concerned with racial segregation in areas and factories, and often turned a blind eye to discriminatory practices while it attempted to build membership.⁹³ While the CIO struggled with the extent to which it could allow the practices of Southern states to divide its potential members, the AFL sidestepped questions of racial equality and continued increasing its membership base through aggressive campaigning. The AFL would soon find itself on the outskirts of social policy development as the government turned a blind eye to the domestic labor force and concentrated its attention on the returning service personnel – exactly as the veterans' organizations and others in the veterans' benefit coalition had planned.

⁹¹ Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

⁹² Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*.

⁹³ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 107.

The Coalition at the Outset

Overall, the veterans' benefit coalition was comprised of several sets of political actors and institutions with a wide range of interests and ideological commitments entering the postwar planning phase. Though New Deal fatigue would indeed be a driving political factor throughout deliberations about how to address the demobilization of the American war effort, the internal politics of the veterans' benefit coalition remains a critical explanation for the ensuing political debate over the 1944 G.I. Bill. The conflicted nature of the coalition, combined with its inability to converge on both the type of veterans' benefits needed and the best method through which those benefits would be administered, established powerful fault lines within the coalition as 1939 drew to a close. The coming battle over the G.I. Bill would deepen the extant divides between members of the coalition, with many of the disagreements turning on the role that the VA would play in the administration of the benefits, as well as the ways in which the benefits could potentially aggravate racial animus in the southern states. It would ultimately be the process of creating the G.I. Bill that would allow certain members of the coalition to make major political gains, while sowing the seeds for explosive interactions for years to come.

The Strain of Policy Development

Although the veterans' benefit coalition appeared to be working toward a unified goal, the legislative process surrounding the creation of the G.I. Bill soon exposed friction within the coalition. The various interests that were invested in the passage of veterans' education benefits were still beholden to their respective constituencies, and as

such were restrained in their ability to potentially advocate for particular provisions within the legislation. The one member of the coalition that seemed to have a blank check from its membership to pursue the G.I. Bill was the American Legion. The role of the Legion especially would highlight the imbalance of power in the coalition, as the American Legion moved to center stage in bringing the bill to Congress.

Henry Colmery, a past National Commander of the Legion, would be one of the driving forces behind the legislation. A former lawyer and veteran, Colmery gained friendship with Representative Edith Nourse Rogers during a debate over appropriations for a veterans' hospital.⁹⁴ Colmery and fellow Legion member (and former Commander) John Stelle drafted the basis for the G.I. Bill during a Legion-enforced sequestration in December 1943 and January 1944, and whose connections to the World War Veterans' Committee would help expedite the bill's passage. The Legion drafted the "Bill of Rights for G.I. Joe and G.I. Jane," a comprehensive piece of legislation that addressed education, medical benefits, disability and unemployment compensation, and various other types of government subsidies (such as housing and farm aid) for returning service personnel.⁹⁵ The Legion mobilized the recent psychological research emerging at the time, which suggested that veterans would be unable to successfully return to the workforce unless they received proper training; worse yet, these veterans might actually be more of a harm to society than a benefit.⁹⁶ Framing the debate about reintegration in terms of a forthcoming crisis was one of the major ways in which the Legion was able to gain both popular and legislative attention. Similarly, the shift in rhetoric towards the "deserving"

⁹⁴ Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The G.I. Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Canada: Brassey's, Inc., 1996), 119-121.

⁹⁵ Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*; Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*; Altschuler and Bumin, *The G.I. Bill*; Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*.

⁹⁶ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 106-110.

postwar hero meant that military personnel would be lauded for their achievements while domestic workers who had taken part in the war effort (including union labor) would be relegated to inferior positions in the postwar society.⁹⁷

The Legion's framing had immediate consequences for the tenuous alliance among the veterans' groups. The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) – which identified itself as the “smallest of the large organizations, but largest of the small organizations”⁹⁸ – immediately took a stand against the Legion's framing of the need for postwar education. The DAV decried the method by which the Legion collapsed the issues of disabled veterans with able-bodied veterans, thereby markedly expanding the VA's jurisdiction (not to mention its potential program oversight). By effectively framing all veterans as being in need of the same types of services that had heretofore been limited to those disabled through military service, the Legion exploded the concept of the “deserving veteran” and gave legislators an inroad for expanding the veterans' benefit regime far beyond its prior scope.⁹⁹

Similarly, the VFW did not fall immediately in line with the Legion in supporting the omnibus legislation. The Legion was concerned that the education assistance benefits were too easily conflated with adjusted compensation, the official term for the “bonus” that had become so politically volatile just a few years' prior.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the VFW claimed that the Legion bill's “omnibus” quality did not render it a panacea for postwar economic revitalization, and that such legislation might actually negatively impact the

⁹⁷ Mann, “All for Some.”

⁹⁸ Omar Ketchum. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation, United States House of Representatives, October 14, 1943 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

⁹⁹ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 110-111.

¹⁰⁰ Omar Ketchum. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation Regarding H.R. 3764 and S. 1767, United States House of Representatives, January-March 1944 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

disabled veterans already being serviced by the VA.¹⁰¹ The Legion's initiative in drafting the veterans' benefit legislation did not draw the veterans' groups closer together; paradoxically, the common goal of securing better living and working conditions for former military personnel actually drive a wedge in the veterans' benefit coalition. The individual group interests could not be subordinated to the common goal of omnibus legislation, and as such the fractures in the coalition began to emerge at the outset of the legislative battle over the bill.

The veterans' groups, during their debates both before Congress and in the media, began to worry about the ability of the VA to hold onto its administrative authority over the benefit regime. Although the Federal Security Agency was one of the few of Roosevelt's political endeavors that narrowly escaped the crackdown against the 1937 executive reorganization, it was still on thin political ice at the beginning of the legislative process surrounding the G.I. Bill. In September 1943, a column in the *Washington Post* that had speculated about the VA being absorbed into the FSA sparked an immediate reaction from the Legion. National Commander Roane Waring wrote to Roosevelt's secretary Stephen Early in an attempt to verify the rumor, stating that the "expressed mandates of the American Legion down through its years of existence are directed to the independence of the Veterans' Administration from any other agency, and to its responsibility to the President and Congress direct."¹⁰² In a memo to Budget Director Harold Smith, Early referenced the Legion's concerns and added, "I hop there is no truth to this rumor...to my opinion something should be said, particularly if the rumor

¹⁰¹ Altschuler and Bumin, *The G.I. Bill*, 64-65.

¹⁰² Letter from Roane Waring to Stephen Early. September 2, 1943. White House Central Files, Veterans' Administration Files, Box 0108, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

is without basis or fact. The Legion is entitled to this information, I believe.”¹⁰³ Early reassured Waring that the VA would retain its independence apart from the FSA, and that there were no intentions to bring the VA under the umbrella of the FSA in the future.¹⁰⁴ The veterans’ groups, despite their in-fighting and disagreements about the ways in which the government should address veterans in the postwar era, seemed to understand that holding on to the VA’s influence in government – and its independence from other agencies – was the most potent force they had to affect political change.

The House began hearings on the Legion Bill in January of 1944, and continued through March of the same year. Title II of the legislation focused on the education assistance for non-disabled veterans, and it was at this point that the Legion stressed the economic implications for the broader citizenry (and not just the returning service personnel). Testifying before Congress, Legion National Commander Warren Atherton stressed that there would be a “very, very great problem of fitting eleven or twelve million service men and women back into the economic structure of the country.”¹⁰⁵

Edith Rogers, a staunch Republican from Massachusetts who rallied against the largesse of New Deal programs, questioned the ability of the VA to handle to education assistance claims in addition to the predicted increase in medical and disability claims. Rogers asked Legion National Commander Warren Atherton (before the House World War Veterans Legislation Committee) if the VA could handle the program better than an alternative department. Atherton made the Legion’s previous preference clear when he

¹⁰³ Memo from Stephen Early to Harold Smith, September 6 1943. White House Central Files, Veterans’ Administration Files, Box 0108, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Stephen Early to Roane Waring, September 16 1943 White House Central Files, Veterans’ Administration Files, Box 0108, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁰⁵ Warren Atherton. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation Regarding H.R. 3764 and S. 1767, United States House of Representatives, January-March 1944 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 15.

claimed that the VA would not only have the best experience in administering the education program, but that splitting up the education assistance program from the other veterans' benefit policies would lead to confusion, mishandled claims, and even competition among the VA and other agencies “to try to handle more of this and more of that.”¹⁰⁶

Warren Atherton, the Commander of the Legion, railed against Rankin, who he claimed was stalling the report of the G.I. Bill out of committee due to his disdain for the unemployment compensation provisions of the bill. Atherton noted that others who had not served in the military during the war – both the “loyal war worker” and the “draft dodger” – would be able to lay claim to unemployment protections while the veteran could not find employment opportunities.¹⁰⁷

For the CIO – and labor unions in general – one of the most difficult areas to navigate was the racial animus of the Southern states and the resulting effects that these pro-segregation politics had upon labor's ability to mobilize. While unions sought to capitalize on the resurgence of veterans back into the American labor market (and potentially a better trained and more educated labor force at that, due to the potential benefits of the G.I. Bill), the Jim Crow South presented intense obstacles for organizing at the local level. This difficulty in determining the best course of action for mobilizing Southern workers – combined with the opposition of business leaders

Interestingly, by this point the Roosevelt Administration was well in line with the pervasive call for a generous education assistance program for veterans, though perhaps

¹⁰⁶ Warren Atherton. Testimony before the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation Regarding H.R. 3764 and S. 1767, United States House of Representatives, January-March 1944 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 16.

¹⁰⁷ *The New York Times*, “Atherton Assails Rankin for Delay,” April 22, 1944.

was not ready to extend the timeframe as far as the veterans' groups would have liked. After his July 1943 fireside chat laid out the general premise of the need to educate veterans, Roosevelt elaborated on his plans in a speech to Congress on October 27 of the same year. In his address, Roosevelt called for up to one year of college assistance for returning service personnel, with a "limited number" holding special aptitude receiving up to two or three years of education assistance.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, White House Special Counsel Samuel Rosenmann did not note the discrepancy between the more generous Legion bill and that offered by Roosevelt in his earlier speeches. In a memo to Roosevelt comparing the Administration's preferred provisions and those contained in the G.I. Bill as passed, Rosenthal only noted that, "the president...recommended the enactment of legislation providing post-war educational opportunities for service personnel."¹⁰⁹ However, in a memo to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosenmann noted that the Bill carried out Roosevelt's recommendations "with a few exceptions."¹¹⁰

Rosenmann did not highlight the discrepancy between Roosevelt's recommendation for the duration of benefits and those outlined by the Legion (and which eventually made it into the G.I. Bill), but it is important to note that Roosevelt's original guidelines for the education assistance benefits were significantly expanded through the efforts of the Legion and its supporters. Far from being a way to recover lost time in postsecondary education or to take advantage of so-called "refresher" courses being developed for returning military personnel, the benefits as enacted by the G.I. Bill meant

¹⁰⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Message to Congress on the Education of War Veterans.," October 27, 1943. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16333>.

¹⁰⁹ Memo from Samuel Rosenmann to Franklin Roosevelt, "Comparison of GI Bill and President's Recommendations," Samuel Rosenmann Files, Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁰ Memo from Samuel Rosenmann to Eleanor Roosevelt, April 27 1944. Samuel Rosenmann Files, Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

a wholesale funding of college education was available for millions of American veterans. Such an extensive program was not originally outlined by the Roosevelt administration, and the White House did not appear willing to attempt to constrain the benefit package back to its original vision once the legislative battle had begun.

In a letter to Senator Elbert Thomas, American Council on Education President George Zook noted that demobilization plans that included the higher education sector would indeed have comprehensive effects for the country's economic development. Zook noted, "In a very real sense the problem is, therefore, not only one of helping those young people whose education has been interrupted or shortened by service in the armed forces, but also one of national interest."¹¹¹

The American Council on Education had, in fact, been anticipating the integration of higher education aid into demobilization plans for some time. Although education assistance had not been a provision of prior programs for veterans following military conflicts, the Council was clearly anticipating that postsecondary schools would play a role in the forthcoming reintegration planning. In the summer of 1943, the Council solicited the opinions of its member institutions through a formal survey, and collected responses from over 230 colleges and universities (split evenly between private and public institutions). The consensus of the questionnaire results suggested that the Council's membership were receptive to some program of federal aid at the individual level, and that (unremarkably) the postsecondary schools were reluctant to accommodate the influx of students using any type of institutional subsidies. The Council's stated position was that it would support investment at the federal level in the veteran

¹¹¹ Letter from George F. Zook to Elbert D. Thomas. August 23, 1943. Elbert Thomas Archives, Box 48, Folder 4, Utah State Historical Society.

reintegration effort through education assistance, but that it would prefer if state- and local-level accreditation procedures were in place to ensure that reputable institutions were in receipt of the funds.¹¹² At the same time, the Council was also reporting to the NRPB an equally vague set of recommendations that placed the onus for postwar education training funds on the federal government, without specifying a particular method of administration or delineation of eligibility criteria. Moreover, the suggestions were based on a small program in the state of Wisconsin, which had awarded modest stipends to WWI veterans who were state residents and seeking education assistance after high school.¹¹³

In October 1943, Senator Elbert Thomas (D-UT) introduced S. 1509, “The Servicemen’s Education and Training Act of 1943.” The bill called for postsecondary and vocational training aid for veterans who had served at least six months since the beginning of WWII, and included a modest subsidy of \$50 per month to cover lodging and other expenses related to undertaking a college or vocational degree. Most notably, the bill was silent on the subject of administration of the veteran education assistance program, and did not refer to a specific agency in reference to implementation or oversight.¹¹⁴ The senator had been meeting with representatives from both the American Council on Education and certain postsecondary schools,¹¹⁵ and the bill represented the ideals of demobilization that were quickly taking hold at the national level. Thomas

¹¹² American Council on Education, “Higher Education and National Defense.” Bulletin. August 16, 1943. Elbert Thomas Archives, Box 48, Folder 4, Utah State Historical Society.

¹¹³ Bennett, *When Dreams Came True*, 86-89.

¹¹⁴ Draft of S. 1509 “A Bill to Provide for the Education and Training of all Members of the Armed Forces and the Merchant Marine after their Discharge or Conclusion of Service, and for Other Purposes,” Elbert Thomas Archives, Box 48, Folder 4, Utah State Historical Society.

¹¹⁵ Letters from Hunter College and American Council on Education, n.d., Elbert Thomas Archives, Box 48, Folder 4, Utah State Historical Society.

introduced his legislation to the committee, and attempted to wrap up the hearing on the proposal by mid-December.¹¹⁶

A backlash against the bill immediately followed, coming from a multitude of angles and which would eventually squelch the Thomas bill (to the satisfaction of both the veterans' groups and some of the postsecondary institutions). Initially, some vocational schools and training facilities expressed concern over the Thomas bill's lack of stipulation of agency control, claiming that it would effectively present Roosevelt with a "blank check" to the federal government, rather than leaving the power to administer the program in the hands of the states and localities (for which groups like the American Vocational Association and National Council of Chief State School Officers expressed a preference). Perhaps most importantly, the vocational and state schools were concerned that the Thomas bill would provide the leeway needed for Roosevelt to either create a new agency to administer the veterans' education benefit program, or place power over the program in the hands of an agency with no experience in higher education program administration.¹¹⁷

Though the Thomas bill was destined to come into direct conflict with the Rankin- and Legion-backed plan emerging from the House, the resistance on the part of educators to the Thomas bill foreshadowed coming conflicts about the administration of the education assistance program. As May began, the House entered into deliberations about the G.I. Bill and the question of administering veterans' education benefits more broadly. The question of state administration loomed large as the hearing opened, and immediately drew a line in the House between two distinct groups: those who wanted the

¹¹⁶ Bennett, *When Dreams Came True*, 123.

¹¹⁷ Benjamin Fine, "Educators Oppose Plan for Veterans," *The New York Times*, December 16, 1943.

VA to administer a veterans' education assistance program, and those who (for a variety of reasons) stood opposed to the agency having control over the policy program. Rankin argued on behalf of the VA, noting that he was "in favor of keeping the rights of the States and keeping as many bureaucrats out as possible."¹¹⁸

One veterans' group that was not completely aligned with the stated goals of the fellow veterans' organizations was that of the Disabled American Veterans. As the House continued deliberations on the legislation, DAV national director Millard Rice warned that the proposed legislation would "overload" the Veterans' Administration. Because the agency would be vested with not only disability claims (as was the primary interest of the DAV), but also the education program (and associated programs for reintegration, Rice argued that the VA would not be able to keep abreast of the large influx of claims that would soon materialize. "The Veterans Administration," Rice claimed presciently, "would shortly become a badly overloaded 'administrative monstrosity.'"¹¹⁹

The Legion would emerge with the major victory. Addressing fellow former members of the Legion, then-National Commander Warren Atherton claimed, "The Legion and Auxiliary have had very little recognition of the great service they rendered to the Nation and the Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, through the self-help provisions of the G.I. Bill. Few beneficiaries know who made it possible for them to start a new life."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *The New York Times*, "House is Divided on Veterans' Bill," May 12, 1944.

¹¹⁹ *The New York Times*, "Urges Amending GI Bill," May 15, 1944.

¹²⁰ Letter from Warren Atherton to Harry Colmery et al. September 26, 1967, Warren H. Atherton Papers, 1891-1976. MSS 165. Box 2 Folder 11. Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

Spillover, Spillback, and the Influence of Veterans' Benefits on Social Policy

The End of the New Deal Era Hope: A Focus on Veterans, Not Citizens

The process of developing the G.I. Bill led to a new focus on the American veteran within both government and society. The Legion had consciously framed the veteran as a hero in need of increased attention and governmental support, and in doing so had created a privileged class of citizens as well as a more powerful lobbying coalition. A solicitor in the White House Office of Special Counsel noted in a memo to Roosevelt advisor Samuel Rosenmann that the G.I. Bill would help strengthen the ability of the veterans' organizations (specifically the Legion, VFW, and DAV) to assist in the mustering-out process when military personnel returned home.¹²¹ The G.I. Bill would be the beginning of veterans' groups' influence in politics as they became an integral part of maintaining, administering, and reforming the veterans' benefit regime through the autonomy offered by the VA.

In a letter to White House Special Counsel Samuel Rosenmann, VA Administrator Frank Hines notes that Roosevelt's approval of the G.I. Bill "rounds out the Government's program, in so far as veterans' benefits are concerned, for restoring out service men and women as nearly as possible to the status they would have occupied except for [military] service..."¹²² Indeed, the G.I. Bill stand in stark relief to the New Deal era programs which had focused on universal social benefits and large-scale income security initiatives. The G.I. Bill, though by appearances a piece of legislation narrowly targeted to benefit a subset of the population, took the place of broad-based policies for a

¹²¹ Memo from Edward Odom to Samuel Rosenmann, Samuel Rosenmann Files Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹²² Letter from Frank T. Hines to Samuel Rosenmann. June 19, 1944. Samuel Rosenmann Files Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

postwar economy in the years following the end of the conflict. Despite the National Resource Planning Board's recommendations for more work-assistance programs, or the campaigns by the labor unions to increase the presence of the American worker, the eventual outcome of demobilization planning was legislation constructed to simultaneously benefit sixteen million people while foreclosing parallel policies for the rest of the country.

Roosevelt, as expected, garnered praise from the veteran population for the passage of the G.I. Bill which was, as Senator Bennett Champ Clark claimed, "received with acclaim and due appreciation not only by the veterans of all wars, but by the mothers and fathers and loved ones on the home front in the present conflict."¹²³ After returning from a country-wide tour, VA Administrator Frank Hines sent a memo to Roosevelt (via Roosevelt's close friend and advisor, Edwin Watson) that he was "optimistic on the political prospects" because "the veterans...are all for the President."¹²⁴ The development of specified policies for veterans would serve to increase the education and social mobility of an entire generational cohort – one that would use its increased resources and civic skills to become heavily involved in politics and associational life.¹²⁵

Changes to Higher Education Policy

Professors hypothesized that postwar higher education would actually be more efficient, due to universities' needs to handle the exigencies of mobilization and the

¹²³ Senator Bennett Champ Clark, Speech at Fayette, Missouri. July 22, 1944. Champ Bennett Clark Collection (Folder 976), State Historical Society of Missouri.

¹²⁴ Memo from Edwin Watson to Franklin Roosevelt. July 8 1944. Samuel Rosenmann Files Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹²⁵ Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*.

permeation of war's effects into the classrooms. One educator argued that "the premium put on speed in training for war functions has resulted in the squeezing out of water and vapor from courses of study."¹²⁶ Post-secondary schools did in fact adapt to the onslaught of veterans, but not without a period of painful growth that threw into sharp contrast the higher education system's inability to meet the needs of a large influx of students. As returning veterans crowded classrooms and dormitories, schools revamped curricula and focused on more "practical" or applied degrees tailored to a mature veteran student.¹²⁷

Wilbur Cohen – who would later become the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, predicted that the veterans' benefit regime would not only continue to be generous in comparison to that of other countries, but that the entitlements in the programs would continue to be liberalized as time went on.¹²⁸ Indeed, the veterans' education assistance program would become codified and renewed with each of America's military engagements. It would be future iterations of the legislation that would create even more changes in American higher education, as the provision of payments directly to universities under the 1944 G.I. Bill would become a point of contestation for reformers in the early 1950s.

The Rise of the Veterans' Administration

Perhaps the most important effect of the G.I. Bill's codification of a generous veterans' benefit system is the durable shift in the role of the VA in American politics. From the debates about how to structure the education assistance program to the

¹²⁶ Louis Wirth, "Postwar Political and Social Conditions and Higher Education" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 231 (January 1944), 154-162. 155.

¹²⁷ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*.

¹²⁸ Wilbur J. Cohen, "The Federal Government's Program for Ex-Servicemen," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 238 (March 1945), 64.

questions about state versus federal administration of all veterans' benefits, the proposal to locate the power over veterans' benefits into a singular agency moved to the forefront as the most politically viable option, if not the most logical for benefit administration.

In a memo from Solicitor Edward Odom to White House Special Counsel Samuel Rosenmann, Odom notes that the administrative provisions of the legislation are, according to the House committee, "not intended to be the last word on the subject."¹²⁹

Indeed the VA's standing was not completely ensured by the signing of the G.I. Bill, though the legislation and its attendant swell in policy provisions would soon elevate the VA to a major political player in the years to come. VA Administrator Frank Hines argued, ultimately unsuccessfully, for a seat at Cabinet meetings to Roosevelt. In declining to invite Hines to participate, Roosevelt said, "it would be unwise to further increase the number of persons attending the cabinet meetings. You know how those things go."¹³⁰ In coming reforms to the G.I. Bill, though, the VA would successfully guard against Congressional attempts to dismantle the agency and remove the administration of the veterans' education assistance program out from its purview. The VA would eventually prove durable in not only its sphere of influence, but capable of utilizing a powerful lobbying network to maintain its policy regime.

Conclusion

The G.I. Bill remains a critical moment for American social policy development, and for good reason: the watershed legislation ushered in sweeping changes to American

¹²⁹ Memo from Edward Odom to Samuel Rosenmann, n.d. Samuel Rosenmann Files Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹³⁰ Letter from Franklin Roosevelt to Frank Hines, n.d. Samuel Rosenmann Files Box 8, Folder "G.I. Bill," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

education and social mobility more broadly. However, the roots of the G.I. Bill are often understudied by political scientists, leaving an incomplete story that highlights the Legion's mobilization or Roosevelt's initial resistance, but little else. The fact is that the creation of the veterans' benefit coalition which emerged before the 1944 G.I. Bill was an important political turning point, and one whose politics would affect veterans' policies and related social welfare policies.

The heterogeneity of the coalition is notable, especially in light of the policy feedback model's predictions concerning interests surrounding issue-specific policies. The disparate interests held together by a desire for generous readjustment assistance for military personnel highlighted the growing importance of the veterans' lobby, the missteps of labor in attempting to grow its ranks (especially in the South), and the motivation of Congressional leaders to join the legislative process early to secure their particular interests with respect to program design and administration.

Beyond the differing perspectives and interests in the coalition, the process of policy development helped create further schisms between and among coalition members. The White House especially was forced to move away from broad-scale postwar planning and instead to focus much of its investment ability on programs for returning veterans. These changes caused Roosevelt to shift away from his earlier, more egalitarian view concerning the ability of veterans to claim benefits above and beyond what a civilian would be able to. Moreover, the process highlighted rifts within the veterans' lobby, as the American Legion soon emerged as the most influential organization among the three major groups at the time. Lastly, the struggles across party lines would pit supporters and opponents of the New Deal against one another, with fears

of federal intervention in the economy and race relations driving conservatives towards a tacit acceptance of the legislation (but only within their preferred, state-level administrative design).

The legislative process driven by a fractured coalition would serve as the starting point for the next iteration of the G.I. Bill. The coalition members could not have known then that the way in which they shaped the contours of the veterans' education benefit system would act as a catalyst for policies focused on the next American veteran cohort. Indeed, the 1944 G.I. Bill set the stage for a new version of the veterans' benefit coalition, and a new political strategy for maintaining the generosity of the education benefit program – as well as the control of the program by the VA.

CHAPTER 3

THE KOREA G.I. BILL, COALITION FRACTURE, AND ENDURING EFFECTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The case study of the 1944 G.I. Bill provides clear evidence of the existence and political power of the veterans' benefit coalition, as well as its widespread political influence. Not only was the coalition able to band together in the face of questions about demobilization policy and the size of the federal government; it was also able to unite disparate political actors behind a common goal of education and training programs for returning service members. The coalition members were not only able to achieve the establishment of an unprecedented education program; they were able to do so in a way that protected their own interests in the process. Moreover, the spillover and spillback effects of the original G.I. Bill were the results of concentrated efforts on the part of coalition members to fundamentally alter the national focus in matters of economic stabilization after World War II. The original G.I. Bill did more than act as a critical vehicle for veteran reintegration following the war; it would establish veteran education benefits as a policy regime in American politics, and one that created conditions that shaped the next version of the legislation in 1952. The Korea G.I. Bill is a function of a complex set of interactions between the 1944 G.I. Bill's established success, individual legislators' actions, and a rift in the veterans' benefit coalition that created the conditions necessary for a major shift in American higher education policy.

The 1944 G.I. Bill appeared to establish a precedent for future renewals of the legislation and the establishment of benefits for veterans of future American military

conflicts; in a newspaper interview, the Administrator of the Department of Veterans' suggested that the Bill's success refocused national attention on human readjustment after military conflict. The American people as a whole, he argued, benefitted from the establishment of the G.I. Bill's education program because of the influx of trained and able professionals – across a variety of fields – that were now driving American economic advancement.¹³¹ The G.I. Bill was not only the culmination of an important political process, but would also serve as the starting point of cycle of benefit program revisions that would affect social policies in the future.

The original legislation provides the starting point for investigating the way in which the policy process involved in creating similar legislation at a later point can fundamentally alter the political landscape at the time. The next iteration of the G.I. Bill in 1952, the Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (or "Korea G.I. Bill") would soon supplant the original version as the primary vehicle for the reintegration of American service members. The 1952 Bill was motivated not by the fear of demobilization that had marked the creation of the original Bill – the postwar prosperity had "frightened away the ghosts of the 1930s who haunted those responsible for the 1944 G.I. Bill"¹³² – but rather by the relative economic prosperity and perceived success of the original legislation. While the creation of the 1944 Bill helped establish the veterans' benefit coalition as a cohesive actor in social policy, the 1952 Bill would soon test the bonds holding the coalition members together. Furthermore, the passage of the Korea G.I. Bill would

¹³¹ Benjamin Fine, "14 Billions Spent in 7 Years to Educate 8,000,000 G.I.'s," *The New York Times* July 22, 1951

¹³² Keith W. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1974), 106.

introduce changes to both the bureaucratic power structure and the higher education system that would indelibly alter both in the future.

This chapter focuses on the development of the Korea G.I. Bill and the ways in which the political process surrounding the 1944 G.I. Bill conditioned the political outcomes following the Bill's renewal in 1952. Using the policy feedback model outlined previously I examine the extent to which the veterans' benefit coalition's members' interests remained politically at odds with one another, as well as what strain (if any) the bill's renewal placed upon the coalition's fragile bonds. The ways in which the political process surrounding the Korea G.I. Bill was able to negatively affect the veterans' benefit coalition's bond – as well as how the coalition, or what was left of it, was able to directly or indirectly influence parallel social policy development at the time – are indicative of the power of the policy feedback model.

Specifically, I argue that the development of the Korea G.I. Bill, which came out of the backlash against – and subsequent investigations into – the original G.I. Bill set the stage for clashes among various members of the original veterans' benefit coalition. Interestingly, the veterans' lobby groups took a backseat in this legislative battle, allowing individual legislators to advance their respective versions of Korean War education benefits. The fact that the groups were not necessarily major players in the development of the 1952 legislation meant that Congressional members were able to craft the legislation according to their particular goals and party agendas. The reforms recommended by the House committee investigating the original G.I. Bill's management included a major overhaul to the system of federal payments: giving the student-veteran tuition stipends directly, and doing away with the direct provision of tuition assistance

funds to the institutions. The idea behind this change was to remove the potential for abuse of the system on the part of education institutions that came under fire for various types of fraud and system abuse. This change soon rankled the elite leadership of private educational institutions who, seeing what was essentially a voucher system as a falsely competitive system (in which they would never be able to fairly compete against lower-cost, public institutions), mobilized against the new funding provisions in a break from the rest of the veterans' benefit coalition.

The ramifications of the Korea G.I. Bill are not limited to the breakdown of the veterans' benefit coalition, however; rather, the same stress on the coalition that was created by the public/private divide over tuition payments spilled over into the higher education sector more broadly. The Korea G.I. Bill marks the first time in American history that accreditation is preferred as a means of assuring quality in higher education; the provisions surrounding accreditation requirements came directly from the legislative debate concerning the ability of the VA to assure that federal funding was being provided to reputable postsecondary institutions. The requirement of accreditation for G.I. bill funding after 1952 was a direct result of the development of the veterans' benefit legislation, and one driven by the same members of the veterans' benefit coalition that attempted to win generous benefits for service members returning from the conflict in Korea.

The analysis of archival evidence suggests that this fracture in the veterans' benefit coalition over the abuses of the 1944 legislation – as well as the best way to inoculate the reformed legislation against a similar fate – also helped facilitate spillover effects into the field of higher education policy. The education benefits in the 1952

legislation – though similar in intent and design to those in the earlier bill – featured a distinct administrative system meant to correct the abuses that had wracked the 1944 bill. By making tuition assistance payments directly to veterans (who would then use these payments as vouchers to attend whatever postsecondary institution to which they were accepted), and stipulating that only accredited institutions could be in receipt of federal funds through the G.I. Bill, the veterans’ benefit coalition created lasting effects for the higher education system. The reliance on accreditation as a substitute for federal standardization of curricula or degrees was instantiated in the 1952 legislation, setting a precedent for accreditation as a necessary precondition to the receipt of federal funding (via a student’s enrollment).

Moreover, the case study of the Korea G.I. Bill shows the first signs of a remarkable trend in changes to state capacity following the reform of the original G.I. Bill. The VA had been a target of investigation and harsh criticism in the years following the original legislation, as its management, backlog of claims, and inattention to education institutions’ fraudulent practices were brought to light in popular reports and Congressional hearings. Though the VA was targeted by members of the veterans’ benefit coalition as part of the problem surrounding the original legislation, the agency was able to insulate itself from substantive change as a result of the legislative reform. Furthermore, calls to remove the education program from under the umbrella of the VA – which to that point had been a centralized administrative hub for all of the programs involving America’s veterans – were largely ignored or dismissed by legislators. Though various agencies and officials recommended that the Department of Education – and not the VA – have control over veterans’ education benefits, the VA was able to retain its

jurisdiction over the veterans' education benefits system, establishing an enduring precedent that continues to inform veteran benefit politics through the present day.

The Post-WWII Political Climate and the Veterans' Benefit Coalition

Despite the success of the veterans' benefit coalition in securing the education provisions of the G.I. Bill, the coalition membership would not remain similarly united within the context of emerging policies in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In fact, the evolving American national security state and questions concerning the necessary size of the federal apparatus (especially relative to that of the states) would continue to be the point upon which many of the coalition members would diverge in their individual interests. The political landscape at the time, though perhaps ideologically disposed to the idea of a "vital center" in regard to international affairs,¹³³ was still fragmented as debate over the increasing federal structure – and remnants of both the New Deal and the World War II agency controls – continued to rage.

Harold Lasswell's warning of an impending "garrison state"¹³⁴ – in which military leadership would overshadow civilian control and drive domestic policy toward an increasingly totalitarian extreme – was echoed by Republicans, though for different reasons than Lasswell had laid out in his original argument. While Truman was committed to balancing the budget in the post-WWII years, Republicans became

¹³³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949).

¹³⁴ Harold D. Lasswell, "The Garrison State," *American Journal of Sociology* 41(1941), 455-68. For more on Lasswell's argument, see also idem, "The Garrison State and Specialists on Violence," in ed. Harold D. Lasswell, *The Analysis of Political Behaviour: An Empirical Approach* (New York, 1947), 146-57; and idem, "Sino-Japanese Crisis: The Garrison State Versus the Civilian State," *The China Quarterly* 11: 643-49. See also Aaron L. Friedberg, "American Antistatism and the Founding of the Cold War State," in eds. Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, *Shaped by War and Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

concerned that there had not been a balanced budget in over 16 years by 1947, and that Truman's reluctance to restrict social spending – combined with his apparent willingness to rein in Pentagon requests for defense appropriations above what he and his Budget Bureau director, James E. Webb, considered reasonable for the current national security climate. Republicans and conservative Democrats pressed strongly for tax cuts for individuals (arguing that it would stimulate investment), while the rest of the Democratic Party rallied behind Truman as he planned incremental expansions of the New Deal benefits policies (such as Social Security). The budget battle, split cleanly across party lines, placed social welfare policies at the center of a struggle over how to balance the needs of an interventionist international power with that of a recovering domestic economy.¹³⁵

Stress along party lines was also being exacerbated by Truman's "Fair Deal" policies regarding race and racial integration, and the subsequent shift from "prewar" to "postwar" Democrats.¹³⁶ After Truman's desegregation of the military by executive order in 1948, the values of minority inclusion and equality that had been purported to be at the center of the New Deal policies (though in practice were not actually an integral part of many of the New Deal provisions) were more substantively represented in the Democratic Party's ideological bent.¹³⁷ As the Democratic Party became more concerned with tolerance and addressing previously underrepresented groups, it further pushed away conservative Democrats who were opposed to federal intervention into the states'

¹³⁵ Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Chapter 3.

¹³⁶ Robert P. Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 122-126.

¹³⁷ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005).

management of racial issues.¹³⁸ The original G.I. Bill brought the racial animus of southern Democrats to the forefront, as the party had fought for state-level administration of the Bill's programs (to prevent federal intervention into unemployment insurance programs and higher education systems). As Katznelson notes, "The GI Bill's remarkable bounty thus could be directed to the country's poorest region while keeping its system of racial power intact."¹³⁹

As far as the political membership of the veterans' benefit coalition was concerned, their loyalties fell squarely along the scrimmage lines drawn by concurrent debates in domestic politics. Rogers, for her support of increasing veterans' benefits and her concern for the veterans' healthcare system, remained opposed to New Deal policies which she argued only served to needlessly expand the size of the federal government.¹⁴⁰ Representative John Rankin (D-MS) similarly fell in step with conservative Democrats in his vehement defense of segregation, as well as his willingness to continue the mission of the Dies Special Committee and amending the House rules to establish the Un-American Activities Committee.¹⁴¹ Rogers was also supportive of Rankin's establishment of the HUAC and was a close personal friend of Senator John McCarthy.

In terms of the political landscape, then, the members of the veterans' benefit coalition were routinely being pitted against one another in struggles over the size and funding of the national security state as well as the Democrats' increasing interest in minority politics and issues of civil rights abuses. Notably absent from this lead up to the

¹³⁸ John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); see also Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*.

¹³⁹ Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*, 125.

¹⁴⁰ Marcy Kaptur, *Women of Congress: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1996).

¹⁴¹ Eric Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

development of the 1952 G.I. Bill were the veterans' groups. Despite their overwhelming presence in creating the 1944 legislation, by the early 1950s the groups were not eager to advance particular proposals for the veterans returning from Korea. Their hesitance, outlined later in their Congressional testimony, was a stark contrast to their previous vocal support of the original G.I. Bill. The lack of similar legislative momentum on the part of the veterans' groups concerning the 1952 legislation meant that individual legislators moved to the forefront of the veterans' benefit coalition, and ultimately decided the direction of the final legislation.

Moreover, the disagreements over the federal budget – combined with Truman's attempts to continue slowly increasing the size and scope of New Deal-era social welfare programs – meant that legislators were already keenly attuned to the issues of austerity and budget balancing, especially in a context in which the defense budget's share was increasingly eclipsing that of other programs. The desire to rein in unnecessary social spending – and to ensure that America had indeed capitalized on the investment that it had made in its World War II veterans – set the stage for an investigation into the original G.I. Bill and the extent to which veterans' benefit coalition members could prove its utility years after its enactment.

Investigating the Original G.I. Bill

Following the legislative success of the original G.I. Bill (including the legislative provisions which further liberalized plan benefits in 1945), it appeared that the bill would soon provide significant dividends to the American economy as veterans flooded colleges and took part in various vocational programs. While the education benefits in the G.I. Bill

proved popular to both veterans and civilian public opinion alike,¹⁴² the size and scope of the program soon drew critical attention as the administration of the program came under investigation. After several years in operation, the Bill would soon become the focal point for a Congressional investigation, as well as a potential template for how the federal government should – or should not – involve itself in the higher education system in the years to come.

By July 1951, as the original G.I. Bill's education benefits program neared its deadline for new applicants, the investment that the federal government had made in returning military personnel was gaining public attention. Out of the entire G.I. Bill omnibus legislation – including low-interest home loans, increased outlays for hospitalization and medical care, and provisions for unemployment compensation –the education program amounted to nearly \$14 million, \$3.5 million of which was on direct tuition payments to institutions alone. Approximately 8,000,000 former service members utilized G.I. Bill benefits during the time period from July 1944 through July 1951; at its peak in 1947, veterans represented nearly 49% of all college and university students, with nearly 50% of veterans accessing G.I. Bill education benefits in that same year.¹⁴³

Despite its widespread popularity and success, significant issues began to emerge in the administration of veterans' education and training benefits, and concern grew about the money invested in the program and reported fraud across the country. Investigation into the previous GI Bill was led by Representative Olin Teague (R-TX), as chair of the House Select Committee to Investigate Educational, Training, and Loan Guaranty

¹⁴² Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*.

¹⁴³ Fine, "14 Billions Spent;" Joint Economic Committee. *A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Government Investment in Post-Secondary Education Under the World War II GI Bill*. 1988. Subcommittee on Education and Health, Washington, DC; the JEC is also discussed in Edward Humes, *Over Here: How the G.I. Bill Transformed the American Dream* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006).

Programs under the GI Bill. Though public opinion among those in the education sector was generally favorable, concerns grew as the program hemorrhaged approximately \$2 billion per year in mismanagement and potential abuses in the payment system for institutions of higher education.¹⁴⁴

The committee ran hearings in several cities across the country, soliciting testimony from veterans' groups, colleges, contractors, and veterans themselves – all stakeholders in the original legislation. Veterans testified about their inability to secure due benefits and the disruption caused by dishonorable for-profit schools and contractors. Veterans testified about being recruited into institutions with dubious qualifications, and being offered degrees in fields like bartending, that proved ultimately far less useful than degrees from accredited postsecondary institutions. The “fly-by-night” schools that infiltrated the education market following the enactment of the original G.I. Bill proved to be only one of the more discouraging developments; further allegations against postsecondary institutions added fuel to the fire. Charges that schools intentionally inflated their enrollment numbers to collect more federal funding from the VA were also leveled, and legislators became concerned that the potential benefits to the original G.I. Bill program might become overshadowed by the corrupt practices that invaded the system (especially due to its administration, which relied heavily on VA and states' oversight of their postsecondary schools).¹⁴⁵

The committee ultimately recognized the extreme deficiencies in the administration of the G.I. Bill program in its report to Congress, but still recommended the extension of benefits to Korea veterans and a revision of the existing veterans' benefit

¹⁴⁴ Fine, “14 Billions Spent”

¹⁴⁵ Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*, 293-294.

program. While the committee expressed concern over the reports of corruption in the G.I. Bill system, they also expressed a desire to facilitate the reintegration of Korean War veterans in the same way that those from World War II had been helped.¹⁴⁶ The positive aspects of the G.I. Bill program – combined with House committee recommendations to restructure the payment plan and ensure school quality through requirements for accreditation – would ultimately find themselves not only at the center of the reformed G.I. Bill legislation, but also at the starting point of a deep rift evolving in the veterans’ benefit coalition.

The Korea G.I. Bill in Development

As the U.S. entered into a military conflict in Korea, some legislators called for an immediate revision of the G.I. Bill to accommodate the veterans of the current conflict. Teague and others in both the House and Senate were, however, not interested in applying the same pre-conflict planning strategies to the situation in Korea as had been done towards the end of WWII. In July 1950, shortly after what was then a “police action” in Korea began, Teague expressed reluctance to begin hashing out details for a Korea G.I. Bill before the full scope of the conflict was revealed.¹⁴⁷ The veterans’ groups were uncharacteristically united on a hesitant approach to Korea G.I. Bill benefits, preferring to wait until the conflict developed further before making legislative action. By August, several extension bills to the original G.I. Bill had been introduced in the House, but had languished as neither legislators nor veterans’ groups were anxious to move on

¹⁴⁶ Report of the House Select Committee to Investigate Educational, Training, and Loan Guaranty Programs Under G.I. Bill. United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1952).

¹⁴⁷ *The New York Times*, “Korea G.I. Bill Put Off: House Group Thinks It Too Soon to Start Work on Benefits,” July 12, 1950.

them while monitoring the conflict. One extension bill was introduced by a New York representative as an active of protest against the Truman Administration's intervention in Korea.¹⁴⁸

Rankin made plans for House committee hearings on proposed Korea veteran benefit legislation, setting the meetings to begin in February. For all his previous support for veterans, was a noted segregationist who opposed extending benefits to African Americans; although he failed in a special senate race in Mississippi in 1947, he continued to remain a prominent force in the House.¹⁴⁹ He noted that new legislation would likely provide almost all (if not duplicate) benefits to Korea veterans as it had to those of WWII; the *New York Times* noted that, "Congress seldom turns down veterans' legislation."¹⁵⁰

The Truman Administration's stance on extending veterans' benefits was measured; while generally supportive of extending benefits for the reintegration of Korea veterans, there was resistance within the administration to an equally broad-based program of education benefits. The Bureau of the Budget recommended a modified plan in January 1951, advocating a formula that relocated some of the onus of college payments onto the veteran, offering to pay half tuition only if there was evidence suggesting that education had been interrupted or impeded by an eligible person's service in the Korean conflict. Assistant Director Elmer Saats outlined in a memo to Rankin that "the veteran should have a financial stake of his own" in his education, and therefore

¹⁴⁸ *The Boston Globe*, "Vet Groups Stall in G.I. Benefits for Service in Korea," August 6, 1950, C18.

¹⁴⁹ V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1949), 253.

¹⁵⁰ *The New York Times*, "G.I. Bill Hearings Set: Plan Would Give Educational Benefits to Korean Veterans," December 17, 1951.

should have his education only partially subsidized by the federal government.¹⁵¹ Similarly, communication from within the Federal Security Agency indicated that the administration was bracing itself for a potential landslide of veterans exiting school into an unstable labor market, and speculating on the ability of the current social safety nets to meet this need.¹⁵² The administration was undoubtedly preparing for a crush of veterans onto the labor market even before the U.S. entered the Korean conflict, and the immediate calls for Korea G.I. Bill benefits likely accelerated their policy development process.

The version of a new G.I. Bill offered by the Bureau of the Budget would allow a maximum government payment of \$300 for tuition and fees, in comparison to the full tuition (up to \$500) offered by the original GI Bill. Additionally, the duration of schooling would be shortened and eligible veterans would need to show combat participation. This desire for combat participants alone to benefit from a G.I. Bill was echoed by the VFW; Omar Ketchum, the organization's Director, stressed in a letter to Rankin that only those personnel eligible for combat ribbons should be granted the education provisions of a new version of the GI Bill.¹⁵³ The discussion of combat participation would soon fall out of the debate over the bill, as new legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate that treated Korea veterans the same way as

¹⁵¹ Memo from Elmer B. Saats to John Rankin and federal agency administrators, "Readjustment legislation for veterans of Armed Forces service during the period of the Korean conflict," June 22, 1951, reprinted in "Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950," Hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office), 914.

¹⁵² Memo from A.J. Altmeyer to Oscar R. Ewing, July 1, 1949. Subject: Continuation of Servicemen's Readjustment Allowances. OF-190V, Box 816, Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library.

¹⁵³ Letter from Omar Ketchum to John Rankin on July 20, 1950, reprinted in "Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950," Hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office), 914.

those of WWII (specifically, in defining eligibility by days spent on active duty, as opposed to verified participation in combat).

In August 1951, Senators George (D-GA) and Kerr (D-OK) introduced legislation to revise the previous G.I. Bill while extending similar benefits to veterans of the conflict in Korea. They acknowledged that the previous legislation had fallen prey to noncompliance and corruption, but argued that their more restricted plan would “provide more adequate safeguards against excessive expenditure of public funds.”¹⁵⁴ H.R. 5040 and S. 1940 emerged during the second half of 1951 as viable plans for extending the education benefits present in the original GI Bill to those involved in the Korean War. The recommended BOB provisions remained; namely, that the term of enrollment be shortened, that tuition payments were to be reduced, and that veterans must be able to prove that their education had been interrupted by their term of service. In reviewing the two proposed pieces of legislation, Saats noted that an extension of veterans’ benefits would necessarily require an assessment of the purpose and utility of veterans’ benefit to the American public, both economically and socially. Referencing the adjusted compensation “bonus” and insurance payouts of World War I veterans, Saats commented that the WWII policies had been much more generous – and thereby successful – in reintegrating soldiers into civilian life. He did caution, however, that revising these benefits with each conflict would create establish a set pattern of entitlements for each military engagement in the future, arguing that:

The concept of readjustment for the millions of veterans of World War II, whose lives and expected means of livelihood were interrupted by military service, was a great advance....However, additional legislation in this field

¹⁵⁴ *The New York Times*, “New G.I. Bill Drafted: Senators Ask Education benefits for Veterans of Korea,” August 2, 1951.

should take into account the further strides which we have made in the United States in providing greater opportunities for education and vocational training, and for freedom from want when early disability or death strike down the wage earner in the family. *General programs in which veterans participate may well be of greater value than programs designed only for veterans,*” [emphasis added].¹⁵⁵

Saats’ comment on the availability of general welfare programs at both the state and federal levels designed to compensate for disability or death of the main wage earner in the household (presumably husbands and fathers), signals resistance in the executive branch to lay the groundwork for a perpetual system of veterans’ benefits that would be expected for any military engagement. This connection foreshadows the influence that the development of the Korea G.I. Bill would have on related areas of social policy – and how its very reach and scope could drive a wedge through the coalition that had supported its predecessor.

The Fracture of the Veterans’ Benefit Coalition

The original G.I. Bill was supported by a coalition that included a diverse set of political actors, including veterans’ organizations (though at times competing in their message), legislators from across the aisles, business, labor, and postsecondary institutions.¹⁵⁶ While the coalitions’ competing interests had been subordinated to the interest of the 1944 G.I. Bill, the revision of the legislation for Korea veterans began to stress the tenuous connections among the group members. Two major rifts flourished

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Elmer B. Saats to Senator James E. Murray, September 14, 1951, reprinted in “Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950,” Hearings before the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1109.

¹⁵⁶ See Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*; Frydl, *The G.I. Bill*; Brooks, “Unexpected Foes,” discusses the collaboration of business and labor specifically; Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* describes the alliances between segregationist Southern Democrats, Republicans, and more progressive Democrats all interested in promoting veterans’ benefits.

during this time period, stressing the connections between and among members of the veterans' benefit coalition as they debated the merits of the G.I. Bill legislation. The first major divide came between the veterans' organizations, whose conflicting approaches to veteran benefit policy were pushed the forefront as Congressional leaders developed the Korea G.I. Bill legislation. The second split was the divide between public and private educational institutions moved to the forefront, as issues of tuition payments would fundamentally change the complexion of veterans' benefits, as well as the VA's relationship with the colleges.¹⁵⁷

The Public/Private Divide in Postsecondary Education

Prior to the hearings in the House, Rankin had solicited feedback from various education administration and veterans' groups about the proposal for a Korea G.I. Bill. The messages from education administration leaders were unified on the point of offering benefits to veterans; despite the challenges faced in administering the previous program, the education associations were still supportive of the program (and the rapid increase in college students – and indirect federal investment – that accompanied them). The National Veterans' Educational Association in a 1952 letter restated its preference for the 1944 entitlement guidelines (one year per year served, up to four years total). The NVEA also recommended that administration over veterans' benefits be turned over to the states, with the VA serving the role of adviser and solely concerning itself with determining

¹⁵⁷ Notably, a discussion of the effects of tuition payments for African American veterans was largely absent of the debates, though in the Senate hearing before the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, officials from private colleges assured Rep. Teague and the Senators that the new legislation would do no harm to historically black colleges and universities, and might even improve their conditions by offering direct tuition payments to the veterans.

eligibility and oversight of the nationwide program.¹⁵⁸ By allowing state-level oversight of the educational benefit program administration, the NVEA suggested that the Korea G.I. Bill program would be devoid of the mismanagement and corruption that had characterized the 1944 legislation. Allowing state agencies the power to evaluate their own institutions of higher education and make the deciding call on the extent to which those schools were eligible for the receipt of federal funding would, in turn, free VA administrators to manage the broader contours of the program at the national level.

While some education officials called for an end to VA authority, the real schism developing in the veterans' benefit coalition began to emerge on the public/private divide in higher education. Before the Senate Labor and Public Welfare committee's hearing on the proposed legislation, Teague commented that, in investigating the G.I. Bill, "there were very definitely two types of private schools: One group that was interested in education and another that was more interested in dollars."¹⁵⁹ Private postsecondary schools' concerns about enrollments as a result of direct payments to the veteran were at the heart of their resistance to the new Korea G.I. Bill, and this provision mobilized the schools as a faction within the veterans' benefit coalition (ultimately pitting them against their prior interests in supporting the earlier G.I. Bill).

The breakdown over the direct payment to veterans came to a head in the House when the Springer Amendment (which would provide for payments to schools, rather than individual veterans) was introduced. The private schools soon found their champion

¹⁵⁸ Letter from Harry A. Snyder to Senator James E. Murray and Representative John E. Rankin on behalf of the National Veterans Educational Association, January 14, 1952. Reprinted in "Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950," Hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 1174.

¹⁵⁹ Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Veterans' Education and Rehabilitation Benefits, of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare of the United States Senate. 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, on HR 7656. June 10-17, 1952. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 141.

in the rather unlikely ally of William Springer (R-IL), a new Republican representative from Illinois' twenty-second district (which had been solidly in Republican control for at least a decade), and whose interests advocacy generally ran toward those of agriculture and farm subsidies.¹⁶⁰ A Navy veteran himself, Springer would soon become embroiled in the center of the rift in the veterans' benefit coalition, driving a wedge between higher education officials and ultimately accusing the House Veterans' Affairs Committee of skirting procedural rules in favor of heavy-handed politics.

In response to news that the Korea G.I. Bill would offer direct payments to veterans as a means of skirting the thorny issue of direct payments to postsecondary institutions, Fred Fagg, President of the University of Southern California, began to mobilize fellow private school presidents through a letter-writing campaign.¹⁶¹ Fagg and others were in favor of maintaining the original indirect payment plan as established in the 1944 legislation, an aspect of the program that had come under intense scrutiny during the Teague Committee investigation. The group reflected concerns that direct payments to veterans' would privilege public schools with lower tuitions, effectively biasing veterans against attending private schools (especially when tuition payments would be \$200 lower for Korea veterans than for World War II veterans).

Fagg's letter campaign found its advocate in Springer, who heeded Fagg's so-called "emergency committee's" call to action (and remained the only real advocate for the private school officials in either the House or Senate). The Illinois representative soon crafted what became known as the Springer Amendment, an addendum to H.R. 7656 that

¹⁶⁰ Cheryl Schnirring, Curator of Manuscripts, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Private correspondence, September 18, 2013.

¹⁶¹ *The New York Times*, "Dispute on Tuition Snags New G.I. Bill: Colleges Press for Retention of Payments to Them – 'Unfair' Attacks on Measure Cited," May 28, 1952.

would restore the direct-payment provisions for postsecondary institutions and remove any type of voucher or stipend system for veterans (for tuition payments only; any room-and-board stipends meant to assist veterans in attending school would remain untouched by the Springer Amendment). The private schools' opposition to the new payment provisions was not mirrored by any public school representatives, who remained silent on the issue in their Congressional testimony. Rather than rally against the private institutions, the public postsecondary schools appeared to leave the debate up to Congress to resolve; no similar countermovement against the private schools' requests was acknowledged either in the Congressional Record or in any Congressional committee hearing transcripts.

This divide between public and private universities represents a sharper fracture in the veterans' benefit coalition than even the growing rift between the veterans' groups. While the Legion, VFW, and DAV, among others, were reluctant to come to the table as a unified front in dealing with Congressional leadership (especially in the wake of the Teague Committee's investigation into the mismanagement of the original G.I. Bill funding), their disagreements had manifested themselves in a similar fashion during the development of the 1944 legislation. To the extent that the veterans' groups has disagreed before on issues of veterans' benefits, their conflict was feeding back into itself from the previous legislation's political process. The divide between the public and private postsecondary institutions was, however, driven by a vocal minority in one sector of the coalition (the private schools). When the interests of the private schools was threatened by the direct-payment provision, the previously unacknowledged differences between the private and public universities (with respect to their treatment under the G.I. Bill payment

program) were suddenly important enough to force the private schools to attempt to alter the legislation in furtherance of their own private interests.

Despite the “emergency committee’s” attempts to contact other representatives, the Springer Amendment generated little discussion in the House. On May 26, Rankin, Teague, and Rogers¹⁶² (R-MA) pushed for a closed rule on the proposed Korea G.I. Bill. By invoking closed rule, the Veterans’ Affairs Committee members were effectively able to restrict the addition of amendments to the legislation, and set a limit of no more than two hours of debate on the House floor.¹⁶³ Springer fought back zealously on the floor, contending that, “If there was ever a gag rule that was imposed upon any particular piece of legislation which was so vital to a certain group of people in the Armed Forces, it is the action of these people trying to pass this bill under a suspension of the rules.”¹⁶⁴ Springer charged Teague with running the House veterans’ committee as if it were his own private enterprise, to which Teague made a point of order establishing a lack of quorum and effectively ending Springer’s time to contest the legislation (within the shortened debate timeframe of the closed rule).¹⁶⁵

In the Senate, the testimony was more subdued and reflected concerns not about the ability to attract the veteran who now had his or her own subsidy in hand, but rather distancing legitimate private schools from those for-profit institutions that sprang up

¹⁶² Rogers, still an outspoken critic of state expansion as a result of the New Deal, was nonetheless a powerful force in veterans’ benefits and an equally prestigious figure within the Republican Party. Her dedication to the expansion of veterans’ benefits after the Korean War – but vocal opposition to any program that smacked of New Deal era state-building – makes her a prime example of the competing forces at work in the veterans’ benefit coalition.

¹⁶³ Congressional Record, Monday May 26, 1952, United States House of Representatives, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, D344.

¹⁶⁴ Comments of William Springer read into the Congressional Record, May 29, 1952, Congressional Record of the United States House of Representatives, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, 6269.

¹⁶⁵ Congressional Record of the United States House of Representatives, May 29, 1952, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, 6271.

during the previous G.I. Bill. Bernard Ehrlich of the National Federation of Private School Associations argued that the competition that would naturally develop among public and private schools as they attempted to attract veterans was actually beneficial for veterans, ultimately driving the education market toward higher standards and better practices.¹⁶⁶ Springer pushed back, once again attempting to gain favor on the Springer Amendment by introducing it into consideration before the Senate; though supported there also by representatives from the University of Southern California and Macalester College,¹⁶⁷ the amendment failed to gain legislative support.

Despite the opposition of the private school “emergency committee” and Springer, Truman signed the bill into law in June 1952. The VA endorsed the provisions of the new legislation; Deputy Administrator O.W. Clark, in a letter to Rankin, reiterated the agency’s support of the new direct-payment provision for tuition benefits and reiterated his belief that such a system would inevitably assist the VA in better managing the “many diverse types of institutions [and] amounts representing tuition and fees.”¹⁶⁸ Despite the reactions to the bills payment provisions and accreditation requirements, it appeared to have the tacit acceptance of the veterans’ benefit coalition – though not without a significant struggle on the part of the private postsecondary schools that had rallied behind the unlikely figure of Springer. Although Springer was ultimately unable to successfully ensure that the new bill made tuition payments directly to the schools as the

¹⁶⁶ Testimony of Bernard Ehrlich, Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Veterans’ Education and Rehabilitation Benefits, of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare of the United States Senate. 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, on HR 7656. June 10-17, 1952. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 149.

¹⁶⁷ Testimony of John E. Fields and Charles J. Turck, Hearings before the Special Subcommittee on Veterans’ Education and Rehabilitation Benefits, of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare of the United States Senate. 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, on HR 7656. June 10-17, 1952. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 151.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from O.W. Clark to John E. Rankin, May 16, 1952. Filed in the Congressional Record, 94086-52, No. 282, 2.

“emergency committee” had wanted, Springer’s vocal opposition to Teague, Rankin, and others in the House was a warning of impending further breakages within the veterans’ benefit coalition.

The recommendations of the Teague committee formed the basis of the 1952 Korea G.I. Bill in its final (passed) version, and represented a different sentiment than the original legislation. Far from the fearful and speculative claims of veteran unrest and mass poverty that animated the debate over the 1944 G.I. Bill, the 1952 Korea G.I. Bill was motivated as much by veteran contentment and relative economic prosperity as it was the political machinations of the veterans’ benefit coalition. While the bill was intended to help Korea veterans reintegrate into society, its political effects reached far beyond the jurisdictional boundaries that separated veterans from civilians. The revisions to the bill would soon affect the way in which the federal government assesses the quality of postsecondary education. Moreover, the process of reforming the Korea G.I. Bill would put the VA’s bureaucratic power on display, its relative insulation and durability apparent as it deflected any potential changes to the administration of veterans’ education benefits under the proposed legislation.

Spillover from the Korea G.I. Bill

The breakdown in the relationship among members of the veterans’ benefit coalition – precipitated by the legislative debate over the new iteration of the G.I. Bill – was not the only major effect of the original G.I. Bill or the process surrounding its reform. The changes to state capacity that resulted from a policy development process – the “spillover” effects into a related area – involved the accreditation standard for

postsecondary education. Additionally, the ability of the VA to successfully emerge from the investigation into the G.I. Bill with its power intact suggests that the Korea G.I. Bill marks a further entrenchment of the VA's power over a parallel set of social policy programs – ones that would become increasingly difficult to attempt to merge with the universal policy sphere.

One way in which the policy feedback process between the WWII and Korea G.I. Bills affected state capacity was by reifying the postsecondary education accreditation system. The experience of the 1944 G.I. Bill had shown legislators, bureaucrats, and veterans that all postsecondary institutions were not created equal: as the number of for-profit institutions grew in response to a need for schooling (and a demobilized population used its newfound benefits), veterans soon learned that not all institutions were reputable. The Teague committee heard testimony from many veterans who claimed they had been swindled by “fly-by-night” institutions that provided little in the way of education. While accreditation had been in practice during this time, it was not until the Korea G.I. Bill that the system was entrenched at the federal level.

Through the Korea G.I. Bill, the federal government established a precedent for federal aid to higher education on the basis of accreditation. Though there was no move toward a federal system, and the new legislation did not require that tuition benefits could only be used at state-accredited institutions, the federal government did begin maintaining a list of accredited postsecondary institutions for public reference. The list was conceived of as a guide for potential student veterans, in hopes that they could sidestep some of the less reputable institutions in making their decisions on higher education after their service had ended. In making the accreditation statuses public,

legislators believed that any corrupt institutions would soon be forced to close their doors as student-veterans directed their tuition stipends toward the accredited institutions.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, the legislation used accreditation as proof of educational quality, or a way to ensure that veterans' education benefits would not be wasted at an institution that lacked a solid reputation.¹⁷⁰ The new reliance on accreditation as a standard of education pushed accreditation agencies to become accountable to the VA in endorsing schools that would be considered "worthy" of indirect government aid. While there was no push for any type of standard federal assessment of postsecondary institutions or their curricula, there was a concerted effort on the part of lawmakers to utilize the existing accreditation structure to validate the receipt of federal funds under the Korea G.I. Bill. The accreditation system would serve to legitimate not only the funding of a particular institution, but would help strengthen the entire administration of this new G.I. Bill to insulate it against the abuses that had wracked its previous version.¹⁷¹

While the changes to the accreditation system were not a wholesale federalization of the process, the shift in reliance on accreditation agencies' approval as a prerequisite for government aid was established during the Korea G.I. Bill. By placing the accreditation process at the forefront of the fight against unqualified postsecondary education, the Korea G.I. Bill set an important precedent for using accreditation to signify a school that is worthy of indirect aid payments. Nowadays, accreditation is used as a condition for federal student financial aid, and although this standard was not codified in

¹⁶⁹ John R. Proffitt, "The Federal Connection for Accreditation." *The Journal of Higher Education* (1979): 145-157.

¹⁷⁰ Margaret M. Conway, "The Commissioner's Authority to List Accrediting Agencies and Associations: Necessity for an Eligibility Issue." *The Journal of Higher Education* (1979): 158-170; Matthew W. Finkin, "Federal Reliance on Voluntary Accreditation: The Power to Recognize as the Power to Regulate." *Journal of Law and Education* 2 (1973), 339.

¹⁷¹ Patricia A. Thrash, "Accreditation: A Perspective." *The Journal of Higher Education* (1979): 115-120.

the Korea G.I. Bill, the important first steps of utilizing accreditation as a standard for student aid were established during this time.

The second major change in state capacity was not necessarily a marked departure from the status quo, but rather a story about effects that were not felt at the bureaucratic level; that is, the ability of the VA to remain insulated from the G.I. Bill's critiques despite being its sole administrator at the federal level. This critique of the VA would soon become a hallmark of the testimony of higher education groups, as their experiences in dealing with the VA during the previous G.I. Bill presented questions about which government agency was best equipped to deal with issues arising from an active education benefits program. Ralph McDonald of the National Education Association of the United States (NEAUS), in a letter to Rankin at the request for feedback on the proposed changes to the education benefits, expressed displeasure at the VA's administration of veterans' education benefits, claiming that "the administration has been in the hands of persons who, because of their experimental background, were not in a position to know much about the administration and finance of colleges and universities in this country...As the law now stands, the Federal agency with which educators are accustomed to deal in most matters involving the Federal Government's participation in educational programs is completely eliminated."¹⁷²

Russell Thackrey, the Executive Secretary of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, wrote to Rankin that the VA's power to review its policies regarding education benefits administration and decide if and when reforms were

¹⁷² Letter from Ralph McDonald to John Rankin, July 19, 1950, reprinted in "Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950," Hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 912.

necessary turned the VA into “judge and jury,” effectively removing any kind of legislative oversight into the veterans’ benefit system.¹⁷³ NEAUS renewed its criticism of the VA in a letter to Rankin, urging that the administration of the veterans’ education benefits program be vested in the Department of Education and state education boards.¹⁷⁴ Various education lobbying groups expressed opposition to proposed veterans’ benefit legislation that would continue to locate the authority over the veteran education program in the hands of the VA. Despite the Teague committee’s investigation into the G.I. Bill administration, the VA emerged relatively unscathed from this legislative oversight, able to effectively deflect critiques of its administration by laying blame on faulty education institutions and “fly-by-night” schools that denigrated the reputation of the G.I. Bill program.

The support for maintaining the VA’s administrative authority over the veterans’ benefit program came from both the administration and legislators (even those who were outspoken critics of state expansion and the New Deal programs). In a letter to Rankin, Bureau of the Budget Director F.J. Lawton objected to the proposed restructuring of the veterans’ education program to involve Comptroller oversight. Lawton argued that the Bureau saw “no compelling reason for this departure from established precedent,” noting that the major interactions between the veteran and the VA would be simplified under a

¹⁷³ Letter from Russell Thackrey to John Rankin, July 20, 1950, reprinted in “Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950,” Hearings before the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, United States House of Representatives, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 913.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Willard E. Givens to Senator John Rankin, February 7 1952, reprinted in “Education and Training and Other Benefits for Veterans Serving on or After June 27, 1950,” Hearings before the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, United States House of Representatives, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 1194.

plan with direct payouts to the veteran (rather than the schools).¹⁷⁵ The administrator of the Federal Security Agency, John Thurston, expressed his agency's opposition to this proposed maintenance of the VA structure in administering the program. Thurston noted that the FSA – which had a vested interest in bringing veterans' education benefit legislation under the same mantle as the other social programs that it supervised – would prefer if the veterans' education benefit program could be at least partially managed by the Department of Education (then the Office of Education). Thurston noted that this reorganization would not divest the VA of its power in veterans' benefits writ large, but rather would assist the VA by offering the OE's expertise and experience in education policy.¹⁷⁶ Despite the various calls for the VA to relinquish at least part of its influence over the administration of the Korea G.I. Bill, there were no attempts on the part of Congress or the White House to officially support divesting the VA of its responsibility in the field of veteran education policy.

Additionally, the recommendations of the Commission on the Reorganization of the Executive Branch of the Government (the Hoover Commission) supported the existing structure of the veterans' education benefit program within the VA, and recommended that the tuition program be kept under the control of the VA (rather than moved to the Department of Education).¹⁷⁷ The debate over the VA's control of the education benefit program was, with the exception of testimony on behalf of several

¹⁷⁵ Letter from F.J. Lawton to John E. Rankin, May 16 1952. Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives, Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session.

¹⁷⁶ Letter from John L. Thurston to John E. Rankin. May 16, 1952. Reprinted in *Congressional Record* 94086-52, no. 280.

¹⁷⁷ Recommendations of Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government Providing for Reorganization of the Veterans' Administration and Creating a Veterans' Insurance Corporation, Hearings Before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 82nd Congress, 2nd session, May-June 1952. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1952).

interest group representatives before the House, largely absent; even the Teague committee's recommendations following the investigations into the original G.I. Bill offered little in the way of criticism on the role of the VA in overseeing the corrupted program.

The VA, then, was able to maintain its authority over the veteran education benefit program even in light of previous accusations of mismanagement and poor administration; moreover, the blame for the breakdowns in the system was placed on postsecondary institutions. Additionally, the direct payments laid out in the Korea G.I. Bill reduced the program structure to being solely between the VA and individual veterans, allowing the agency to not only make direct payments to veterans but also to investigate and resolve any problems in the administration of its programs. It seemed that, despite calls for changes in program administration, the VA would retain the ability to be "both judge and jury," despite recent investigations into the agency's faults.

One explanation for this insulation could lie in the VA's ability to build institutional credentials through its administration of the G.I. Bill, such that it became seen as the only viable agency within which a complex set of veterans' benefits could be housed. This concept is best articulated in Carpenter's theory of bureaucratic autonomy, which suggests that agencies build up leverage by controlling a particular policy sphere, such that moving that policy's administration is not considered a viable alternative to legislators.¹⁷⁸ The testimony of administration and legislative officials suggest that they preferred to keep all veterans' benefit programs within the jurisdiction of the VA, rather than splitting programs up under the control of different agencies. The way in which the

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Carpenter, *Forging Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

original G.I. Bill fed back into the development of the Korea G.I. Bill – and the fact that the VA was able to emerge from this process with its power still intact – suggests that there may be reification of existing power structures as a result of policy development. Additionally, the case of the VA may provide further evidence that agencies can gain power that allows them to then affect changes in parallel policy spheres, rather than exclusively focusing on changes within the same policy area.

Conclusion

The 1952 Korea G.I. Bill is more than an isolated example of a policy that was affected by its own previous incarnation; rather, it provides an important example in which to test a more expansive approach to the policy feedback model. In expanding the policy feedback model to include heterogeneous groups whose composition and internal strength vary over time (and as a direct result of repeated interactions with one another on the same types of legislation), I argue that the veterans' benefit coalition demonstrates that policies can feedback negatively to the detriment of their original supporters. The experience of reforming the original G.I. Bill – beginning with the investigation into the mismanagement of education benefit funding and culminating in the legislative debate surrounding the format of the new legislation – forced the individual coalition members to once again subordinate their own individual interests to that of the greater good. When the private schools' interests in attracting and retaining students were threatened via the direct payment provision as proposed, the private schools broke rank and sought out legislative support for reestablishing the same payment program as had existed in the earlier legislation. Though the private schools did not necessarily exit the coalition (thereby constituting a complete break in the coalition), their opposition to the legislation

generally accepted by the rest of the members suggests that the strain of reform was too great to maintain the fragile connections within the veterans' benefit coalition.

Moreover, the coalition's actions in reforming the G.I. Bill spilled over into other policy areas. First and most visibly, the requirement of accreditation embedded in the 1952 Bill instantiated the concept of accreditation as a substitute for federal standardization of higher education. By utilizing the regional and subject-specific accreditation agencies' approval as preconditions for the receipt of federal funds under the G.I. Bill, the VA could be assured a smaller risk of the misallocation of funds or the misuse of funds by non-reputable institutions. The federal government's endorsement of accreditation agencies' approval – and the reluctance to establish a federal accreditation system – were codified in the 1952 Bill, setting the stage for the reliance on accreditation as a condition for federal aid receipt under the financial aid system in the years to come.

Finally, the ability of the VA to hold onto the veterans' education benefit program management – despite calls from various agencies and officials for the removal of the system into more capable or experienced hands – is a testament to the hidden strength of the VA in establishing its sphere of influence. The VA was able to retain the administration of its education programs and prevent any part of its benefit program structure from being annexed by another federal agency (or being decentralized fully to the state level). The VA, then, was able to insulate itself from countervailing political forces, and was ultimately strengthened by the process of revising the 1944 G.I. Bill into the 1952 legislation.

Overall, the Korea G.I. Bill presents an important case study in assessing the ability of policies to affect politics at a later time. The coalitional politics involved in the

promotion of veterans' benefits were not only affected (negatively) by the process of reforming the original G.I. Bill; they in turn pushed the ramifications of the legislation into other areas of social policy and state capacity. The policy feedback model's specifications for how interest groups and state capacity are both affected by the policy process deserves update in light of the case study of the Korea G.I. Bill; expanding the model to account for more types of feedback is useful not only for understanding the first reform to a piece of legislation, but for understanding various subsequent reforms as well. In the next chapter, we turn our attention to the Vietnam Era, and the ways in which the 1966 G.I. Bill further extended the effects of the 1952 legislation, while creating its own distinct political affects in that era.

CHAPTER 4

A GREAT SOCIETY WITH A 'PECULIAR PROBLEM': PEACETIME VETERANS AND THE 1966 COLD WAR G.I. BILL

Although the veterans' benefit coalition had provided the momentum behind the 1944 and 1952 G.I. Bills, the relative power of this set of political actors appeared tied to the exogenous shock of American military engagement. As the war in Korea drew to a close, it seemed that the question of how to best address the reintegration of veterans had been answered in the political struggle over the 1952 bill; after all, the legislation would provide a parallel education benefit system to the precedent-setting program that had been utilized by World War II veterans. As America entered a period of relative peacetime (insofar as no other large-scale military engagements loomed on the horizon), the question of how to address the peacetime veteran would soon move to the forefront of veterans' benefit discussion. This group of veterans was, as Republican National Committee leader Bradley Taylor wrote, "in a class set aside – they are different and what has made them different is a little pice [sic] of paper that said 'greetings from the President'...they are set into a nother [sic] class within the nation."¹⁷⁹ How would America address the reintegration of the so-called "peacetime veteran," and in what ways would this period of policy reform compare to the development of the previous veteran education benefit systems in its effects on parallel policies?

¹⁷⁹ Letter from Bradley R. Taylor to Ivy Baker Priest, June 14, 1953. The Papers of Maxwell M. Rabb, Box 37, Folder Ta(4). The Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Taylor was the Assistant Campaign Manager of the Veterans' Division in the Republican National Committee at the time; Priest was the Treasurer of the United States.

In this chapter, I argue that the 1966 Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act – also known as the “Cold War G.I. Bill” and which extended education benefits to Cold War era military personnel – marks an important turning point in not only the politics of veterans' benefits, but of social policy development more broadly.¹⁸⁰ The legislation passed in the absence of the strong support of the veterans' groups or colleges that had been the driving force behind the legislation of 1944 and 1952. Additionally, the executive branch was, from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration, opposed to the extension of education benefits to veterans' that had not been in conflict; even the more sympathetic Johnson Administration would have preferred to focus more on universal postsecondary education than on reintegration benefits for veterans. In the case of the Cold War G.I. Bill, it would be the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (and its allies in the Senate) that would secure passage of the legislation after nearly seven years of constant appeals to the President, Congress, and the broader public. Thus, it would be individual legislators who would activate the coalition's support – however tacit – for peacetime veterans' benefits and ultimately negotiate its separation from similar programs aimed at universal higher education programs.

The country faced a “peculiar problem” with regards to the peacetime veteran: he was still under compulsory service obligations, but did not share in the wartime experiences that previous draftees had encountered.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the 1952 election that had placed Eisenhower in the White House – though with Democrats in control of the

¹⁸⁰ In this chapter, I use the terms “Cold War G.I. Bill,” “1966 G.I. Bill,” and “peacetime G.I. Bill” interchangeably.

¹⁸¹ In testimony before Congress, AMVETS National Commander Edwin Fifleiski called the post-Korea situation a “peculiar problem not heretofore encountered by this Nation.” Testimony before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, “Legislative Recommendations of the Veterans' Organizations,” United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 2310.

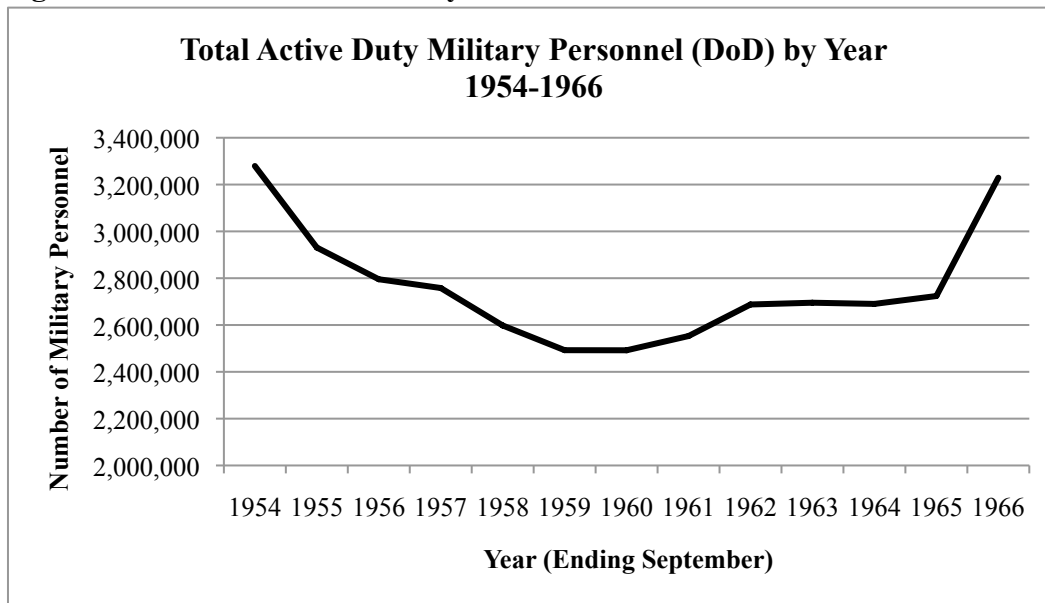
Congress – marked a decided electoral shift away from the support for Democrats’ brand of social policy development throughout the Roosevelt and Truman eras. Though the system of Selective Service remained in effect, the lack of military conflicts did not elicit the same urgency from political actors (from either side of the aisle, or even within some of the larger veterans’ groups) to establish broad-based education programs for returning military personnel. Politicians seemed to agree that an “opening up of the government’s coffers” need not immediately follow compulsory service¹⁸²

Alongside the call for education benefits for peacetime veterans was President Lyndon Johnson’s plan to revitalize the public sector and increase the quality of life in the country through a series of targeted government programs.¹⁸³ The development of the 1966 Cold War G.I. Bill falls in line with the legislative trajectory of the 1965 Higher Education Act, and the two pieces of legislation were effectively aimed at overlapping audiences (especially as a peacetime draft maintained a fighting force of over 2 million people through the beginning of the 1960s, who were unable to secure deferments for education or other socioeconomic reasons) (see Figure 1 below).

¹⁸² Mark Boulton, “A Price on Patriotism: The Politics and Unintended Consequences of the 1966 G.I. Bill,” in ed. Stephen Ortiz, *Veterans’ Policy, Veterans’ Politics: New Perspectives on Veterans in the Modern United States*. (Florida: University Press of Florida Press, 2014), 246.

¹⁸³ Sidney M. Milkis, “Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society, and the ‘Twilight’ of the Modern Presidency,” in eds. Sydney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).

Figure 1: Size of the U.S. Military Post-Korea¹⁸⁴



This chapter focuses on the development of the 1966 Cold War G.I. Bill as a function of a very different veterans’ benefit coalition than the one that had successfully secured the passage of the 1952 G.I. Bill. While the development of the 1952 bill created a fracture in the veterans’ benefit coalition between public and private postsecondary institutions – with the private schools concerned about their enrollment in comparison to the less costly public schools – the 1966 legislative process was far different. The peacetime veterans’ education benefit had (at best) lukewarm support from veterans’ organizations and political parties, and outright opposition from not one, but three different presidential administrations. The driving force behind the veterans’ benefit coalition would come from the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs (and, to a lesser extent, allies in the Senate). In line with my first contention, I argue that the powerful combination of individual legislator incentives (due to concerns about voting patterns among veterans), combined with the popularity of veterans’ benefits regardless of the

¹⁸⁴ Data compiled from the Defense Manpower Data Center’s “Active Duty Military Strength by Service – Historical Reports FY 1954-1993” Accessed March 3, 2014. <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/reports.do?category=reports&subCat=milActDutReg>.

perceptions of the military conflict in which the veterans were involved, allowed for a select few members of Congress to overreach their positions within the coalitions and move forward on education benefit legislation in the face of uncertainty or inactivity within the group.

The evolution of education benefits for peacetime veterans would test not only the strength of the veterans' benefit coalition, but the ideational attachments to the social construction of the American veteran that had persisted through the Korean War. Changing the political landscape for the peacetime veteran would continue to fracture the veterans' benefit coalition, even as it entered the debate about these education benefits without a uniform stance on the legitimacy or even necessity of postsecondary education for all former military personnel, regardless of their experience in military conflicts.

A Coalition of Diverging Interests? The Veterans' Benefit Coalition in the Post-Korea Era

While the debates concerning the 1952 G.I. Bill were undertaken by a veterans' benefit coalition generally reified by the legislation's development, the period of reform surrounding the 1952 bill was not as constructive to the veterans' benefit coalition. As discussed in Chapter 2, the process of reform undercut the coalition by creating schisms along lines of public and private postsecondary institutions. Moreover, the 1952 legislation had solidified the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the House as a powerful component of the coalition, and one that appeared to fall in lockstep with the veterans' organizations' demands. By 1959, however, the differences among the veterans'

organizations was thrown into stark contrast as their legislative agendas featured distinct mismatches on the issue of education.

Moreover, the House and Senate Committees were not homogenous in their support for extending veterans' benefits, and were not motivated by the investigatory hearings that had been generated by the 1944 bill (and which, I argue, helped solidify support for the 1952 legislation). Additionally, the support of the President – which had, until Eisenhower, been relatively firmly in place behind the extension of benefits to veterans – was now no longer guaranteed, regardless of party affiliation. The veterans' benefit coalition closed out the 1950s in a state of disjuncture, no longer united behind a response to an ongoing conflict, and grappling with the policy consequences of an ideological shift in how America would define a “veteran.”

The Vietnam Era Coalition and Divided Interests

Though the veterans' benefit coalition remained concerned with issues of veteran medical care and the treatment of veterans' dependents, the issue of education benefits (parallel to those that had been established for veterans of both WWII and the Korean War) would soon occupy space on the agenda. The discussions over these particular benefits would draw in the members of the coalition into a heated debate about policy priorities, fairness to veterans of different conflicts, and government responsibility to the peacetime veteran who did not see the kind of combat that his predecessors had experienced.

Veterans' Organizations

Though veterans' groups had been united behind the reforms to the 1944 G.I. Bill that would become the Korean G.I. Bill, their tenuous joint commitment to veterans' education would begin to falter at the end of the 1950s. As attention turned to healthcare and disability rehabilitation, the reintegration of veterans seemed to focus largely on physical ailments and helping to reduce the unemployment rate among former military personnel. The issue of postsecondary education for veterans would soon cause conflicts among the major veterans' groups, with their opposition to the issue – either through silence or outright direct contestation – becoming a wedge that would further divide the groups. The differences in the attention that the groups paid to the issues in their national resolutions – presented annually before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs – highlights the disparities in each group's agenda and their uneven support of extending G.I. Bill benefits to the newest cohort of veterans (see Table 2, below).¹⁸⁵

Table 2: Veterans' Organizations and Support for Peacetime Veteran Education Benefits

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
American Legion							+
AMVETS	+	+	+	+	+	+	
Disabled American Veterans							
Veterans of Foreign Wars	+		+	+	+	+	+
Veterans of WWI of the USA	-						

+ Explicit group support in legislative agenda for Congress

- Explicit group opposition in legislative agenda for Congress

The American Veterans of WWII (AMVETS) was one of the only groups that actively sought educational benefits for peacetime veterans, appearing before Congress in

¹⁸⁵ Source: Annual Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 1960-1966. Retrieved through ProQuest Congressional database.

1960 to request that the G.I. Bill model of education benefits – though with a different “1 day of benefits per 1 day of service” model – be extended to veterans who had entered the service after 1955.¹⁸⁶ There was the only veteran group to consistently make explicit remarks in support of educational benefits for peacetime veterans from 1960-1966, arguing that the “new breed of veteran” deserved to have the same types of educational opportunities as those from previous eras, despite the potential cost to the federal government.¹⁸⁷ AMVETS leadership argued that “the education and lives of the young men serving today are interrupted and their preparation to compete in the Great Society disrupted,” without the remedy of an extended veterans’ education benefits system in place.¹⁸⁸ The AMVETS consistent organizational support for the extension of peacetime education benefits throws into sharp relief the varying levels of opposition that all but one of the other veterans’ organizations held for a peacetime G.I. Bill.

The Disabled Veterans of America (DAV) maintained consistency in its message that the most critical constituency of veterans were those with physical or mental limitations created by military service. As such, the DAV had, in previous debates about the 1944 and 1952 G.I. Bills, called for more emphasis on disabled veterans and publicly opposed investing in broad-based education initiatives that would only serve to siphon money and attention away from the disabled veterans. The leadership of the DAV put it succinctly: “In discussing prospective benefits for current members of the Armed Forces,

¹⁸⁶ Harold T. Bere, AMVETS, *Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1965.

¹⁸⁷ Don Spagnola, AMVETS national commander. *Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), 5.

¹⁸⁸ Don Spagnola, AMVETS national commander. *Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 2436.

it comes to mind that attempts are being made to bring GI educational and other programs within the scope of the sweeping welfare activities of the Great Society.”¹⁸⁹ The DAV refused to speak in support of education benefits for peacetime veterans, pressing members of Congress to place more of an emphasis on programs to provide education and vocational training for those who had sustained injured during their service in Korea and in WWII.

Unlike the DAV, the VFW was routinely supportive of the Cold War G.I. Bill in their national resolutions, consistently adding the extension of G.I. bill benefits to their platform throughout the first half of the 1960s, although never adding testimony before Congress to strengthen – or even draw attention to – their position. Thus, the VFW’s support can be considered relatively symbolic, as it blended its support for education benefits in alongside a variety of other measures for vocational training and rehabilitation. Interestingly, in 1965 – as the debates over the peacetime G.I. Bill were coming to a head – the VFW adopted language in their national resolution that would limit potential pool of beneficiaries of any education program to only those who had been in active combat.¹⁹⁰

The Veterans’ of World War I renewed its protest against the increasing attention paid to the new veteran cohorts at the expense of legislation directed toward older veterans. In a 1960 Congressional hearing, the group’s national commander expressed his opposition to the continued neglect of the WWI veteran, asking, “What were the

¹⁸⁹ Claude L. Callegary, National Commander of the DAV. Testimony before House committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, 1965 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), 3336.

¹⁹⁰ Statement of John A. Jenkins, Commander in Chief, VFW. Testimony before House committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, 1965 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1965), 2408.

opportunities offered for furthering his education, suddenly become so necessary in a world upside down to prewar concepts and requirements? None...the now fast-aging veteran of the First World War gladly paid the soaring taxes made necessary by war in addition to striving for those benefits in favor of the boy who was to return.”¹⁹¹ The group remained steadfast in its unwillingness to continue advocating for benefits that its own members would never receive in the future, and had never been offered when they had left the military.

The Parties

Similarly, neither of the two political parties seemed to place veterans at the forefront of their party agendas on a post-Korea political system, giving short shrift to the issue of veterans’ reintegration through the beginning of the 1960s. Though individual legislators like Senator Ralph Yarborough and Representative Olin Teague remained powerful forces in the veterans’ benefit coalition, the broader party organizations did not echo this strong advocacy in the arena of veteran’s benefit programs at the national level (nor did their presidential candidates in either the 1960 or 1964 elections).

The 1960 Democratic Party platform featured a small section on veterans’ affairs, pledging to continue expanding coverage for veterans with service-connected disabilities and maintaining the healthcare system. Additionally, Democrats pledged to “continue...educational benefits patterned after the G.I. Bill of Rights,” though did not specifically mention whether such benefits would be extended to peacetime veterans or

¹⁹¹ Charles A McCarthy, World War I Veterans of the USA, Inc.. 1960. Testimony before House committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Legislative Recommendations of Veterans Organizations to the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, 1960 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), 1982.

only those who had been involved in military conflict. During the same year, the party proposed a system of national grants and scholarships at the federal level to assist young people with obtaining postsecondary education, citing the benefits of a well-educated American youth.¹⁹² The 1964 party platform, however, did not make mention of specific plans for the extension of any veteran education benefits, though it did reference legislation passed in 1963 which nearly tripled the amount of federal aid available to students, from \$50 million to \$142 million.¹⁹³ Notably, of the Democratic presidential candidates from 1952-1964 (Stevenson, Kennedy, and Johnson), not one made any mention of veterans in any of their national convention addresses.¹⁹⁴ Though veterans did make it into the Democratic Party platforms of the 1960s, there was no extension of the initial drive for either the 1944 or 1952 G.I. Bills present in the party's messages.

Republicans, in comparison, were more focused on the role of veterans' benefits as economic reintegration, as opposed to a portal for more education funding. In 1960, the Republican Party pledged to improve veterans' reemployment rights, with no mention of educational programs or benefits. They also pledged to stand behind the maintenance of the VA as a separate agency. In the realm of higher education, they did mention support for federal aid programs, but pledge to keep funding and control over all forms of education delegated to the state level.¹⁹⁵ The 1964 platform made only minor references

¹⁹² Democratic Party Platforms: "Democratic Party Platform of 1960," July 11, 1960. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29602>.

¹⁹³ Democratic Party Platforms: "Democratic Party Platform of 1964," August 24, 1964. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29603>.

¹⁹⁴ Source: Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://presidency.ucsb.edu>.

¹⁹⁵ Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1960," July 25, 1960. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25839>.

to veterans, and focuses on veterans' preferences in employment and disability and medical care. In higher education, the GOP proposed a system of tax credits for those with higher education costs, as well as aid to states and a limited federal student aid program to assist with postsecondary school costs.¹⁹⁶

This reluctance of either party to reiterate the message of the veterans' benefit coalition has several potential explanations. One rationale centers on the minor recessions of the 1950s – in 1949-1950, 1953-1954, and 1957-1958 – that together placed Congress' focus squarely on unemployment and inflation issues. These economic downturns would have drawn focus away from issues of education and toward more immediate questions of economic policy. Thus, at the time when the question of veterans' benefits was beginning to gain traction among some interested veterans' groups, the parties' policy priorities were not amenable to questions of veteran education.¹⁹⁷ Another potential explanation is that the peacetime draft allowed for a great deal of deferments – for education, childrearing, etc. – that the reintegration needs of military personnel became less salient as those who could achieve high levels of education and professional training were already opting out of military service.¹⁹⁸ Neither of these explanations, however, account for why neither party would at least entertain valid policy proposals from a loyal voting constituency.

The best explanation for this lack of attention comes in the form of the ideological shift that the Democrats begin to undergo after 1952 (which John Gerring refers to as the

¹⁹⁶ Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1964," July 13, 1964. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25840>.

¹⁹⁷ James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1983), 342.

¹⁹⁸ Robert P. Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter 6.

“universalist epoch”¹⁹⁹) and the concomitant reaction from the Republican Party in the wake of Eisenhower’s win. As the Democrat’s platform shifted from New Deal era policies to a focus on “the American public” (and less on individual minority groups), singling out veterans as a target population was less aligned with this new strategy. Similarly, the GOP’s parallel focus on the “populism of the right” (as Gerring argues) meant that it eschewed a public emphasis on special interests in favor of supporting “American values” held in common by the entire citizenry.

Veterans’ Affairs in the House and Senate

At the outset of the discussions concerning the Cold War G.I. Bill, several holdovers from the development of the 1952 legislation remained in powerful positions in Congress. While having such support would appear to mean a more influential role for veterans’ education benefits in the legislative agendas of the late 1950s, the issue of peacetime veterans’ education benefits was actually met with intense resistance from various members of the veterans’ benefit coalition. The task of championing this benefit reform would fall to various members of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, and the Subcommittee on Veterans’ Affairs (within the Committee on Labor and Public Works) in the Senate.

In the House, Olin Teague (D-TX), who had been a major force behind the 1944 G.I. Bill investigations as well as the 1952 Korea G.I. Bill’s development, headed the Veterans’ Affairs committee. The House Committee generally presented a unified front on veterans’ issues, allowing the veterans’ organizations latitude in shaping each year’s

¹⁹⁹ John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 7; see also Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898*.

legislative agenda (via annual testimony and review of the five largest groups' national resolutions). The House remained poised to move on peacetime veterans' benefits, insofar as their committee membership remained largely intact and featured several high-ranking representatives from both sides of the aisle.

The issue of peacetime veterans' education benefits was introduced in Congress in 1959, via legislation proposed in the Veterans' subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Member of the subcommittee Lister Hill – a Democrat from Alabama – was also chair of the full committee, and had been an advocate of the 1952 Korean War G.I. Bill. Similarly, the subcommittee contained Ralph Yarborough, a vocal advocate for veterans who would ultimately take the lead in pressing forward with the legislation until it was passed in 1966. Though the subcommittee setup seemed to favor the enactment of powerful veterans' legislation, it would not become its own standing committee until 1970, leaving veterans' benefit issues split between Labor and Public Welfare, and Finance. This bifurcation of the veterans' issues agenda would plague Senate leaders as they attempted comprehensive action on various issues, and leave them especially vulnerable to a powerful LPW committee (even with Hill at the helm). Additionally, Congress would be met with strict opposition from the Eisenhower – and later, Kennedy and Johnson – administrations, stunting the ability of the subcommittee to even report out various versions of the legislation. Though the Senate appeared fertile ground for increasing veterans' benefits, it appeared that it would not be able to match the opposition of the White House.

The Executive: The Presidents and the VA

The Eisenhower Administration's last year in office would be the target of the first round of appeals for broader veterans' benefits. The Bradley Commission had recommended in 1956 that education benefits for veterans after the Korea War cohort be opposed, since they would increase spending on a social program with no direct relation to a military conflict.²⁰⁰ In private legislative meetings with advisors, Eisenhower stressed the need to rein in spending and to reject any provisions for veterans that had not served in either of the World Wars or in Korea, contending that doing so would be a reversion to New Deal era policies.²⁰¹

The Kennedy Administration kept largely silent on veterans' benefits, giving the semblance of agreement with the Eisenhower Administration and the Bradley Commission's recommendations. The Administration, similarly, did not concede ground to the veterans' groups' demands for more benefits, either. In responding to appeals from the National Director of the American Association of University Veterans (based at West Virginia University) to provide educational benefits for the peacetime veterans, White House Assistant Special Counsel Lee White noted that other scholarship programs will meet the needs of the newest cohort of veterans. Holding the line of the Administration in their overall reluctance to engage in an expansion of veterans' education benefits, White stated, "We do not oppose expansion of educational and training opportunities for

²⁰⁰ Boulton, "A Price on Patriotism."

²⁰¹ Notes on Legislative Meeting, Week of July 7, 1959. Legislative Meetings Series, Box 3, Folder July 7, 1959, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

peacetime ex-servicemen, but believe that these should be provided by programs designed to increase the opportunities for all of our qualified young people.”²⁰²

It would not be until the Johnson Administration that the veterans’ benefit coalition would meet a President that tacitly accepted – if not explicitly endorsed – its place in their ranks. Johnson’s Great Society plans would dovetail to some extent with the goals of reintegrating veterans, though the two goals would eventually come into conflict as his plans for higher education reform necessarily included discussions of education former military personnel.

Although the VA had been instrumental in advancing the interests of veterans’ groups during the development of the 1952 G.I. Bill, the agency was initially stridently opposed to the idea of peacetime veterans’ benefits (beyond service-connected disability programs). The VA’s strict criterion for the “deserving veteran” emerged as early as 1957, when the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs requested comments on a measure that would extend Korea G.I. Bill benefits to those service members who had voluntarily joined the military during January 1955, in the 30 days between the end of active combat (in the DoD’s assessment) and the beginning of the benefit program. This group, VA officials argued, had only willingly joined the armed forces in an attempt to extract potential benefits from the military while not actively participating in the conflict as other members had.²⁰³

The VA’s resistance to awarding benefits to peacetime veterans extended well into the following decade, mirroring the Eisenhower administration’s reluctance to

²⁰² Letter from Lee White to Peter Evans, April 10 1961 (carbon). WHCF Folder LE/VA 3, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

²⁰³ Letter from VA administrator Higley to Teague, April 15, 1957, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives [Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 85th Congress, 1st Session]. No. 86

increase VA spending for the express purpose of reintegrating veterans who had not experienced combat.²⁰⁴ Most of the VA's concerns stemmed from the potential drain on resources that a peacetime veterans' benefit program would produce, which administrators feared would overload the benefit system and create further delays and backlogs. Interestingly, the VA's assertions of its own administrative capacity had been fervent just a few years earlier as it argued for retaining control over the veterans' education program (despite legislative and interest group calls for its transfer to Health, Education, and Welfare).

The efforts on the part of the VA to retain their jurisdiction over the entire set of veterans' benefits offered at the federal level left HEW somewhat sidelined in the debates about further changes to the G.I. Bill's eligibility. The agency could only weigh in on the potential effects on higher education policy, as well as the precedent that peacetime veterans' benefits might set. In a letter to Teague upon request of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, one HEW administrator expressed concern that extending peacetime veterans' benefits was not in the national interest, and that doing so could fundamentally alter the way in which the government distributed loans to college students in the future.²⁰⁵ The agency especially questioned the format in which the veteran's benefits would be extended to service personnel, and whether changing the method of

²⁰⁴ Letter from VA administrator Whittier to Teague, August 19, 1960, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives [Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 86th Congress, 2d Session]. No. 272; Letter from VA administrator to Teague, June 24, 1960, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives [Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 86th Congress, 2d Session]. No. 253. The VA's comments were in direct response to legislative attempts in the Senate Labor and Public Works Committee (via Ralph Yarborough) and Teague's willingness to move ahead on veterans' benefit issues in the House as Senate talks broke down in the summer of 1960.

²⁰⁵ Letter from Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to Teague, February 22, 1960, Prints of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives. Correspondence, 86th Congress, 2nd session, pages 2-3.

payment from tuition vouchers to types of grants or scholarships would have effects on how aid would be extended to civilian students.

Overall, the veteran's benefit coalition members remained divided in their expressed interests as individual lawmakers and interest groups began to put serious force behind a peacetime G.I. Bill. The most aggressive supporters would be found in leadership positions in the House and Senate, and not among the veterans' groups or VA as had occurred during the previous iteration of legislative development following the Korean War. The fact that coalition members were not wholly supportive of the extension of peacetime benefits – and in some cases, were vocally opposed to the establishment of these provisions – sets the stage for a future schism in the coalition and a potential for these interests to overshadow attempts at cooperation.

Attempting to Cooperate

While veterans' benefit coalition members retained diverging (or at least, unaligned) interests in terms of a peacetime G.I. Bill, individual members of the coalition attempted to advance various proposals to continue education assistance to veterans. In 1959, Ralph Yarborough began advocating for a "Cold War G.I. Bill," that would have similar positive effects on national educational attainment and employment that the previous bills had offered.²⁰⁶ He did so without the majority of the veterans' groups offering explicit support on the measure, and also to a Senate Labor and Public Works Committee that vocally opposed what appeared to be a "blank check" to the VA for the foreseeable future.

²⁰⁶ Boulton, "A Price on Patriotism."

In an editorial, Yarborough argued for the adjusted compensation model of education benefit extension, and even as a corrective for the inequality amongst those who had been drafted for service (especially that those who were wealthy enough to attend college would be not only exempt from service, but have that much more of an advantage in postsecondary education than their peers serving in the military). In an editorial responding to a column claiming the equitable nature of military service, Yarborough argued, "I doubt that cold war veterans and their families will appreciate the force of your subtle argument that, even though we may select for military service those of lesser financial standing, on discharge 'the best of these' may compete 'equally' with the more wealthy for their education."²⁰⁷ Yarborough's claims would be met with resistance from both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, as neither was willing to increase spending on veterans' benefits beyond those in health and disability compensation.

Teague, at the helm of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in the house, was already prepared for an uphill struggle against the White House. He noted the lack of references to veterans or veterans' benefits programs in the 1961 State of the Union address (and what he perceived to be silence on the subject of veterans during the 1960 presidential campaign) to his committee.²⁰⁸ He interpreted this lack of rhetoric as opposition to his committee's active agenda, one that was becoming increasingly shaped by veteran's organizations who found sympathetic legislators willing to advocate on their behalf in the committee. Teague told members of the committee and veterans' organizations, in looking ahead to veterans' benefit programs for those service members who had joined

²⁰⁷ Ralph W. Yarborough, "G.I. Bill Advocated; Grants Considered Compensation for Interrupted Schooling." *New York Times*, August 22 1959, 16.

²⁰⁸ John F. Kennedy: "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.," January 30, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8045>.

after 1955, “We will have a tough job.”²⁰⁹ With a veteran’s lobby that was divided on the issue of extending education benefits to peacetime veterans, Teague’s committee (though internally united) was left in position of flux on peacetime veterans’ benefits through the early 1960s. Despite the diverging interests of the veterans’ groups and the difficulty that Yarborough and others were having in the Senate, the House committee was poised for action – though admitting that their demands would not be met with positive reactions from the White House.

Similarly, the VA remained unwilling to yield to lawmakers in appeals for support for increased veterans’ education benefits. They provided repeat testimony in House and Senate hearings that the extension of these benefits would be harmful to their broader agenda and constituency, and mirrored presidential opposition to increased spending for veterans who had not been in combat. By 1964, though, the Johnson Administration’s influence would push the VA to make a deliberate turn towards support for tuition and aid programs for veterans, and the agency would ultimately cooperate with Teague, Yarborough, and others in advancing the legislation forward. At the outset of the legislative process, however, the VA was unwilling to yield to legislative drives for the expansion of the benefits program.

The lack of cooperation between and among members of the veterans’ benefit coalition is due in large part to the lack of cohesion on the issue of peacetime G.I. Bill benefits. Without a unifying goal for coalition members, the strain of cross-pressures

²⁰⁹ Olin E. Teague, Chairman’s Remarks during the Legislative Recommendations of Veterans’ Organizations before the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, 1961, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 17.

began to corrode the fragile structure of the coalition,²¹⁰ driving members back into their own vested interests and out of important strategic arrangements around their common issue. Thus, the previous success of reforming the 1944 G.I. Bill was not sufficient to reify the coalition for further iterations of the reform process, as their individual interests eventually overshadowed their previously shared position. Moreover, the definitional questions about veteran status threw the coalition into debate over what constituted the “American veteran,”²¹¹ and a lack of consensus among members (and varying degrees of support for a more inclusive definition from across the coalition), further prevented unified action on the part of coalition members. In this way, the veterans’ benefit coalition’s divisions left it immobilized until the mid-1960s, as individual members found support in the administration and (eventually) among veterans’ organizations.

Reform Strains the Coalition: The 1966 Cold War G.I. Bill

In earlier chapters, I argue that previous iterations of the G.I. Bill legislation strained the coalition through their reform process (which forced to the surface the conflicting interests of coalition members both in and out of the realm of veterans’ education benefits. The 1966 G.I. Bill was no different in this regard, though it did sidestep some of the more contentious debates of the 1952 legislation (centered on tuition vouchers) by introducing a more immediate conflict: defining the new American veteran. Whereas both WWII and Korea veterans held active combat experience in common, the

²¹⁰ Andrew B. Whitford, “The Structures of Interest Coalitions: Evidence from Environmental Litigation.” *Business and Politics*. 5 (2003): 45–64; for an overview of how coalitions may be placed under stress due to conflicting interests, see Christine Mahoney and Frank R. Baumgartner. “The Determinants and Effects of Interest-Group Coalitions.” *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago*. 2004.

²¹¹ For an in-depth discussion of the changing nature of the veteran during the time period, see Boulton, “A Price on Patriotism.”

peacetime veterans could not claim the same effects of active duty service as their predecessors. Rather, in attempting to define the new American veteran through compulsory service – but not necessarily combat duty – Cold War G.I. Bill supporters were drawing a more explicit connection between federal intervention and the mitigation of inequality.

After Yarborough's introduction of a Korea G. I. Bill extension in 1959, the Eisenhower Administration quickly came out in opposition to Yarborough's proposal.²¹² Eisenhower in particular was adamantly opposed to the idea that peacetime veterans would receive the same treatment as those that had been involved in active combat, telling legislative leaders that he would remain staunchly opposed to any attempts to include peacetime veterans into the same benefit eligibility category as combat veterans.²¹³

Eisenhower was not alone in his opposition to the peacetime veteran receiving education benefits. The Department of Defense also removed its support from the idea of veteran education provisions with the realization that such a program would adversely impact its ongoing Cold War operations. The DOD argued that the extension of the benefits would ultimately pull qualified and trained service personnel in technical fields out of military careers and into secondary education with guaranteed benefits.²¹⁴ An internal 1961 White House memo reiterates that the potential damage to the armed forces could be severe, as education benefits would lure prospective non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers out of the service and into education or training programs in

²¹² *The New York Times*, "G.I. Bill Benefit Opposed: Administration Against Plan to School Recent Soldiers," April 18, 1959.

²¹³ Notes on Legislative Leadership Meeting, June 9, 1959, Box 3 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers as President, Legislative Meetings Series. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

²¹⁴ *The New York Times*, "Pentagon Opposes Extended G.I. Bill," New York Times May 23, 1961.

the civilian sector. More than merely changing the definition of the category of “veteran,” administration officials were concerned that such a benefit program would negatively affect the potential of the military to retain quality personnel beyond their term of compulsory service.²¹⁵

Senator Yarborough moved forward, undeterred. In 1959, a set of three bills were introduced in the Senate, only one of which (86 S. 1138) would mirror the provisions of the previous G.I. Bills in its structure and substance. The legislation was sponsored by 26 senators, among them three of the five members of the Veterans’ subcommittee (of which Yarborough was chair). Lister Hill (D-AL), who had been a major proponent of the 1952 Korea G.I. Bill and who chaired the Senate Labor and Public Works Committee, as also a cosponsor and an ally above the subcommittee level. Senator John F. Kennedy was another Veterans’ Committee member who signed onto the early version of the bill (though he would later turn away from attempts to pass the legislation as president).

The major provision of the legislation was a combination grant and scholarship program to replace the original method of funding postsecondary education for veterans. The bill laid out a plan to make aid to peacetime veterans contingent upon either successful academic progression during a probationary period (after which they would continue to receive aid as long as they received good grades), or enrolling in in-demand programs (essentially earning government grants for their education in desirable fields). This aid structure replaced the tuition voucher system that had been created during the 1952 bill reforms (and which itself was a corrective to the method of direct payments to schools in the 1944 legislation).

²¹⁵ “Readjustment Assistance Benefits for Peacetime Ex-Servicemen,” Memo (author unknown) dated January 6, 1961. Legislative Background Files: Cold War G.I. Bill, Box 1, Folder 1. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

The Veterans' subcommittee and Labor and Public Works Committee successfully reported it out to the full Senate. Then-Senator Lyndon Johnson called for a limited debate and no further amendments to S. 1138 on January 1, effectively containing the debate to only the provisions regarding loans to military personnel in lieu of the federal grant program.²¹⁶ The measure passed in the Senate, though the vote was clearly down party lines with no Republicans voting in favor, and only 10 of the 63 Senate Democrats voting in opposition (though 4 did vote "present" during the roll call).²¹⁷

The bill would ultimately die in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee due to resistance to the education loan structure. The VA repeatedly came out in opposition to the structure of the benefit program in S. 1138 (and its parallel bills in both the House and Senate), actively lobbying House Committee Chair Teague to reject the measure in committee.²¹⁸ The proposed structure of the legislation was one of the major sticking points for House Committee members, who could not reach a consensus on the establishment of a new system of veterans' education benefits (paralleling those offered to civilian students through higher education aid).

The disagreements over the specific elements of S. 1138 would foreshadow a broader debate about peacetime military service, as a Cold War G.I. Bill took shape that more clearly resembled the ones passed in 1944 and 1952. The debates about the peacetime G.I. Bill reforms would not be resolved until the beginning of the Johnson Administration, at which point a new executive focus on social policy (though not

²¹⁶ Journal of the Senate of the United States of America: First Session of the Eighty-Sixth Congress, January 1, 1959, 468.

²¹⁷ S. 1138 (1959) Vote breakdown provided by GovTracker. Accessed online March 29, 2014. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/86-1959/s129>.

²¹⁸ Letter from VA to Teague, June 24, 1960, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives [Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 86th Congress, 2d Session]. No. 253; Letter from VA Advisory Committee on Vocational Rehabilitation and Education to Teague, Committee on Veterans Affairs, House of Representatives [Untitled Prints of Correspondence, 86th Congress, 1st Session]. No. 144

necessarily on ones for veterans) would present coalition members with a more supportive member in the White House and the rhetorical leverage they needed to frame a peacetime G.I. Bill as a beneficial policy for the entire country.

The Conflict over Specific Reforms

While S. 1138 had been attached largely due to its payment structure, the underlying question of providing benefits to peacetime veterans would prove to be the more durable debate in the early 1960s, as select coalition members continued to advocate for a more inclusive benefit program. Only during the Johnson administration did coalition members find the tacit executive support they needed to move forward with a peacetime G.I. Bill; moreover, it would be Johnson's Great Society initiative that would help form the basis for appeals to increased government expenditures for former service personnel (though it was potentially the blowback from other veterans' policies that led to Johnson's support of the Cold War G.I. Bill).

After the failure of his first attempt to pass S. 1138, Senator Yarborough reached out to his former subcommittee member (and cosponsor on the bill), then-President John Kennedy, to take up the issue of peacetime veterans' benefits. Despite the lack of interest on the part of the Kennedy administration to move forward with peacetime veterans' benefits in 1960, Yarborough continued to apply pressure after his failed attempt to rouse interest in 1959 (and a shutout in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee). In June 1961, he sent a call to action to White House Special Counsel Theodore Sorensen, and Special Assistants Lawrence O'Brien and Kenneth O'Donnell. "I think these needs more vital for the preservation of the liberties of this and the succeeding generations of Americans, than

all the other educational bills pending in the Congress combined, and I am not alone in the Senate in this opinion.” He closed by declaring, “I am trying to get someone in high executive office to listen to the facts.” [Emphasis his].²¹⁹ A memo attached to the letter in O’Brien’s files notes, “His proposal will certainly be given careful consideration. That really means we will try to keep it from being adopted.”²²⁰

In sharp contrast to the Kennedy administration’s inattention to the peacetime veteran benefits issue, the Johnson Administration was poised to engage with coalition members (if not as a full member of the coalition itself). In November 1964, Johnson directed then-VA Administrator J.S. Gleason to report to the White House on any measures that would advance the cause of the Great Society. In a memo to Special Assistant Bill Moyers, Gleason writes, “In light of these remarks [Johnson’s October 25, 1964 speech²²¹], I have re-evaluated the situation and now recommend that the President sponsor legislation which would extend to peacetime veterans a program of educational assistance patterned on that provided by the Korean G.I. Bill. Such a program would be a valuable and feasible step in achieving the Great Society.”²²² Unlike the VA, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was cautious about extending full education benefits to the peacetime veterans in 1964. Assistant Secretary Wilbur Cohen (who had worked in the Social Security Administration and had a reputation as a social welfare reformer) noted that the proposal had “considerable merit to providing education

²¹⁹ Letter from Ralph W. Yarborough to Theodore C. Sorensen, Lawrence F. O’Brien, and P. Kenneth O’Donnell. June 19, 1961. WHCF Folder LE/VA 3, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

²²⁰ Memo, undated. “Yaborough – to L. O’B” WHCF Folder LE/VA 3, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. The memo is signed only “M.F.,” likely Myer “Mike” Feldman who served as Deputy Special Counsel to Kennedy during his administration (and continued on into Johnson’s first term).

²²¹ This speech represents one of the two college addresses in which Johnson laid out his Great Society initiative in a public forum.

²²² Memo from J.S. Gleason, Jr. to Bill Moyers, Special Assistant to the President, White House. November 19, 1964. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 2, “Initial Administration Opposition and Substitutes.” Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

payments for ex-servicemen,” but that it should “not be a substitute for other desirable educational proposals (scholarships, student loans, work-study programs, etc.).”²²³ Though the VA was ready to move ahead with the legislation in 1964, HEW administrators remained cautious about the possible spillover effects into higher education policy, and the potentially detrimental results for broad-based postsecondary education aid.

The Johnson Administration, though willing to entertain peacetime veterans’ benefits as a part of its broader social policy vision, still appeared reluctant to transplant the veterans’ benefit system into its vision of the Great Society. In a letter to Yarborough in 1965, White House Associate Special Counsel Lee White noted that, while Johnson was aware of the Senator’s attempts to move the legislation through committee, he was publicly committed to universal aid in lieu of veterans-specific policies. White noted that, “Veterans who have served their nation should be eligible to participate in these [universal] programs...we are hopeful that this general approach will be favorably acted upon by the Congress.”²²⁴ In fact, the Bureau of the Budget was adamant that not only would the legislation not make economic sense within the Great Society initiative; it would actually further anger members of the veterans’ organizations whose attention was focused keenly on Johnson’s plan to reorganize (and close) several VA hospitals and regional care centers.

By December 1965, Yarborough’s renewed attempt at the peacetime benefits was contained within S.9, and Johnson Administration officials were trying to override

²²³ Memo from Wilbur J. Cohen to Bill Moyers. “Educational Payments to Servicemen” Dated August 7, 1964. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 2, “Initial Administration Opposition and Substitutes.” Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

²²⁴ Letter from Lee C. White to Ralph Yarborough, January 15, 1965. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 3, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

Yarborough's influence by introducing a new (similar) bill that would keep veterans' benefits within the realm of the Great Society. However, an internal memo reveals that Johnson's advisors were aware that Teague would not support any bill that didn't originate in his committee, and an education bill would land outside of his jurisdiction.²²⁵ As discussed later in Section 3, Teague would move forward with his committee's own version of the legislation, sidestepping the Administration's plan and establishing a precedent for peacetime veterans' benefits.

The conflict over the Cold War G.I. Bill before its ultimate passage is reflective of a broader schism in the veterans' benefit coalition. Though the White House was willing to entertain a peacetime veterans' education plan, they wanted to do so through an expansion of HEW resources to accommodate the large number of veterans who, like their civilian counterparts, had not been engaged in active combat – thus reifying the idea that the peacetime veteran was more of a civilian than his WWII or Korea counterparts who had seen active combat. However, pressure from the House – combined with an incensed veterans' lobby in the wake of hospital closings – eventually won out over Johnson's attempts to stave off the rising tide of VA funding and instead direct the majority of eligible veterans to HEW higher education grants. Despite the inability of many coalition members to concede to each others' policy proposals, the work of individual legislators once again proved decisive in extending education benefits to Cold War era veterans.

²²⁵ Memo from Phillip Samuel Hughes, Assistant Director for Legislative Reference, Bureau of the Budget, to Joseph Califano, Special Assistant to the President. December 9, 1965. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 4, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

Spillover Effects: Higher Education and the Plan of the Great Society

While the effects of policy reform on the veterans' benefit coalition are significant, the more important outcome of this process is how it shaped parallel social policies during the time period. Due to the vested interests of the veterans' benefit coalition members, policy advocates were able to effectively siphon momentum away from broad-based education and training programs and instead divert significant budgetary resources toward the Cold War G.I. Bill. Additionally, in maintaining a distinction between veterans and civilians, the veterans' benefit coalition further insulated its administrative capacity (through the VA) and established a precedent for veterans' education benefits regardless of the type of military service. The "spillover" and "spillback" effects of the 1966 G.I. Bill stunted the development of the Great Society and further instantiated the veterans' lobby as a powerful political force in American politics.

Favoring Veterans' Benefits over Universal Benefits

The Johnson Administration proposed a measure that would effectively change the intention of S.9 (Yarborough's more successful iteration of the peacetime veterans' education benefits legislation). It inserted a clause that would divide the peacetime veterans between the college assistance program (run through HEW) and the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962). Drafted by HEW, the stipulation would mean that only 10% of the veteran cohort at the time would fall under the proposed legislation's provisions (as they had been in active combat situations), while the other

90% would be funneled into one of the two proposed alternate tracks.²²⁶ Additionally, internal White House memos reveal that the Administration wanted the program to begin in 1963 (and not 1955, the end of the Korea G.I. Bill program eligibility).²²⁷ Teague was wary of the bill and had “grave reservations,” reluctant to seek presidential endorsement of the legislation and preferring instead to mirror the Cold War G.I. Bill on the Korea G.I. Bill.²²⁸ Teague moved forward in committee with H.R. 11985, which left behind all of the Administration’s recommendations and replicated the Korea War G.I. Bill, increasing the expected budget for the legislation from \$100 million to \$400 million.²²⁹ The Teague version was supported in both the House and Senate, and arrived on Johnson’s desk less than a month later.

Upon signing the bill into law in March 1966, Johnson expressed his qualms about the Cold War G.I. Bill, noting that the legislation did in fact undermine his broader vision of increasing the accessibility of higher education for the broader population. “Well, I must be frank. I had felt that we could start the new GI program, and that we should, by providing special funds for soldiers who served in combat areas. Others could be provided opportunity grants through the Higher Education Act. In that way, I was hopeful that we would not ask for more than we could get, or bite off more than we could

²²⁶ Memo from HEW to Douglass Cater, December 16, 1965. “Draft G.I. Bill: educational opportunity grants and MDTA training for peacetime veterans who have not served in combat.” Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 4, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

²²⁷ Memo from Joseph Califano to Douglass Cater, December 21, 1965. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 4, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

²²⁸ Memo to the President from Douglass Cater, December 28, 1965. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 4, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

²²⁹ Memo to the President from Bureau of the Budget (unsigned), nd. Legislative Background Folder, New G.I. Bill 1966, Box 1, Folder 4, Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

chew in educational costs.”²³⁰ Although the Johnson Administration had seen Congress expand the veterans’ education assistance program beyond the scope that they had originally considered, Johnson was in no position to veto the bill (especially after the uproar over the consolidation of VA hospitals the previous year).

While much of the conflict surrounding the Bill was focused between Teague and Johnson, the veterans’ organizations were also attempting to navigate the conflicted coalition by appealing to the Great Society language while still protecting their membership. Veterans’ groups had also couched their requests for veterans’ education benefits in terms reflective of broader payoffs to the American citizenry via postsecondary aid for veterans. AMVETS national commander Harold Bere referred to the renewed attention paid to America’s comparative advantage in economic and educational fields as a “creeping gaposis” that, while unwarranted in some fields, was relevant to the discussions of veterans’ benefits broader impacts. Speaking of the need for postsecondary aid for veterans, Bere claimed that while AMVETS was concerned primarily for the economic well-being of its own membership, “my secondary and extended thinkings [sic] relate to any justifiable opportunity which the Government has to intensify, to diversify, to increase, and to spread as widely as possible educational opportunities.” This is especially noteworthy because the AMVETS membership would not have been eligible to receive any of the benefits being discussed for the post-1955

²³⁰ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Remarks Upon Signing the "Cold War GI Bill" (Veterans' Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966)," March 3, 1966. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27461>.

veterans, but the organization was in favor of the extension of these benefits to the new veteran cohort on principle.²³¹

The American Legion spoke out against the proposed legislation, claiming that it paid the veteran less through the VA's program than the individual would receive through universal HEW policies. The Legion pointed out that, under the compensation rates for the working version of the 1966 act, stipends for single male veterans would be about \$100 per month; under the training program as a part of the War on Poverty, the stipend would be \$375 per month. The Legion argued not against the training program, but that the veterans' program be given more generous allowances in line with the civilian sector.²³²

The concern on the part of the veterans' groups was not limited to the establishment of peacetime benefits, though: the groups were also nervous that the Great Society program itself could siphon political momentum away from progress on the benefits front for their membership. The VFW became concerned that the Great Society program could wreak havoc upon the system of veterans' benefits that had been established. The 1966 National Resolution noted that the Great Society encompassed a wide variety of benefits for the elderly and the young, but warned, "there are signposts along the road indicating that many long-standing veterans' rights and benefits and services are in serious jeopardy of being eliminated or drastically curtailed."²³³ The

²³¹ Harold T. Bere, AMVETS statement, 1960. Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1960. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), 1965.

²³² Testimony of James Eldon, American Legion National Commander. Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1966 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

²³³ Veterans of Foreign Wars, "We Must Not Fail the Veteran," National Resolutions of the VFW, 66th National Convention, August 1965, Chicago IL. Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations

veterans' groups, though initially wary of the peacetime veterans' benefit legislation, quickly mobilized to protect their members' interest and advocate in favor of the plan, rather than submitting veterans to the universal programs that civilians were accessing.

In all, the Johnson Administration was right to be suspicious of Teague and the veterans' organizations. A powerful combination of committee leadership and veterans' lobbies was able to divert significant budgetary resources away from the HEW postsecondary programs and toward veteran-specific legislation that mirrored its previous incarnations. The passage of the Cold War G.I. Bill was sufficient to prevent the planned expansion of HEW and the Manpower Development and Training Act, and instead shift more funding to the VA (which had argued for its place in the Great Society initiative through the G.I. Bill). Rather than a complement to universal policies (or a way to address a small fraction of eligible personnel), the peacetime G.I. Bill supplanted broad-based HEW initiatives and narrowed the scope of higher education aid through its passage.

Veterans' Benefits and Insulation from Cross-Pressures

Despite coalition members' attempts to effectively link the Great Society initiative to veterans' education benefits, the two policy spheres remained jurisdictionally distinct following the 1966 bill. Though, as in the past, calls to better integrate parallel programs between HEW and the VA were made by various administrators, coalition members helped insulate veterans' education benefits from any attempts to change their centralized administration (through the VA). Thus, the actual administration of the

before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1966 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office).

veterans' education benefit system was what remained truly removed from any reorganization attempts or growing support for addressing inequality through government-backed education initiatives. This protection of the VA and its system of benefits fits within the concept of "spillback," or the prevention of similar policies through deliberate policy action in a related sphere.

The most vocal opponents of proposals to move the veterans' education benefits program into HEW were the veterans' groups, who has similarly resisted these attempts during past periods of legislative reform (in 1952). Discussions of moving veterans' reintegration programs drew ire from the veterans' organizations, especially the longest standing groups. Robert E. Hansen, Commander in Chief of the VFW, testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs that the VFW would "resist to the last man taking away veterans programs from the Veterans' Administration."²³⁴ Likewise, the DAV "utterly and fundamentally" resisted any attempts to move veterans' programs out to the jurisdiction of other departments under the potential reorganizing force of the Great Society initiative.²³⁵

The veterans' groups at this point were the most powerful proponents of the VA and its administrative capacity, though prior to the development of the 1966 act their interests had diverged sharply from those of the Administration. Though veterans' groups were more willing to consider the potential for peacetime education benefits than the VA was, they were still reluctant to move individual programs out from under the VA's

²³⁴ Robert H. Hansen, VFW, 1962. Testimony before the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs, Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1962 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), 2261.

²³⁵ Comments from Claude L. Callegary, National Commander of the DAV. Legislative Recommendations of Veterans' Organizations before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1966 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 3336.

oversight, for fear that any leverage that they had in determining the administration of veterans' policies would disintegrate.

Much as in the case of the 1952 G.I. Bill reform, legislative recommendations for the VA to release some of its authority over the veterans' education benefits program were sharply opposed by veterans' organizations. While this opposition represents a relatively weak test of the groups' influence in protecting the veterans' benefit program (since the suggestions for HEW control never went beyond issues raised in Congressional hearings), the fact that the VA could not be seriously threatened by attempts to dismantle its administrative capacity is in itself evidence of the VA's durability in the face of threats to its power – and, as a corollary, the benefit system that it was charged with maintaining.

Conclusion

Overall, the case of the 1966 G.I. Bill reveals important connections between the policy reform process and the understudied feedback process that can result. By analyzing relevant archival materials from different actors involved in the policy process, I am able to analyze a variety of perspectives on a singular process and identify potential coalitional disagreements or strategic choices.

Here it is important to note that there is partial support for each of the three hypotheses derived earlier: the process of reforming the G.I. Bill for peacetime veterans did in fact reveal a fragile coalition (that was further strained by the policy development process). This unstable coalition was, however, able to siphon political momentum (and actual material resources) away from broad-based higher education programs and

maintain the separate jurisdiction of the VA over veterans' education affairs (even for those veterans who had not served in active combat).

In expanding the G.I. Bill's education provisions to peacetime veterans, veterans' benefit coalition members made critical changes to both public policy and American political culture. In the policy realm, the 1966 G.I. Bill's supporters increased the scope of veterans' education benefits beyond the original intention of the 1944 or 1952 iterations of the legislation. They also managed to prevent a substantial increase in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and maintain the power of the VA in keeping the entire program of veterans' benefits for American service personnel distinct from social policies for civilians.

Moreover, the establishment of the 1966 G.I. Bill signaled an important conceptual turning point in American politics. The reality of compulsory service meant that every veteran was now entitled to the host of benefits formerly reserved only for those who had been involved in American military engagements. This would prove to be an important precedent as the country became entangled in warfare in Vietnam and (soon after) lifted the compulsory service obligation. Counting peacetime veterans as American veterans – without asterisks or qualifiers – would set the stage for the next iteration of veterans' benefit legislation, and one that would test the strength of the veterans' benefit coalition – and the extent of its influence – in a way it had not yet experienced.

CHAPTER 5

THE VIETNAM ERA G.I. BILL AND CONGRESSIONAL TRIUMPH

“That place was cold, man,” commented a Vietnam veteran to a reporter, when asked about his experience with the Veterans’ Administration after seeking G.I. Bill benefits in a VA office.²³⁶ Indeed, the veterans of the Vietnam era would be faced with a societal reintegration process that was backed by less generous education benefit programs than what their WWII or Korean War peers had encountered. Veterans’ education benefits as of the late 1960s had stagnated, remaining at approximately \$100 per month for a single veteran, which veterans’ groups argued was not sufficient to keep pace with rising tuition and education costs.²³⁷ However divided the public was concerning the rationale or process of the war, the political pressure for education benefits for veterans remained a constant. Vietnam veterans would ultimately receive comparable benefits to those veterans of older generations, and would have only the formidable veterans’ benefit coalition to thank for this political victory.

The story of the 1972 Vietnam Era G.I. Bill actually encompasses two decisive political victories on the part of the veterans’ benefit coalition: an increase in education allowance benefits in 1970, and the subsequent additional increase under the 1972 legislation. In both cases, the White House resisted the Congressional pressure for increasing spending for the VA at the outset, ultimately acquiescing to the increased education provisions under Congressional pressure. Interestingly, the 1972 G.I. Bill case

²³⁶ *The New York Times*, “Miserly Reward,” April 13, 1972.

²³⁷ Resolutions of the DAV 1968 National Convention, as quoted in the testimony of National Commander Wayne Sheirbon, Legislative Recommendations of Veterans’ Organizations before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 1969 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 54-55.

presents the first in which the veterans' benefit legislation appeared to have little influence on concurrent higher education legislation (namely, the amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965 that occurred in 1972, establishing Title IX).

This chapter focuses on the political maneuvering between the veterans' benefit coalition and the Nixon Administration between 1968 and 1972. In both the 1970 and 1972 battles over veteran's education benefits, Congress would once again move to the foreground as the driving factor within the passage of the bills; namely, individual legislators with previous success in the realm of veteran's benefits would continue their push for more government provisions for returning military personnel. Their own electoral interests to satisfy veterans in their districts, combined with their past successes and reputations for popular veterans' benefit legislation – would drive these legislators' actions within the House and Senate. Despite the presence of veterans' organizations and a new membership cohort of Vietnam era veterans to recruit, legislators were still the major policy entrepreneurs in the realm of veterans' education benefits. By the time of the 1972 legislation, the veterans' benefit coalition was distilled down into two main allied groups of Congressional leaders (both Republican and Democrat) and veterans' organizations.

While previous iterations of the veterans' benefit coalition had featured a more diverse and potentially divisive set of entities, the coalition of the 1970s bore little resemblance to that heterogeneous and complex dynamic. After several successes in the realm of veterans' education benefits, the veterans' benefit coalition was strong, unified – and, perhaps most importantly, a strong alliance between key legislators and the growing veterans' lobbying groups. Key members of Congress would maximize the

political utility of the popular G.I. Bill program to maintain favor with a critical voting bloc, and also continue their personal legislative agendas in the field of veterans' reintegration opportunities. As I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, the veterans' benefit coalition's composition following the 1944 G.I. Bill was tilted much less in favor of veterans' group action, and more towards the entrepreneurship of individual legislators with ties to veterans' legislation.

This chapter begins with an overview of the political context at the outset of the Nixon Administration, as well as the composition of the veterans' benefit coalition. Beginning first with the political fight over the 1970 education allowance increases, I outline the tenuous relationship between Nixon's promises to the nation's veterans, and his desires (and those of his party) to hold firm against the excessive government spending of the Johnson Administration's Great Society. This first battle sets the stage for the 1972 Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act, and helps explain the continued victory of the veterans' benefit coalition in expanding the veterans' education benefit program. Taken together, these two legislative contests provide clear evidence of not only the influence of the veterans' benefit coalition, but most importantly, how individual legislators were able to lead not only their fellow party or even committee members, but the veterans' groups themselves on formulating legislation that would provide postsecondary education access to millions of returning veterans.

Johnson, Nixon, and Vietnam: Changes in the Veterans' Benefit Coalition

In one of his final public addresses, President Lyndon Johnson noted that both President-Elect Richard Nixon and Vice President-Elect Spiro Agnew were veterans, and that he had faith that they would continue the record of success (or at least, success as the veterans' benefit coalition had defined it – that the Johnson Administration had.²³⁸ The 1968 Democratic Party platform noted the increase in GI Bill benefits for Vietnam veterans, passed by what the platform described as an “education-minded Democratic Congress.”²³⁹ While the Republican platform made no mention of veterans' education benefits, the growing issue of returning veterans was not one that the GOP – or their newly-elected president – could easily ignore. That same year, the *New York Times* reported, “The Veterans Administration is doing a brisk business in G.I. Bill benefits for Vietnam era veterans who are returning to civilian life at an average rate of 70,000 a month.”²⁴⁰ This “brisk business” would need to be sustained by an administration that was willing to continue increasing outlays for veterans' benefit programs and, ideally, one that would be able to work better with the veterans' benefit coalition than the Johnson Administration had been able to.

However, during Nixon's first term, the Administration faced concurrent inflation and a rising unemployment rate, pulling much of the White House's attention toward federal spending and job creation programs.²⁴¹ Meanwhile, the veteran population in the country was booming. Vietnam veterans were returning at the rate of

²³⁸ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Remarks to Leaders of Veterans Organizations Upon presenting Awards to Members of the U.S. Veterans Advisory Commission," November 20, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29247>.

²³⁹ Democratic Party Platforms: "Democratic Party Platform of 1968," August 26, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29604>.

²⁴⁰ *The New York Times*, “Vietnam Era Starts new Veterans Agency Boom,” September 22, 1968.

²⁴¹ Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1999).

about one million per year between 1969 and 1972 and increasingly laying pressure on the VA's education programs to help bridge the gap between military service and civilian life.²⁴² By 1972, there were over 28 million veterans in the United States – a combination of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans produced by the draft and America's military interventions.²⁴³ This veteran population would become increasingly politically important to the Nixon Administration, and would, at the same time, be the cause of much strife between the White House and Congress (and even within the Republican Party). The veterans' benefit coalition would represent this new cohort of Vietnam veterans, and would force Nixon to make critical decisions in his first term in office. Nixon's strategy was a marked difference from the way in which Johnson dealt with the veterans' benefit coalition, and the debates over the G.I. Bill in the late 1960s would establish the framework within which the veterans' benefit coalition would attempt to address the returning Vietnam War veteran cohort.

Johnson and Congress: The Afterglow of the 1966 G.I. Bill

Toward the end of President Johnson's final term, he began to express more unqualified support for increased veterans' education benefits. Such a change in rhetoric is surprising given his resistance to the 1966 Cold War G.I. Bill, but in his message to Congress on January 31, 1967, Johnson recommended an increase in the educational allowance from \$100 to \$130 per month.²⁴⁴ It would be this recommendation to which

²⁴² George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (New York: Pearson, 2009); *Congress and the Nation, Volume III 1969-1972* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1973), 555.

²⁴³ *Congress and the Nation*, 555.

²⁴⁴ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Special Message to the Congress: America's Servicemen and Veterans," January 31, 1967. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28283>.

veterans groups like the DAV would later refer as their policy proposals for returning Vietnam veterans.²⁴⁵ He would later relax his pressure for education benefits somewhat, preferring to focus more on veteran healthcare and hospitalization, an area that had proved thorny for him during the debate over the 1966 G.I. Bill. In January 1968, Johnson, in a special message to Congress, called on legislators to do more for job placement and health (didn't specifically mention increases to GI Bill funding).²⁴⁶ It would ultimately be the Nixon Administration that would be tasked with addressing the rising disparity between veterans' education benefits and postsecondary education costs, though Johnson's public support for increased benefits provided veterans' groups with presidential support late in his final term. Upon signing in education extensions to widows of service members under HR 16025 (PL 82 Stat. 1331) in October 1968, Johnson remarked that it was a "veterans bill – yes. But most important of all, an education bill that will not only recognize the veterans' service, but will enrich the Nation that he fought and gave his blood to protect." In his remarks, he also mentioned two key members of the veterans' benefit coalition – Senator Yarborough and Representative Teague – as critical to the cause of veterans' education benefits writ large.²⁴⁷

Teague and Yarborough would continue to be instrumental to the cause of veterans from their positions within Congress, though their experiences negotiating the

²⁴⁵ John Under, National Commander of the DAV, 1967 Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 391.

²⁴⁶ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Special Message to the Congress - "Our Pride and Our Strength: America's Servicemen and Veterans.," January 30, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29027>.

²⁴⁷ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Remarks Upon Signing Bill Extending Veterans Educational Benefits," October 23, 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29198>.

1966 G.I. Bill had somewhat strained their working relationship. Though the two shared in common their experience as veterans and the same constituency groups in Texas, Teague's desire for increased benefits for veterans was tempered somewhat by his fiscal conservatism.²⁴⁸ Yarborough, meanwhile, was becoming more openly critical of the Vietnam War (of both Johnson and, eventually, Nixon's handling of the conflict) and more willing to back sweeping legislation for service members.²⁴⁹

The Veterans' Groups Begin to Mobilize for the Vietnam Veteran

Beginning in 1967, the veterans' groups began paying increasing attention to the issue of returning Vietnam veterans and the applicability of the Cold War G.I. Bill to these new veterans' academic pursuits. The veterans' groups were unified in their concern over the gap between rising education costs and the static payment structure offered to veterans for education expenses, but none of the groups had offered a defined proposal as to their policy preference.

In testimony before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, American Legion National Commander John Davis noted that the benefits paid to veterans through the 1966 legislation were not keeping pace with the dramatic increases in college tuition that had occurred since the Korea War legislation had been considered. Davis noted the figures from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that suggested that postsecondary education expenses had risen 45% in public institutions, and nearly 62%

²⁴⁸ Mark Boulton, "A Price on Freedom: The Problem and Promise of the Vietnam Era G.I. Bills," (PhD diss., University of Tennessee at Knoxville, 2005), Chapter 4.

²⁴⁹ Robert Cox, *Ralph Yarborough, The People's Senator*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001)

in private schools.²⁵⁰ While he conceded that education alone wouldn't "do the whole job," in terms of reintegrating veterans back into society, the Legion remained committed to the principle of increasing benefits for Vietnam veterans.²⁵¹ AMVETS leaders remarked that the GI Bill had once been perceived as a "giveaway program," but in reality proved the ability of the VA to administer a broad-scale education program alongside other veterans' assistance programs, and as such deserved to be repeated for a new cohort of veterans.²⁵²

The Veterans of Foreign Wars articulated their support in the broader context of past victories for veterans through the prior iterations of the G.I. Bill. The VFW's national resolutions of 1969 mentioned that the education allowances were "for years the high-water makers of a constructive and progressive society. These programs have shown the way. This, they must continue to...The merit of sound, valued, social programs for all citizens, that are underway now, should not be permitted to subordinate nor submerge the nation's commitment to its veterans."²⁵³ The VFW's recognition of the inherent national value of the veterans' education benefit program would not be echoed by the rest of the major veterans' organizations, as they groups pushed to further detach veterans from the Great Society programs of the 1960s and retain them in a protected class (administered solely by the VA). However, in sharp contrast to the effects of G.I.

²⁵⁰ Testimony of John E. Davis, American Legion, Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 368.

²⁵¹ Testimony of John Davis, American Legion, Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 381.

²⁵² Testimony of Joseph Ferrino, National Commander of AMVETS, Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 17.

²⁵³ VFW 1967 National Legislative Goals, as quoted during the testimony of Commander-in-Chief Leslie Fry, Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 431.

Bill reform noted in Chapters 2 and 3, the 1972 G.I. Bill's legislative process does not appear to have created consequences for parallel education programs at the time. The veterans' groups, however, were still guarded about the potential for moving veterans into the jurisdiction of other bureaucratic agencies from prior G.I. Bill battles.

It was only the Disabled American Veterans who offered specific policy proposals in their remarks to Congress concerning veterans' education benefits. The DAV supported an increase in the education assistance allowances by 30%, from \$100 to \$130 per month, for all veterans regardless of service-connected disability. Moreover, the DAV wanted to amend the education benefit eligibility guidelines – under 1952 Korea G.I. Bill, a veteran could receive 1.5 days of education per day of service; under the 1966 law, the compensation was one month of education per month of service. The DAV explicitly recommended in their national guidelines that all Cold War veterans (that is, anyone who served after the January 1, 1955 deadline for inclusion under the Korea G.I. Bill) should be covered under the 1.5/1 ratio outlined in the 1952 legislation.²⁵⁴ These early proposals would become the basis of the policy provisions that would be debated in 1970, and again in 1972, concerning how best to compensate Vietnam veterans.

The position of the veterans' benefit coalition heading into 1969 was beginning to take shape. Veterans' groups, increasingly aware of the potential membership swell due to returning Vietnam veterans, combined with media acknowledgement of the increased pressure of these veterans, were positioned to look for increases in education payments. No longer concerned with validating the position of the veteran (as they had

²⁵⁴ Resolutions of the DAV 1968 national convention, as quoted in the testimony of National Commander Wayne Sheirbon, Veterans' Organizations Legislative Recommendations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 54-55.

been in 1952 and 1966), the groups were now more clearly focused on making the existing programs more generous. Likewise, the Johnson Administration had softened its position slightly on veteran's benefits though, in handing over the White House to the Nixon Administration, the role of the President in the veterans' benefit coalition was unclear. Would Nixon embrace his campaign promises of fiscal conservatism and try to reign in VA spending, or would he be forced to acknowledge the popularity of the G.I. Bill as an institution and continue to renew its promises for the newest group of veterans? Ultimately, though, the two most important architects of the Cold War G.I. Bill remained in Congress, and Teague and Yarborough were now adept at dealing with one another and their respective committees. Their respective reputations as champions for veterans' benefit legislation preceded them, and their vested interest in reforming the G.I. Bill appeared grounded in their past legislative successes and the perception of both as strong advocates for veterans' benefits.²⁵⁵ The fight for education allowance increases in 1970 would be the first test that the veterans' benefit coalition had faced since the 1966 G.I. Bill, and one that ultimately paved a notably smoother path for the 1972 version of the legislation than the coalition had previously enjoyed.

The 1970 Education Benefit Increases and Nixon's Predicament

As the Vietnam veteran cohort grew, the White House would be forced to respond to the pressure of the veterans' benefit coalition to make substantive changes to existing policies, especially given the rising unemployment and inflation rates of Nixon's first term in office. Nixon's response revealed his attempt to mitigate the influence of the coalition by attempting to stall them, before turning toward his fellow Republican on the

²⁵⁵ Boulton, "A Price on Freedom," Chapter 4.

House Veterans' Committee (Teague) to try to salvage the Administration's stance against federal spending. The influence of the veterans' groups in national policy areas, combined with the White House's knowledge of the importance of veterans in electoral contests, ultimately drove the Nixon Administration to bend to the pressure of the veterans' benefit coalition in 1970. Nixon's predicament over his handling of the education allowance increases became the policy window that veterans' supporters needed to make the changes they had been hoping for since the end of the Johnson Administration.

By the summer of 1969, the Nixon Administration was fielding increasing pressure from veterans' groups for expanded education and healthcare benefits. In response to calls by the major national groups (such as the VFW and Legion), Nixon appointed a new VA administrator with strong Legion ties to replace William Driver. Donald Johnson was the former Legion national commander, and had lobbied before Congress for the 1966 G.I. Bill, among other pieces of legislation.²⁵⁶ News media began to question the ability of Johnson to actively restrain the requests of the veterans' groups, as requests for expansion of medical services and increased education allowances further added to the "bloated veterans budget...among a multitude of new proposals that clearly are not related to sacrifices made on behalf of a nation at war." The *New York Times* suggested that, "the new Administrator's background as a spokesman for an organization that has repeatedly made intemperate demands on the public treasury in the name of veterans is not encouraging."²⁵⁷ One of Nixon's first actions with Johnson at the helm of the VA was to create a special commission to study the veterans' budget, in the hopes of

²⁵⁶ Robert B. Semple, Jr. 1969. "New V.A. Director Appointed by Nixon," *New York Times*, June 6, 1969.

²⁵⁷ *The New York Times*. 1969. "Benefits to Veterans." July 4, 1969, 20.

preserving his intention of curbing spending while appeasing veterans' organizations' interests.²⁵⁸

In June 1969, Nixon called for the development of the President's Committee on the Vietnam Veteran, claiming in a public address that:

Veterans benefit programs...have become an investment in the future of the veteran and of his country. The time has come for a careful reevaluation of this investment. Just as there is a difference between the kinds of battles fought in Normandy in 1944 and in South Vietnam in 1969, so there is also a difference in the kinds of problems faced by the returning veterans of these battles. Therefore, we must be certain our programs are tailored to meet the needs of today's veterans.²⁵⁹

Nixon's attempts to moderate the influence of the veterans' benefit coalition by delaying action with an exploratory committee were not sufficient to prevent the veterans' groups and Congress from realizing their own vision for the future of the G.I. Bill program. The issue of the education allowance – the payments made to veterans attending postsecondary institutions to aid them with expenses – would become the focal point of the veterans' benefit coalition that year. The pressure to increase these assistance payments would come from all members of the coalition, leaving the Nixon Administration to make difficult decisions about their reactions to the push for increased benefits.

The Veterans' Benefit Coalition and Internal Motivations

At the helm of the push for increased education assistance payments for veterans, much as he was during the fight over the Cold War G.I. Bill, was Texas Senator Ralph

²⁵⁸ Boulton, "A Price on Freedom."

²⁵⁹ Richard Nixon: "Statement on Benefits for Vietnam Veterans.," June 5, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2084>.

Yarborough (a full discussion of his efforts with the legislation can be found in Chapter 3). Yarborough was galvanized by his success with the 1966 Cold War G.I. Bill and what he perceived as a pending victory in the upcoming 1970 elections (for his third term as senator). Yarborough was appointed chair of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, and was widely recognized for championing various causes of health and public assistance in the Great Society tradition.²⁶⁰ In testimony concerning S338 (the Senate version of the education allowance increase legislation, offering a 46% increase in subsidy payments for veterans), Yarborough proclaimed, “It took 8 years to pass [the Cold War G.I. Bill]. I have been in the Senate 12 years. It was the longest, hardest fight of my service, because in those 8 years I had the opposition of the three Presidents with whom I served, of every Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs, and, most of all, the Defense Department and the Bureau of the Budget.”²⁶¹ Yarborough’s impetus for championing the cause of the Vietnam veterans was at once based in past success, as well as his impending reelection in Texas – a state with an increasingly discontented electorate in the wake of Civil Rights legislation, represented by an explicitly liberal Democrat (which would ultimately turn away from Yarborough in the 1970 election).²⁶² Yarborough’s attempts to build a strong coalition in favor of an expanded veteran’s education benefit system was as much a function of his bid for reelection and the popularity of veterans’ benefits,²⁶³ as it was his own personal experience with the Cold War G.I. Bill.

²⁶⁰ Cox, *Ralph Yarborough, The People’s Senator*, Chapter 13.

²⁶¹ Ralph Yarborough. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Veterans’ Affairs of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, United States Senate, Ninety-First Congress, First Session. June 24-26, 1969. 46.

²⁶² Cox, *Ralph Yarborough, The People’s Senator*, Chapter 13.

²⁶³ R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1990), Chapter 1.

In testimony before the House VAC, the leadership of the various veterans' organizations focused on the alternate legislation (11925) as a more realistic proposition than the Teague bill. The DAV was more willing to place its support what it identified as a more "liberal" provision in light of the rising costs of higher education;²⁶⁴ similarly, the American Veterans' Commission endorsed HR 11925 because it would bring the House version of the legislation more in line with Yarborough's plans for increased provisions in the Senate.²⁶⁵

The other major veterans' groups soon followed in step, providing a unified veterans' organization voice in favor of increasing the assistance payments for veterans in college. AMVETS offered its support for the bill, though, as in the case of the 1966 G. I. Bill, its membership did not stand to reap the same benefits as the newest cohort of veterans.²⁶⁶ The American Legion, which had offered tempered support for the Cold War G.I. bill initially, also swung its support behind HR 11925.²⁶⁷ The VFW's leadership claimed that the original intent of the 1944 G.I. Bill – to provide college educations to returning service members – was not being realized in the current form of the Cold War G.I. Bill provisions: "the GI Bill helps, but the veteran is hurting."

²⁶⁴ William B. Gardiner, Testimony offered as the Assistant Director for Legislative Research, Disabled American Veterans. House Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing on 11959 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1908.

²⁶⁵ Statement of Andrew E. Rice, National Vice Chairman of the American Veterans Committee, William B. Gardiner, Testimony offered as the Assistant Director for Legislative Research, Disabled American Veterans. House Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing on 11959 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1912.

²⁶⁶ Statement of Ralph J. Rossignuolo, Legislative Director, AMVETS, William B. Gardiner, House Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing on 11959 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1917.

²⁶⁷ Statement of E.H. Golembieski, Director, National Rehabilitation Commission, The American Legion, House Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing on 11959 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1919.

Alongside the rest of the veterans' groups, the VFW offered its endorsement of the more generous assistance plan.²⁶⁸

Thus, at least at the outset of the negotiations over increased education payments for veterans, the major coalition members in the Senate (Yarborough and, to a lesser extent, his colleague Alan Cranston) were able to set the agenda for the discussions of provisions for increased allowances in the House. Though Teague's original plan in HR 11959 was less generous, he would be forced to meet Yarborough on his – and the veterans' groups – new terms.

The Legislative Process and Conflict in Congress

On June 9, 1969, just days after Nixon's announcement of his Vietnam Veteran task force, Teague and Brown introduced HR 11959 in the House, and it was referred to the House VAC.²⁶⁹ The bill offered an increase the rates of education assistance under Chapters 31, 34, and 35 of Title 38, United States Code. Ch. 34 is directly related to those who have served in the military since January 1, 1955 – or out of the eligible group for the Korea War veteran's benefits.²⁷⁰ Adair noted that the previous GI Bills had made the veteran population "better educated, better able to command higher wages."²⁷¹

Just days after being sworn in as Administrator of the VA, Johnson appeared before the House VAC on June 25 to testify on several measures relevant to returning veterans, one of which being HR 11959. Johnson mentioned the VA's investigation into the veterans'

²⁶⁸ Statement of Francis Stover, Director, National Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. House Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs Hearing on 11959 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 1922.

²⁶⁹ Boulton, "A Price on Freedom."

²⁷⁰ Congressional Record, United States House of Representatives, August 4, 1969, 22073

²⁷¹ Ibid., 22079

education program, citing it as a reason to move slowly in considering any additional increases in veterans' education allowances. The VA "study" was meant to help stall for an Administration response to the growing push for HR 11959. Donald Johnson expressed hesitation before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee at moving too quickly on the issue of increased funding for education allowances, advocating instead that the House wait for the report of the President's Task Force before moving forward with specific provisions.²⁷²

Nixon's Reaction and an Intermediate Veteran Victory

On August 3, 1969, Olin Teague moved to suspend the rules and pass HR 11959. Two thirds voted in favor of the motion to suspend the rules and the bill was passed with its amendments, 404-0.²⁷³ Numerous representatives took to the floor during debate on the measure, citing the need for increasing veterans' education benefits as a means to spur growth in the higher education sector and potentially increase veterans' participation in the G.I. Bill program (to further validate the policy's usefulness in the current era). The House's measure was clearly more generous than the provisions considered by the White House, and the House was, as Boulton argues, "very self-satisfied."²⁷⁴

In early September, Kenneth Cole summed up the White House's situation succinctly for Deputy Assistant to the President Darrell Trent: "The whole problem boils down to this. The Administration does not have an offensive program for veterans. The

²⁷² Donald Johnson. Letter to Olin Teague. Recorded in Hearings before the Subcommittee on Education and Training, of the House of Representatives' Committee on Veterans' Affairs. June 25, 1969. 1800.

²⁷³ Congressional record, United States House of Representatives, August 4, 1969, 22081

²⁷⁴ Boulton, "A Price on Freedom," 125.

offense has been seized by Olin Teague, and the Veterans Administrator, Don Johnson, feels that he has been left at the post.” Cole explained further that the White House was unable to bolster any VA claims to legislative development on the education allowance issue, because doing so would place Nixon in a difficult position: he would have to backpedal on this position regarding reining in expenditures in FY 1970.²⁷⁵

In the meantime, the rest of the Nixon Administration was beginning to weight in on the viability of the veterans’ education allowance increases. In early September 1969, the HEW sent a memo to Nixon adviser Stephen Hess that apprised him of the comparisons between HR 11959 and the Yarborough legislation, noting that the Yarborough plan offered an additional increase of \$30 per month (over HR 11959’s \$165 proposal). The memo cited that Cranston, chairing the subcommittee of the Labor and Public Welfare Senate Committee, was “strongly for” the Yarborough bill and complementary legislation that would provide additional grants to postsecondary schools for disabled veterans.²⁷⁶ At the same time, VFW leadership was meeting with White House officials. A memo to Bryce Harlow (Counselor to the President and a trusted Nixon adviser) mentioned that the VFW was concerned about veterans being “lumped in with ‘welfare’ cases” and with Nixon’s seeming intractability on the issue of increases to veterans’ education allowances up for debate in Congress.²⁷⁷

By October, the Nixon Administration was beginning to voice more strident opposition to the legislation, at least internally. The Bureau of the Budget warned the

²⁷⁵ Memo from Kenneth Cole to Darell Trent. September 3, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁷⁶ Memo from Office of the Secretary, HEW, to Stephen Hess. September 8, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF – Subject Files – FG233, Box 1, Veterans Administration 7-1-69-12-31-69, folder 2 of 2.

²⁷⁷ Memo from A. P. Toner to Bryce Harlow, et al. September 5, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF – Subject Files – FG233, Box 1, Veterans Administration 7-1-69-12-31-69, folder 2 of 2.

White House about the potential for the increased education allowances to “strain further the credibility of the President’s commitment” to holding federal outlays firm (at about \$193 billion) in FY1970. The BOB warned that, “together with other budget overruns, these amount simply cannot be accommodated within the budget as presently planned...the Veterans Administration is not now in a position [emphasis original]” to absorb the costs of the increased allowances by forcing them to cut in other program areas.²⁷⁸ Nixon adviser Arthur Burns explicitly warned Nixon of the potential developments in Congress. He noted that the President was likely to receive a “costly bill” sometime in November, and that he needed to make a decision about how to best address the proposed increases in the education allowances. Burns warned, “Continued silence may be construed as acquiescence. Our Republican colleagues in Congress will then believe that they are free to do whatever they feel is in their own best interests. This process has already taken place in the House and may soon take place in the Senate.” He further argued that, while holding firm on a position of no increases would increase Nixon’s credibility in holding firm against inflation, doing so would not be likely to mesh with Congress’ willingness to make increases in line with education costs. Attempting to propose an increase that would come in below the Congressional 46% level would “be popular with the Congress but it would make a mockery of your fight against inflation.”²⁷⁹

On October 21, 1969, Nixon sent a letter to Yarborough and appealed to him for help reining in the House measure, which he argued would increase benefits beyond the

²⁷⁸ Memo from Bureau of the Budget to Kenneth Cole, Jr., October 9, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁷⁹ Memo from Arthur Burns to the President, October 6 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

cost of living increases or the increase in education costs since the 1967 measure signed in by Johnson.²⁸⁰ After receiving the letter from Nixon, Yarborough called a press conference to discuss Nixon's letter with the press.²⁸¹ The following week, Johnson reported to the White House on the "G.I. Bill Allowance Hassle," claiming that Teague has discussed publicly in the media that Nixon should not be "so naïve as to expect a bill with less than the 27-percent voted by the House."²⁸²

By November, the VA and White House expected that Teague would call up HR 11959, agree to the Senate amendment, and send it back to the Senate for a vote.²⁸³ Teague, however, was willing to work with the White House on keeping the increase in educational allowances as low as possible. In a memo from Deputy Counselor Richard Burress to Bryce Harlow, Burress noted that he had met with Teague, who was amendable to "holding the line," provided he had "some assistance." Teague asked the White House to signal disapproval of the Yarborough plan, so that Teague could push for acceptance of the House version. Teague conveyed to Burress that doing so would mean that Senate would push for a conference, which Teague noted would "not be an easy one."²⁸⁴ The White House was attempting to remain relatively uninvolved in the issue, hoping that Teague would be able to hold out in the House and push the measure

²⁸⁰ Richard Nixon: "Letter to Senator Ralph Yarborough on Proposed Increases in Veterans Educational Benefits," October 21, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2276>.

²⁸¹ Memo from Donald Johnson to Darrell Trent, Deputy Assistant to the President. October 22, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF – Subject Files – FG233, Box 1, Veterans Administration 7-1-69-12-31-69, folder 2 of 2.

²⁸² Memo from Donald Johnson to Darrell Trent, Deputy Assistant to the President. October 29, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF – Subject Files – FG233, Box 1, Veterans Administration 7-1-69-12-31-69, folder 2 of 2.

²⁸³ Memo from the Veterans' Administration, "Veterans Administration Legislative Progress Report." November 15, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF – Subject Files – FG233, Box 1, Veterans Administration 7-1-69-12-31-69, folder 2 of 2.

²⁸⁴ Memo from Richard Burress to Bryce Harlow. October 21, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

into the second session, effectively reducing some of its momentum. However, Richard Burress noted that, while Republican John Saylor (a committee member) was willing to tow the Republican line and resist large increases in education payments, fellow Republican Teague would probably allow the measure to pass, carrying the other Republican members of the committee along with him.²⁸⁵

In December 1969, Nixon reached out the House and Senate leadership, appealing to them to curb spending given the increase in veterans' program spending.²⁸⁶ The matter would not be resolved by the end of the year, however, pushing the battle well into the following winter. In early 1970, Nixon's budget address to Congress outlined the 1971 FY budget, with over 40% of federal outlays dedicated to "human resources," including the Great Society programs and veterans' benefits.²⁸⁷ In a memo from Kenneth Cole to John Erlichman, Cole positioned the VA to formulate a report for Nixon the political cost and benefit analysis of vetoing HR 11959 (in whatever format the conference committee would eventually release it). Cole told Erlichman that Teague was still attempting to "hold out for his 30.8% increase versus the 46% increase recommended by the Senate."²⁸⁸ In a memo to Richard Burress, Bryce Harlow contended that the Republican conferees were unwilling to back the 35% increase, which kept the Democrats from moving up from the 30.8% increase offered by the House, and

²⁸⁵ Memo from Richard Burress to Edward Morgan. November 8, 1969. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁸⁶ Richard Nixon: "Letter to the House and Senate Leadership on Federal Spending and Revenues.," December 17, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2376>.

²⁸⁷ Richard Nixon: "Annual Budget Message to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1971.," February 2, 1970. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2580>.

²⁸⁸ Memo from Kenneth Cole to John Erlichman. February 21, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

the 46% increase that the Senate was promoting.²⁸⁹

The White House's unwillingness to come out with a definitive stance on some level of increase to the education assistance payments began to attract negative attention from the veterans' groups. Bryce Harlow warned Darrell Trent that the veterans' groups were becoming agitated with the White House for its resistance to increasing education benefits. Harlow ominously warned that a veto would mean, "there will be blood knee deep running down Constitution Avenue. I think this problem needs urgent attention. The President requires the support of these groups on the ABM fight."²⁹⁰

Ehrlichman (an Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs) knew that the cost of vetoing HR 11959 would go far beyond the veterans' benefit programs. In a memo to Nixon after the bill was out of conference, Ehrlichman argued that a veto would risk other key Administration agenda items by isolating the middle class (composed of veterans and their families), key members of Congress who had thrown their support behind the education increases, and the veterans' organizations whose support, Ehrlichman claimed, "is vital in the legislative battle over the ABM system and other key legislative proposals."²⁹¹

Further, it would give the White House an "anti-education image," and with broad bipartisan support, any veto would be overridden anyway. Though vetoing the measure would "have a moderating effect of Congressional handling of other pending legislation that may exceed Administration spending requests," Ehrlichman and Johnson concurred

²⁸⁹ Memo from Richard Burress to Bryce Harlow. February 24, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁹⁰ Memo from Darrell Trent to Bryce Harlow. February 13, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁹¹ Memo from Bryce Harlow to President Nixon. March 24, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

that the effects would ultimately be disastrous for the Administration.²⁹² While many of his advisors were in agreement, Bryce Harlow dissented, arguing that Nixon should instead veto it symbolically (expecting it to be overridden). Harlow told the President “I am afraid this action will cost the President heavily later this year.”²⁹³

In early March 1970, VA chief Donald Johnson warned Nixon and his staff that Congress was considering further increasing the allowances to veterans under the G.I. Bill provisions, warning that their proposals included “increases the President might view excessive.” Johnson further noted that the Senate was “on the higher side” with a proposed increase of nearly 46% over the existing educational allowances for single veterans without dependents.²⁹⁴ The Nixon Administration, faced with increasing concerns about the viability of pushing ahead on the ABM without the support of the veterans’ groups, was now backed into a corner: moving in favor of increased education payments made Nixon backtrack on his promises to rein in federal spending in FY1970, and also to stem the growing tide of federal intervention that had been constructed within the Great Society. However, taking an opposing stance to the increased benefits was increasingly less of a choice for the Administration. The only viable option left in mid-March 1970 was a veto – one that would, in all likelihood, anger the same veterans’ groups that Nixon was looking to court for support on his ABM legislation. Nixon reluctantly signed the bill into law on March 26, 1970, granting the veterans’ benefit coalition a major victory, pushing education allowances up nearly three times what the

²⁹² Memo from John Ehrlichman to the President. Undated. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁹³ Memo from Bryce Harlow to President Nixon. March 24, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1969-1970].

²⁹⁴ Memo from Donald Johnson to Edward L. Morgan, Deputy Assistant to the President. March 4, 1970. Richard Nixon Presidential Library. WHCF FG233, Box 1, Folder FG 233 – Veterans Administration 1-1-70-6-30-70.

White House had originally advocated.

However, not all of the members of the veterans' benefit coalition benefitted equally from the passage of the legislation. Yarborough in particular was unable to leverage the success of the legislation into an election victory in 1970, and was defeated in the Democratic primaries by challenger Lloyd Bentsen.²⁹⁵ While the veterans' organizations celebrated their legislative victory, the coalition would lose one of their most important allies in the Senate. Additionally, Teague's inability to hold the Administration's line on the amount of benefit increases was indicative of the broader trend of the House VAC. Though the White House had attempted to use Teague as their last line of defense against a major increase in payments – and, to an even greater extent, maintain a semblance of neutrality while not making it seem as if Congress had a free pass from the President – Teague alone was not in a position to keep the other members of the veterans' benefit coalition in line.

The Nixon Administration's attempts to stunt the power of the veterans' benefit coalition also cost the White House a certain amount of credibility when it came to his ability to negotiate with Congressional leaders and the veterans' groups. Nixon had originally proposed that the allowance be increased by 13%, but signed HR 11959 accepting the 34.6% increase as “reasonable,” in the words of press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.²⁹⁶ It would be this electoral battle that would set the stage for the 1972 G.I. Bill debate – one that would once again move the rising costs of higher education to the forefront, though with a decidedly less contentious political fight over how best to address the problem.

²⁹⁵ Cox, *Ralph Yarborough, The People's Senator*, Chapter 13.

²⁹⁶ *Congress and the Nation*, 555.

The 1972 G.I. Bill: Further Expansions of Veterans' Education Program Benefits

Unlike the political contest over the 1970 allowance increases, the impetus behind the 1972 G.I. Bill was actually ensuring that the program was reaching its maximum eligible population. A newfound focus on the utilization rates of the G.I. Bill pushed members of the veterans' benefit coalition into action, to protect the popular approval of their program and to continue pacing increases in veterans' benefits with rising inflation. Also unlike the 1970 legislative process, the White House had learned its lessons from its battles with veterans' supporters. Rather than direct opposition or looming threats of a veto, the White House endorsed increases more in line with the Congressional requests (and those of the veterans' groups), making negotiations proceed at a much quicker pace.

The negotiations concerning education increases drew attention to the difference in education benefit utilization rates among Vietnam veterans. Only approximately 25% of those veterans who were eligible for the new G.I. Bill benefits were utilizing the program, a statistic that dismayed many in the VA and the public. Especially troublesome was the fact that the veterans most disproportionately affected were racial minorities and those from lower socioeconomic brackets; additionally, an increasing number of under-education veterans had not completed high school and were ineligible for postsecondary tuition assistance.²⁹⁷ In his 1972 State of the Union address, Nixon mentioned the G.I. Bill increases, but spent more time discussing the role of employment programs and the necessity to assist veterans' in finding suitable occupations following

²⁹⁷ Iver Peterson, "Most Veterans of Vietnam Fail to Seek Aid Under the G.I. Bill," *New York Times*, April 9, 1972.

military service.²⁹⁸ It was clear that the Nixon Administration's answer to the problem of rising costs was a focus on improving employment options for returning veterans and not, necessarily, a renewed interest in education allowances. However, the victory of 1970 had given the veterans' benefit coalition an important lesson in how to interact with the Nixon Administration, and it would serve the coalition well as they considered their plan for a renovated G.I. Bill in 1972.

The Push for Increased Allowances

The writing was on the wall, in a sense, when it came to the veterans' benefit coalition's move to increase education allowance payments even further than they had in 1970. The lessons of the previous legislation had been difficult, but they primed the Nixon Administration to be prepared to not place all of their reliance on Teague's ability to rein in veterans' supporters in the House. In June 1971, VA Chief Donald Johnson warned Domestic Affairs Assistant John Ehrlichman about the important role that Teague was likely to play on veterans' benefit policies in the 1972 Congress. With proposals on a new G.I. Bill and VA medical care expansion heading toward markups, Johnson was concerned that Teague was not going to act in defense of the Nixon Administration's interests when it came time to negotiate upcoming veterans' legislation. Johnson noted that Teague, while "a conservative at heart" who had been "very effective in past years in standing pat...to avoid undue spending or other unwise measures in the field of veterans affairs," might still feel slighted after Nixon refused a

²⁹⁸ Richard Nixon: "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.," January 20, 1972. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3407>.

private meeting with him in late 1969.²⁹⁹ The stage was set for the White House to place less faith in Teague this time around, and instead to attempt to negotiate as best it could with the veterans' benefit coalition as a whole.

The White House Response and a Second Victory

As Congress opened in 1972, the issue of increased education payments was on the agenda, as well as the focus of the Administration. The VA, which had remained relatively silent on the 1970 allowance increases, was in the midst of an investigation into the education benefits offered to veterans (prompted by outcries over the low utilization rates of the 1966 G.I. Bill among returning Vietnam veterans).

The OMB reported on its observations of the VA's National Task Force on Education and the Vietnam Veteran to the White House, and realized the impending increase in benefit levels (and thus federal outlays) if some of the recommendations of the Task Force were to be made public. Notably, the Task Force's preliminary proposals indicated a willingness on the part of two newest veterans' benefit coalition senators – Hartke and Cranston – to return to the WWII system of direct tuition payments to postsecondary institutions. The OMB Assistant Director, Paul O'Neill, revealed that the VA would prevent the public release of the Task Force's initial reports so as to not add fuel to the fire of the veteran's benefit coalition's efforts.³⁰⁰

In the weeks that followed, The White House read public opinion as turning somewhat away from the promise of higher education for veterans. Advisors in the

²⁹⁹ Memo from Donald Johnson to John Ehrlichman. June 3, 1971. Richard Nixon Library. WHCF-Subject Files-FG233, Box 1, Folder [EX] FG 233-Veterans Administration-1-1-71 (Folder 1 of 3).

³⁰⁰ Memo from Paul O'Neill to Kenneth Cole. February 4, 1972. Richard Nixon Library. WHCF-Subject Files-FG233, Box 1, Folder [EX] FG 233-Veterans Administration-1-1-71 (Folder 2 of 3).

Nixon Administration claimed that the president was willing to invest more in vocational training programs for veterans than to throw its weight behind a traditional G.I. Bill design (which would privilege postsecondary education in theory, though pay out the same amounts in benefits to those in vocational education programs).³⁰¹ Although moving the discussion about how to best assist veterans would have placed the White House back on the familiar ground that Nixon had laid out in his prior public addresses, the coalition – led by Congress – would ultimately push the Nixon Administration back into a discussion about higher education.

The White House endorsed a \$200/month allowance due to the increase in the Consumer Price Index from 1971 to 1972. The White House went into conference with a low number, expecting to be forced slightly higher (though not as high as the Senate’s proposed \$225/month). Though Teague was told to hold the line against Hartke’s increase, he took his own initiative and, White House advisors note, “without our prompting, delivered the 48 hour ultimatum to Hartke.” Evans warned the President of appearing to side with the Senate, when Teague had been “loyal and valiant,” and it simultaneously risked selling out the Republicans on the newly-formed Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee. Evans recommended inaction on the part of the White House to give the semblance of Congressional gridlock – and, in particular, what Evans suggested could be framed as “the insensitive Senate.”³⁰² Ken Cole noted ominously in his

³⁰¹ Memo from John Evans to Donald Johnson. March 29, 1972. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF-SMOF, Papers of James Cavanaugh. Box 33 “Veterans – GI Bill Benefits.”; Memo from Donald Johnson to John Evans, April 7, 1972. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF-SMOF, Papers of James Cavanaugh. Box 33 “Veterans – GI Bill Benefits. Johnson corrected Evans’ claims that vocational education provisions were far less generous than those for postsecondary education programs.

³⁰² Memo from John Evans to Ken Cole, September 18, 1972. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF-SMOF, Papers of James Cavanaugh. Box 33 “Veterans – GI Bill Benefits.”

comments, “We’re headed for trouble here.”³⁰³

The role of the new Veterans’ Affairs Committee in the Senate – created in 1970 – was as yet untested, and remained a point of uncertainty for White House advisors. Evans pointed out that the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee was a “new animal” with a new staff that was not yet accustomed to engaging in conference deliberations with the House Committee’s staff.³⁰⁴ A new committee –though headed by senators who were amenable to increasing education payments for veterans – was unpredictable in conference negotiations, and placed even more weight behind Teague’s willingness to support the line of the Administration.

Meanwhile, Congressional pressure for higher allowances was building from inside and outside the VACs. Twelve Republicans and six Democrats signed onto a letter to Teague and Hartke, urging them to agree on a \$250 allowance deal in conference. The White House immediately went on the offensive, contacting the Congressional Republicans and reaching out to veterans’ group lobbyists to contact the Democrats on the letter, telling them “that the Senate version is the wrong place to be.” John Evans, in a memo to Bill Rhatican (who worked under Colson in the Office of Special Counsel), argued that those who signed onto the letter were not necessarily apprised on the importance of the issue, let alone the official position of the White House.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Memo from Kenneth Cole, undated, Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1-1-71-12-31-72]. The note was attached to correspondence between John Evans and Kenneth Cole regarding the stalemate between Teague and Hartke on the \$220/\$225 ultimatum that Teague had offered to Hartke.

³⁰⁴ Memo from John Evans to Kenneth Cole. August 4, 1972. Memo from Kenneth Cole, undated, Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1-1-71-12-31-72].

³⁰⁵ Memo from John Evans to Bill Rhatican, September 22, 1972. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF-SMOF, Papers of James Cavanaugh. Box 33 “Veterans – GI Bill Benefits.”

After coming out of conference – and under the threat that the house Rules Committee would not put legislation without clear consensus (coming out of conference) up for a vote – the White House was prepared to accept the \$220 offer. Nixon’s advisors contended that there was “no particular need to kick Hartke, the Senate or Congress on the eve of a compromise.”³⁰⁶ On October 24, Nixon signed the bill into law, ushering in another victory for the powerful veterans’ benefit coalition.

Conclusion

During Nixon's first term, Congress increased GI education benefits for a single veteran with no disabilities enrolled in college by 34.6 per cent. In 1969 a single veteran enrolled in a VA-supported college program received \$130 per month. Beginning October 1, 1972, he received \$220 per month.³⁰⁷ The sharp increase in benefits for Vietnam veterans was not at the direct action of the White House, however. Rather, it was a concerted effort on the part of Congressional leaders – members of the veterans’ benefit coalition – to realize personal agendas in a particular policy area that held potential electoral benefits for them.

While earlier versions of the veterans’ benefit coalition had been large and diverse, the newest iteration of the coalition was small, and distilled down to a few key categories of members: veterans’ organizations, members of Congress, and the Veterans’ Administration. While this arrangement of the coalition exemplifies the “iron triangle” in its purest sense, the coalition politics inherent in the debate over veterans’ education benefits highlights a powerful feedback dynamic as well as inequalities in the levels of

³⁰⁶ Memo from John Evans to Kenneth Cole. September 20, 1972. Richard Nixon Presidential Library, WHCF Veterans Affairs, Box 7, Folder EX VA 3 Educational Programs [1-1-71-12-31-72].

³⁰⁷ *Congress and the Nation*, 555.

influence that each member enjoyed. Though veterans' groups supported the education allowance increases of 1970, they were led toward this goal largely by Congressional leaders who, acting with the tacit consent of the Johnson Administration, were willing to consider further increasing the scope of the veterans' benefit program.

Moreover, the 1972 G.I. Bill highlights the changing role of the White House in the veterans' benefit coalition. Though rhetorically on the side of the veterans, the Nixon Administration was, like Republican and Democrat administrations before it, hesitant to provide veterans with a blank check for postsecondary education. Despite Nixon's endorsement of changes to higher education funding, he remained resistant to the idea of granting major increases to Vietnam veterans for education alone (especially when both public and private statements revealed that his Administration would have been more comfortable focusing on the importance of job growth amidst rising unemployment).

Additionally, the 1972 G.I. Bill process sheds light on the temporal element of policy development, specially how feedback processes can generate new political contexts for similar policies moving forward. The victory of the veterans' benefit coalition in 1970 established that strong Congressional leadership – with or without a major show of force by the veterans' organizations – could effectively set the agenda for changes to veterans' benefit policy.

What is absent from the process of the 1972 G.I. Bill is its affects on related social policies. While some veterans' groups (like the American Veterans' Committee) noted that the expanding role of the veterans' benefit system might be best integrated with broader welfare policies – there was no major effects on parallel social policy efforts during this timeframe. The veterans' benefit coalition, in reducing down to a small but

powerful group of members, appeared to have lost its interest in affecting parallel social policies alongside veterans' benefits. While an expansion in veteran's education allowances was, at least rhetorically, tied to the broader budget (and social welfare policies in particular), there were no attempts by veterans' benefit coalition members to actually engage parallel welfare state policies in the legislative battles of 1970 or 1972. Instead, coalition members focused almost exclusively on negotiating within their own terms, and pushing the White House toward their desired course of action.

Overall, the 1972 G.I. Bill case highlights the evolving abilities of the veterans' benefit coalition in maximizing their leverage against countervailing forces. The coalition maintained its power throughout its struggle for increased education benefits, and actually improved its chances for its version of the 1972 G.I. Bill due to its success in 1970.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The G.I. Bill enjoys a prominent role in American political history, due to the scope and magnitude of its effects on the economy, society, and politics. The Greatest Generation's existence is attributed to the legislation's ability to help ease readjustment for returning veterans, and ultimately relax some of the class barriers that had existed prior to the start of World War II. Moreover, the legislation is used as a prime case study for explanations of policy feedback theory, suggesting that the policy generated positive effects in the civic engagement of a growing American middle class.³⁰⁸ Despite an understanding of the positive effects that the original G.I. Bill had on those who utilized its benefits, political scientists are left with two separate, but interrelated questions: how did the 1944 G.I. Bill establish a potential policy feedback loop for the other iterations of the legislation (and under whose direction); and, how did these moments of policy development in the field of veterans' benefits affect parallel processes occurring in social policy aimed at the civilian American population?

In analyzing the four iterations of the G.I. Bill's education provisions between 1943 and 1973, I contend that the architect of these bills is in fact a fractured coalition of diverging political interests and sharply contrasted members. Moreover, despite the veterans' benefit coalition's membership including major veterans' interest groups (which were credited with the mobilization behind the passage of the 1944 legislation), largely individual legislators championed the subsequent versions of the tuition assistance

³⁰⁸ Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

programs within the G.I. Bill. The inability of the coalition to agree completely on policy provisions – combined with individual member interests in opposition with one another – created a loose organization that was only thinly connected under a common goal of increased educational assistance provisions for veterans.

Additionally, I argue that the divided membership of the coalition led to demonstrable effects for the development of several parallel social policies during the time periods in which the G.I. Bill revisions were being debated. More specifically, G.I. Bill politics were able to constrain broad-based reintegration programs in the immediate post-war era, replacing other policy proposals for large scale training and unemployment compensation programs. Moreover, G.I. Bills reforms in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s maintained the student-veteran within a privileged class, minimizing the potential of the Higher Education Act of 1965, while at the same time imposing accreditation requirements for federal education funding (via the 1952 G.I. Bill). Taken together, the heterogeneous coalition was able to effectively shape American welfare state development (via education and training policies), presenting and foreclosing particular options depending upon the coalition's attempts to maintain VA jurisdiction over the veterans' benefit regime. Interestingly, these effects did not extend into the case of the 1972 G.I. Bill, although concurrent higher education policies were also being formulated alongside the veterans' benefit legislation. This case study presents important findings not only in the substantive realm of policy studies, but also makes an important theoretical contribution to the policy feedback approach long used to explain G.I. Bill development.

The case study of the G.I. Bill lends support to existing policy feedback models, suggesting that the political process for future reforms of a policy can be shaped by the previous legislative battles that have occurred. The original G.I. Bill did affect the subsequent iterations of veterans' education benefits, and not only by establishing a precedent for a system of tuition assistance; the 1944 G.I. Bill defined the way in which supporters of veterans' benefits would approach the extension of those programs, and how these advocates would interact with each other, Congress, and the White House. The G.I. Bill case presents two important refinements to many of the existing policy feedback models, however: (1) that interests may not be reified by a policy, but rather broken down by it; and (2) that the feedback effects may not be limited solely to the same policy area.

The Veterans' Benefit Coalition: Fracture and Imbalance

The first important addition to the policy feedback model (via the case study of veterans' education benefits) is the incorporation of the literature on coalition politics. Rather than presupposing a united or homogenous interest group behind a particular policy – and which is strengthened through the successful adoption of its proposed legislation – a coalition-politics approach allows scholars to better understand the internal dynamics of the interest groups within the feedback process. Opening up the “black box” of these vested interests within the model affords researchers the ability to make fine-grained observations on intra-group dynamics, leading to more substantiated claims concerning group strategies and (following policy adoption), the true effects of the policy process on these organized interests.

In the case of the G.I. Bill reforms, the coalition's politics showed an interesting pattern between the 1944 G.I. Bill and its later iterations. The original legislation was the product of intense veterans' organization lobbying, so much so that the American Legion was able to essentially write the final version of the Bill on its own. While there may exist an assumption that further G.I. Bills were the result of a similar process, I argue that the historical analysis does not bear out such an argument; rather, the veterans' benefit coalition distilled down into a loose arrangement between veterans' organizations, the VA, the White House (infrequently), and, most important of all, individual legislators willing to take up the cause of veterans' education benefits in the absence of coalition accord. These members of Congress – concentrated within the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and, in the Senate, the disparate committees of Labor and Public Welfare and Finance which predated the standing committee – were motivated, I argue, by electoral incentives as well as personal agendas concerning New Deal era social policies to advance veterans' education benefits. These legislators were able to gain legislative momentum in this arena due to the extant social construction of veterans' benefits in the country as entitlements for the “deserving,” and with broad public support.

Heterogeneity in Interest Groups Surrounding Policy Development

In highlighting the complex composition of the veterans' benefit coalition, I argue for the inclusion of heterogeneous groups within extant policy feedback models. In each instance of G.I. Bill development following WWII (and to the end of conscription in 1973), veterans' benefits were supported by a loosely-tethered group of individual members of Congress, veterans' organizations, the Veterans' Administration, and (at

times) presidents themselves. The ability and willingness of individual legislators to advance the cause of G.I. Bill reform within the framework of the broader coalition suggests that individual actors within a political alliance may shift responsibilities and cause power imbalances. These shifting group arrangements could aid scholars in identifying reasons for particular coalition strategies, as well as the source of particular policy proposals or legislative initiatives from coalitions that have a semblance of unity or homogeneity.

Moreover, the case study of the veterans' benefit coalition may help explain the composition, strategies, and legislative successes (as well as failures) of similarly-situated groups that are united behind common policy goals. Understanding the ways in which political actors with little else in common beyond a singular legislative preference interact with one another – and what can cause them to stop working together harmoniously – provides both academics and policy analysts with new lenses to appreciate particular strategic choices within those coalitions.

A more recent example of a political coalition with contrasting interests is found in recent work on the American homeschooling movement. Behind the push for federal and state regulations that are more amendable to families educating children within their homes (and not through school attendance), a deeply divided coalition has found a common ground. Ideologically, supporters of homeschooling are more likely to be either libertarian-conservatives (members of the Tea Party, for example), or extremely progressive liberals. Despite their political differences in a host of other social, economic, and political issues, this divided constituency has found a common (and tenuous) connection in their shared policy preferences regarding education children at home. Such

a coalition, though addressing policy on a smaller scale than that of veterans' benefits, still presents an important case study of an evolving political debate concerning the limits of government intervention.³⁰⁹

The Influence of the Coalition on Social Policy Development

The second major observation that can be drawn from the case study of veterans' education benefits is centered on the effects of policy reform on parallel policy spheres. The investigation into the G.I. Bill reform process suggests that concerted efforts on the part of political actors – specifically, invested legislators – can affect policies in connected areas, either through establishing provisions later used in other policy areas, or constraining policymakers' abilities to broaden existing policies (at the risk of important administrative or programmatic powers being annexed by other agencies). The case study of the postwar G.I. Bills presents a compelling argument for the inclusion of veterans' benefits in discussions of American social policy development writ large, as well as the reasons for the current complexion of the American welfare state.

The fact that the G.I. Bill was able to have long-term effects on reintegration policy – effectively supplanting broad-based unemployment compensation and labor policies – following WWII was only the beginning of the program's influence. The establishment of accreditation requirements ushered in by the 1952 G.I. Bill created a decentralized system of qualifications for the receipt of federal education funds (following disagreement within the veterans' benefit coalition), a requirement that exists to this day in the much-debated issue of student loans for postsecondary education (and

³⁰⁹ James Aber, "Where the New Left Meets the Religious Right: Home-Schooling and American Political Development." Paper presented at the 2013 American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

the increasing rates of student-loan debt in America). With the average college graduate owing \$16,000 in loan debt (and an average of \$40,000 owed by those with graduate degrees),³¹⁰ combined with concerns about for-profit colleges and returns on educational investment, the influence of the 1952 G.I. Bill was indeed a significant one. The same system of accreditation that was an attempt to inoculate against G.I. Bill corruption is the very same one that remains under careful investigation as student loan debt continues to rise.

Later versions of the G.I. Bill – under the careful crafting of select legislators within the veterans’ benefit coalition – also left their mark on higher education policy. The 1966 and 1972 G.I. Bills continued to exclude veterans’ postsecondary education benefits from the realm of Health, Education, and Welfare Department oversight, in line with VA demands to maintain all veterans’ benefit programs on its own. Moreover, attempts to incorporate veterans into the Higher Education Act of 1965 met with the firm resistance of the veterans’ benefit coalition, which preferred to maintain the distinction between veterans and civilians (even under conditions of peacetime, as is evidenced in the debate concerning the 1966 G.I. Bill).

Thus, the veterans’ benefit coalition was able to not only continuously reform G.I. Bill education benefits, but were also capable of protecting the veterans’ benefit regime within the purview of the VA and limit the ability of competing agencies to co-opt the veteran population within their policy spheres. By relegating veterans to the sole control of the VA, the feedback effects of the G.I. Bill reform process constrained reintegration (and, later, higher education) policy, shaping the contours of the American welfare state.

³¹⁰ Beth Akers and Matthew M. Chingos. “Is a Student Loan Crisis on the Horizon?” Report from the Brown Center on Education Policy, Brookings Institution, June 24, 2014. Accessed on July 10, 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2014/06/24-student-loan-crisis-akers-chingos>.

Beyond the observations gleaned from the veterans' education benefit case, however, the current investigation presents an important amendment to the policy feedback model concerning the direction and scope of feedback effects.

Spillover and Spillback Effects in the Policy Feedback Model

Although extant policy feedback models explicate the connections between the politics of policy reform and their effects on changes in political contexts, existing research focuses much of its analyses on effects within the same policy spheres.³¹¹ Consequently, investigations into the veterans' benefit system (and other social policy regimes) have not focused sufficient attention on the potential "spillover" or "spillback" effects, in which policies may influence (positively, or in the case of veterans' benefit influence on welfare state development, negatively) related policies in parallel issue areas. The reform process can generate its own inherent political clashes, as policy interests compete in a "zero sum" system of finite resources.³¹² The "policy windows" created by changes to related policies – in the case of the current case study, the expansion of veterans' education benefits to new cohorts of military personnel – may allow policymakers to influence not only their own realm of issues, but to establish the conditions under which related policies may be examined, debated, and legislated.³¹³

The case of veterans' education benefits suggests that policymakers – motivated by electoral interests as well as personal predispositions towards federal intervention in

³¹¹ Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2002).

³¹² For more on the reform process, see Eric M. Patashnik, *Reforms at Risk: What Happens after Major Policy Changes are Enacted* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

³¹³ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (London: Longman Publishing Group, 2002).

education and labor issues – were able to directly restrict the policy options available to proponents of a more generous higher education policies at the federal level. Additionally, the provisions built into G.I. Bill education benefits were used as blueprints for policies directed at the civilian population, once again establishing veterans’ benefits as a prototype of large-scale policy initiatives (as Skocpol argues it had been following the Civil War pension system).³¹⁴ Perhaps most influential for current political analysis, the veterans’ benefit coalition members were successful at delineating veterans’ benefits as a discrete policy regime that, though it could extend its influence outward, could not be the object of influence from other spheres of policy development, being sufficiently shielded by the VA’s exclusive administration.

As much as the current case study provides critical insights into the historical development of G.I. Bill benefits, this research also has important implications for current veterans’ benefit politics. The most recent iteration of the veterans’ benefit regime is a direct reflection of the legislative processes that created it; therefore, inquiries into the rationale behind current policy proposals or administrative configurations should begin with an appreciation of the historical context within which the current veterans’ benefit system developed.

Current Scandals and Future Research in Veterans’ Education Benefits

Understanding the way in which the subsequent G.I. Bills were formulated, as well as their impact on parallel programs, carries important implications for political scientists and policymakers alike. The current composition of the VA (and the most

³¹⁴ Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Politics of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

recent version of the veterans' benefit coalition) is as much a function of current political realities as it is the historical foundations of the coalition's interactions and policy goals. The state of veterans' benefits in America – as well as the broader welfare system – can be best understood through a perspective that incorporates the coalition politics and feedback effects discussed within the previous chapters.

Current Scandals and Potential Lessons

Analyzing the veterans' benefit regime is of critical importance in contemporary American politics, as the VA has under increasing scrutiny for mismanagement and poor administrative practices beginning in 2012. At the center of the VA scandal has been a failing healthcare program, which has allegedly left thousands of veterans waiting for appointments (and dozens potentially dying before they could access care), in addition to as many as 600,000 veterans with backlogged medical disability claims.³¹⁵ Former Secretary of the Veterans' Administration Eric Shinseki stepped down in May 2014, as allegations of gross waiting times for veterans at VA hospitals gained public (and Congressional) attention.³¹⁶ As the investigations into the VA's management continue, increasing public and political scrutiny will be placed on the VA and how the agency has been developed its current administrative practices.

The medical branch of the VA is not the only part of the agency gaining criticism for its administration of veterans' benefits, however. Recently, the education benefit

³¹⁵ Josh Hicks, "A Guide to the VA Health Care Controversy." *Washington Post*, May 15, 2014. Accessed on June 15, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/federal_government/a-guide-to-the-va-health-care-controversy/2014/05/15/0a0c7f04-dc6d-11e3-8009-71de85b9c527_story.html.

³¹⁶ Greg Jaffe and Ed O'Keefe, "Obama Accepts Resignation of VA Secretary Shinseki." *Washington Post*, May 30, 2014. Accessed on June 15, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/shinseki-apologizes-for-va-health-care-scandal/2014/05/30/e605885a-e7f0-11e3-8f90-73e071f3d637_story.html.

system has gained attention for delays in the disbursement of tuition payments to postsecondary institutions that caused problems for veterans' enrollment at those schools. The VA Inspector General revealed that over \$60 billion was delayed in payments for the tuition and fees of some 80,000 veterans on campus, causing issues for the students as they began the new school semester.³¹⁷ These concerns come on the heels of the recent healthcare and disability payment investigations at the VA, and though the scope of the mismanagement is far different, the reports still raise concerns about the VA's ability to manage several policy arenas simultaneously. These critiques echo the overshadowed (but present) critiques of the VA following the 1944 G.I. Bill, at which time various interest groups and individual legislators questioned the capacity of the VA to direct education programs alongside what was already a large-scale healthcare and disability pension operation.

Additional critiques have been leveled at the VA for the widespread use of G.I. bill benefits at for-profit colleges and universities; Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) revealed in a recent Senate report that 8 of every 10 G.I. Bill dollars awarded as education benefit payments go to for-profit schools.³¹⁸ This statistic is a far cry from the debates surrounding the 1952 and 1966 G.I. Bills, in which veterans' benefit coalition members argued about whether public or private schools would hold the enrollment advantage, depending on direct versus indirect tuition payments. Once again, the veterans' education benefit system will be under close review to determine the capability of the VA to

³¹⁷ Gregg Zoroya, "VA Faulted for Delays in G.I. Bill Student Benefits." *Army Times*. July 14, 2014. Accessed on July 15, 2014. <http://www.armytimes.com/article/20140714/EDU02/307140031/VA-faulted-delays-G-Bill-student-benefits>.

³¹⁸ United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. 2014. "For Profit Higher Education: The Failure to Safeguard the Federal Investment and Ensure Student Success." July 30, 2012. Accessed on July 15, 2014. http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/for_profit_report/PartI.pdf.

administer the program, as well as the extent to which the scale and cost of the education program is providing a favorable return on the nation's investment.

In all, the recent critiques of the VA reinforce one of the most important areas of spillover from the investigation of the 1944-1972 G.I. Bills: the relative insulation of the VA from reorganization efforts. Despite large-scale investigations into corruption surrounding the 1944 G.I. Bill – and through Health, Education, and Welfare bids to incorporate veterans into higher education assistance programs in the 1960s and 1970s – the VA has been able to effectively maintain a jurisdictionally-distinct sphere of administration and influence. The most recent investigations into VA management should call political scientists to question the extent to which the institution's past management of the G.I. Bill education (alongside its other policy spheres) might be one of the reasons for its current backlog and issues with benefit management.

Veterans' Benefits and the American Welfare State

More broadly, though, the lessons of the earliest iterations of the G.I. Bill – and its effects on parallel social programs – invites historians, political scientists, and policy analysts alike to revisit the role of the veterans' benefit regime in the development of the American welfare state. The depiction of the “laggard” American welfare state often obscures the role that veterans' benefits play in adding to the country's outlays for social welfare programs.³¹⁹ However, the earliest forms of American welfare policy was based on entitlements to Revolutionary War and Civil War veterans for their service.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Christopher Howard, *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths about U.S. Social Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

³²⁰ Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

Although benefits were distributed across different socioeconomic groups, it was the selective apportionment of benefits for the wealthy that had been officers in the military that drew the harshest criticisms from opponents. These opponents forecasted that the generous entitlements given to the more wealthy citizen-soldiers for their service, as officers would effectively establish a precedent for how much particular groups in American politics would become entitled to benefits. Jensen writes, “As the original opponents of Revolutionary officers’ pensions predicted, selective entitlements fostered the concentration and purposeful application of central state capacity to privilege particular interest at the expense of more collective concerns.”³²¹ This concern was valid: during the early twentieth century, veterans’ benefits were one of the largest government expenditures: in 1913, for example, payouts for veterans’ benefits reached a staggering 18% of all federal expenditures.³²² These first iterations of veterans’ benefits would lay the groundwork for the future G.I. Bills, and form a political context in which veterans’ benefits were an acceptable, popular, and politically successful element of the patchwork American welfare state.

The G.I. Bill’s creation further instantiated veterans’ benefits within the framework of welfare politics in the postwar era. The comprehensive nature of the G.I. Bill and the success of its initiatives mean that this single piece of legislation, directed at a jurisdictionally distinct subset of the American population, could function as a more widely-applied set of benefits than it was intended to be. Addressing the needs of a demobilized population of citizen-soldiers meant that the federal government could intervene in issues of welfare in a separate sphere from contested New Deal policies,

³²¹ Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins*, 235.

³²² Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, Basic Books, 1996).

while still accomplishing many of the same goals as those policies. Because the G.I. Bill was able to accomplish what some parts of the New Deal were not – and because it had a broad base of support for its myriad programs – it was able to modify other social policies in development, shaping them in contrast to the established veterans’ benefit policies that had long been an established part of the American political landscape. That later iterations of the same legislation were able to shape and constrain higher education policy is a testament not only to the work of the veterans’ benefit coalition, but to the embedded nature of veterans’ education policies in the comprehensive system of American social policy throughout the 20th century.

Such a role for the veterans’ benefit regime fundamentally alters the existing narrative of American welfare state development. Veterans’ benefits – and their advocates – are not accountable for the current construction of American welfare policy; there are a myriad of reasons for the country’s position behind its more generous industrialized peers. However, the fact that veterans’ education benefit supporters were able to advance their agenda for veterans – while at the same time constraining policies for the civilian population, especially in the fields of education and training – suggests that the absence of veterans’ benefit politics in a full discussion of 20th century welfare policy development misses a critical component.

The ability of the veterans’ benefit coalition to continue to advance the scope and magnitude of the veterans’ benefit regime – even in the face of heavy political opposition – suggests that not all welfare policies may be subject to ideological contest or efforts at retrenchment. Indeed, the American welfare state has used veterans’ benefits as a prototype, and the case study of the G.I. Bill proves that the country is in fact able to

sustain large-scale social policies aimed at improving income stability, labor force participation, and social mobility. America's most successful version of its welfare state – its *veteran* welfare state – may already be a political reality, and one that will continue to direct the politics of social policy development well into the future.

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