

THE BATTLE FOR THE BONUS: WORLD WAR I VETERANS AND THE DEBATE  
FOR ADJUSTED-COMPENSATION

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by  
Benjamin D. Creech  
Professor Catherine Rymph, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

THE BATTLE FOR THE BONUS: WORLD WAR I VETERANS AND THE DEBATE  
FOR ADJUSTED-COMPENSATION

presented by Benjamin Creech,

a candidate for the degree of master in History,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Catherine Rymph

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Professor Jay Sexton

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Professor LaGarrett King

## DEDICATION

To my parents,

who have always been supportive of my academic endeavors.

To my extended family and friends,

memories were missed during the writing of this paper, but your support was present.

To the faculty and staff that I have worked with during my teaching career,

I appreciate all the support you have given me.

To all my future, current, and former students,

You inspire me daily, and in many ways, have been one of my biggest motivators

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In regards to research, I would like to acknowledge those individuals who helped me at the Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, IA. The archivists helped me during my one visit to the archive and also provided me with valuable research electronically to help me complete portions of this project. Also, a word of thanks to the various people who have helped me set up research times at The State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia, MO. Without the flexibility of these two archives this thesis would not have been possible.

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## ABSTRACT

Following World War I, veterans returned home to a country that was reaping the economic benefits of mass producing for the war effort. It became apparent to those in Congress that some sort of compensation would need to be given to those who served. In 1924, the Adjusted Compensation Act took effect that provided for a certificate of payment of a bonus to be redeemed by veterans in 1924. As the Great Depression began in 1929, a veterans' movement organized that began to demand for the early payment of the bonus.

This thesis traces this story from the formation of veterans' organizations following the end of World War I in 1918 through the Bonus March of 1932. Using letters written to politicians, newspaper coverage of events, and veterans' testimony in Congressional Committee hearings, the grassroots activism of veterans is followed during these years. The study shows various opinions among veterans and organizations in regards to the payment of the bonus.

## Introduction

Banners were carried down a Los Angeles street in 1932 as 5,000 veterans showed up to demand the immediate payment of the bonus being discussed in Washington D.C. The local American Legion post sponsored the parade and it ended with a rally at the steps of city hall. Music filled the air of the procession as various servicemen did their part to make this a patriotic affair.<sup>1</sup> Scenes like this indicate that veterans were engaged in the politics surrounding the legislation that pertained to the bonus payments. Veterans attended parades and rallies, wrote politicians, and testified in Congressional hearings that were evaluating the merits of various pieces of legislation. This thesis will focus on the political process that saw the engagement of veterans and veteran organizations with their government and the debate within veteran circles on compensation for their time of service during World War I.

In the summer of 1932 a Bonus March descended on Washington D.C to demand the immediate payment of the veterans' bonus. This event was significantly covered in the newspapers, as the entire situation happened during a presidential election year, but individuals and locally organized movements that received less recognition are just as important. Individuals like Harry Specter, father of future U.S. senator Arlen Specter who was a veteran of the First World War, had too little money to leave Kansas to join the Bonus March. He had been wounded during the war and needed the money to provide for his wife and kids.<sup>2</sup> Veterans like him are just as important to analyze as the nationally known individuals and national moments are. This thesis will include individuals, like Harry Specter, who could not be visibly active in regards to demanding the veterans' bonus but would show their activism in other ways.

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<sup>1</sup> "Veterans In Parade For Bonus: Thousands March Through Downtown Streets in Plea For Full Compensation." *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1932, accessed October 30, 2021. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/162601897/2C53BD19271C424EPQ/11?accountid=14576>

<sup>2</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus Army*, 6.

The process by which the soldiers entered the military fueled some of this activism. Some men volunteered while others were conscripted, including some reluctantly due to local pressure, which led to different types of veterans after the war. The pressure to participate in the draft as a young man's patriotic duty led to various opinions regarding the compensation of veterans following the war. Newly created veteran organizations and the grassroots effort of veterans through the writing of letters and attending rallies throughout the country showed that there was an undercurrent of veteran activism in the United States. Some veterans wrote politicians and voiced their support for legislation that would provide adjusted compensation for their time in service during World War I while others would oppose it. This activism does provide evidence of the engagement following the war from veterans on issues that pertained to them. Veteran organizations and members of Congress would also be important in getting these issues into a position to allow veterans' legislation to pass.

This thesis will start in 1919, immediately following the end of World War I and follow the movement of veteran activism specifically as it pertains to compensation for time served during the war. It will look to expand on the work of Stephen Ortiz who reframed the Bonus March by focusing on the impact activism had during the early Roosevelt years, specifically how it connected to the New Deal.<sup>3</sup> While some of this paper crosses paths with Ortiz, the focus will be on letters written to members of Congress and President Hoover from veterans across the country. Letters from veterans were also entered into various Congressional Hearings regarding the bonus. Newspaper coverage will also show the grassroot connections towards the bonus from key veteran organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010).

Throughout the thesis, three political figures provide the lens to veteran activism as it pertains to the federal government. Starting in 1924 Congressman Ralph Lozier received letters from veterans and non-veterans from his home state of Missouri regarding their stance on the bonus issue and how he should vote. By 1929, Congressman Wright Patman from Texas would become the national figure for the immediate payment of the bonus in Congress and received letters from veterans across the country. Congressman Patman's papers are housed at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas and because of the Covid-19 pandemic they remained off limits for access during the writing of this paper. Fortunately, some letters from veterans were entered into Congressional Committee hearings and news coverage of rallies where Patman met with veterans provide evidence of veteran activism. Secondary sources will also help provide some important context for the role Patman played. Lastly, President Hoover, specifically in 1932, as the Bonus Army descended on Washington received letters from veterans across the country. These letters provide important context to the national story covered in most scholarship on the issue. These political figures were in key positions to advance or slow issues regarding veterans and one of the underlying themes of this thesis is to show how veterans played a role not only in writing them in regards to legislation but were active in election politics.

Two significant books about World War I soldiers and their roles as veterans after the war were instrumental to this project. Jennifer Keene's *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, discussed how our national army was formed and also how veterans worked for adjusted compensation after the war.<sup>4</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz's *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill* focused specifically on the veteran activism towards the veterans bonus and the role

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

it played in laying the foundation for the GI Bill after World War II.<sup>5</sup> While these two works form the core, others will play a part in helping to develop the narrative of a portion of the project. Even though secondary sources were used to help develop the narrative because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the thesis is supported by primary sources, such as newspapers, Congressional hearings where individuals and members of veteran organizations testified, and letters from veterans throughout the country.

The national story of veteran activism has been studied through the previous pieces of scholarship, but the grassroots has been much less. The origins of the two major veteran organizations, American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, played a part in the initial debate around what the initial bonus bill would look like. As work on the Adjusted Compensation bill began, veterans testified at committee hearings and wrote letters to members of Congress and encouraged them to act on the bill favorably. There were also veterans and groups who worked to stop the passage of the same bill. After passage, and especially by the early days of the Great Depression in 1929, the focus of veterans and the groups that represented many of them began to be on the immediate payment of the bonus. On this issue the two major veteran organizations differed on their stance, as did some veterans. By the time a vote was held in 1932, veterans were not only assembled in Washington D.C., but had also written President Hoover with strong words on the vote outcome and the Bonus March incident that would be the climax event of that summer.

World War I started in Europe in 1914 shortly after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. For the first three years of the World War, the United States stayed out of the affairs of those involved in the war but did trade goods with countries at war. By

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010).

trading with countries at war against Germany, ships were at risk of being sunk by German unrestricted submarine warfare. The most famous example of this happened in 1915 when the British passenger liner *Lusitania* was sunk killing over 1,000 passengers, including 128 Americans. Amidst all this, President Woodrow Wilson did keep the United States from entering the conflict and campaigned on that concept as he ran for reelection in 1916. In early 1917, the Germans resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. In late February 1917, the Zimmerman Telegram was intercepted and connected Germany to helping Mexico regain territory in the United States. These two events in early 1917 led to the United States Congress to declare war on Germany in April 1917.<sup>6</sup>

The war for the United States would last until November 1918, as soldiers returned home to a country eager to put the war behind them some veterans found it difficult to locate work. Those who stayed behind and worked often accumulated more money than the soldiers who served overseas. As veterans returned home, they began to join organizations that worked to help them locate jobs and began the conversation for the compensation they would receive for their time in service. The nearly 20 year debate on how veterans should be compensated for their time in service and how soon that payment would come led to veteran activism that had been rarely seen by generations prior. The work of these veterans did help lay the groundwork for the GI Bill that followed World War II.

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<sup>6</sup> Neil M. Heyman, *World War I*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 8-9, 50-51, 65-67.

## Chapter 1

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, they did not have the military numbers to effectively fight a war in France. They needed to increase the size of their fighting force significantly. When the United States entered World War I the army had just over 127,000 men, with over 80,000 National Guardsmen stationed along the United States border with Mexico. This would lead to the first occasion in United States history where a conflict would have draftees as the most significant part of a fighting force. The fighting force by the end of the war, November 1918, was close to 3.9 million men.<sup>1</sup> The conscription process led to a fighting force that combined willingly enlisted men with those that were drafted leading to conflicting views of the value of service. This created a significant number of recruits for newly founded veteran organizations with which to increase their membership and generated differing points of view on the type and amount of compensation veterans should receive once their military service ended. This chapter will look at the conscription process, its impact on the growth of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the initial conversations on the Adjusted Compensation Act.

June 5, 1917, was the first registration day established by the War Department. The day was full of patriotic celebrations across the country. Cities and towns had festivals to mark the occasion as their local boys would enlist to join the American fighting force.<sup>2</sup> In Santa Barbara, California, a parade was planned for the evening before to celebrate those who would register the next day. The procession included constable companies and civic organizations from throughout the city. Each man that registered was going to be given a khaki-colored badge made by a

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 10.

committee of local women to commemorate the moment. Despite this enthusiasm, there was one man known to have voiced his opposition to the conscription process and stated that he would not register. His opposition would be marked with arrest if this continued through the next day and he did not register for the Selective Service.<sup>3</sup> Even though in Santa Barbara there was one occurrence of defiance, and that any act of defiance could be met with a threat of arrest or possible ridicule, that could be enough for some to enlist in the Selective Service. The pressure to enlist could lead to some of the frustrations with lack of compensation once the war was over.

In New York, over 1,000,000 men registered for the Selective Service. In contrast, approximately 150 men were arrested for not registering on June 5. These men were all taken to the Federal Building and the United States Marshal Thomas McCarthy said that in every instance these men stated a reason for not registering and were eager to enlist. McCarthy stated that “there isn’t a chance in a million for any slacker to escape. I am receiving piles of letters every day from citizens about alleged slackers. Those who have registered will see that all others register.”<sup>4</sup> With information that anti-conscription groups were in the planning stages to start a campaign to encourage men from responding if they were called into service through the draft, it was important to the federal government, and those sworn in to enforce the Selective Service law, to show strength on those who chose not to register, whatever the reason.

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<sup>3</sup> Direct Wire-Executive Dispatch, “Parade Works Up Much Enthusiasm. Santa Barbara Expects a Big Registration. Every Man Who Signs for Draft will be Given a Khaki-colored Badge Made by Fair Hands. Only One Man in County Known to Have Voice Objection,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1917, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/parade-works-up-much-enthusiasm/docview/160382889/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>4</sup> “300,000 Available in New York Draft: Indications Now Are That One Out of Three Will Be Called. Gov. Whitman is Proud: State Registration About 1,037,000, Within 63,000 of Federal Government’s Estimates,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1917, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/300-000-available-new-york-draft/docview/99948863/se-2?accountid=14576>.

This idea of individuals slacking on their obligation to enlist in the military through the conscription process is an undercurrent throughout this thesis. The draft process created a new narrative on what it meant to be a citizen during war time. These types of citizens could include conscientious objectors, draft dodgers, and those who felt it was their duty to enlist. Regardless, the idea of what it meant to be a citizen and your obligation to the country during a war was being reimagined. Up to this point the United States had relied mostly on a volunteer army, but now with the idea that enlisting in the army was being portrayed as another duty of citizenship, a new type of veteran would emerge by the end of the war.<sup>5</sup> This would become significant in the argument of the bonus and explain why some felt it was their duty to enlist and therefore may have been against the bonus, but also verify why so many veterans wanted the extra compensation over the next decade.

Citizens' resistance to conscription concerned the federal government. To combat this, Provost Marshal General Enoch H. Crowder, head of the Selective Service system, wanted local control over the process. Local officials oversaw the 4,647 draft boards throughout the country. Tying patriotism to conscription and calling it a registration drive instead of a volunteer effort was a way to increase the enrollments in the Selective Service system. The public nature of these drives discouraged dissenters who may have opposed registering to take part in the process because they did not want to risk being mocked and ridiculed by their local communities. It also allowed those that registered to appear patriotic and loyal to the cause, but still have hope that they would not be chosen and would never have to enlist. The fact that by the end of the war 72 percent of the United States Army would be made up of those who were conscripted into service led to concerns about how civilians who didn't choose military life would impact military

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22.

culture. The United States Army did make decisions on how to handle this situation, but the impact on volunteers and some of the animosity of these volunteer soldiers, led to some jealousy within the ranks.<sup>6</sup>

The enlistment of African American soldiers was also given some consideration by the United States Army. African American men were registering for the draft and enlisting for military service. Units were segregated for black soldiers in a more expedited fashion than they were for foreign-born soldiers. This was more of a reaction to the political climate of the time to allow black and white soldiers to have a peaceful existence in the military, not necessarily to promote equality amongst the ranks. It reflected the Jim Crow laws that had been enacted in the southern states and segregation that had been allowed because of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision two decades earlier.<sup>7</sup> The service of African American soldiers would include them in the conversation for the bonus in the years to come.

As the first registration number was drawn on July 20, 1917, officially starting the conscription process, there was concern that citizens who were forced into service by the draft would not easily conform to the authoritarian customs of the United States Army. The Army worried that drafted soldiers would commit military crimes so they would be discharged dishonorably. Early on there was some increase of reports of this from commanders, but the judge advocate general responded that there would be no sentences of dishonorable discharge for the duration of the war. The new policy discouraged resistance from these new military members.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 9-11.

<sup>7</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 10, 12-13.

As the registration effort entered its second year in 1918, many of the instructors were impressed with how well those who were conscripted into service handled military life. Many who would potentially be conscripted into military service began to see the advantage of volunteering so they could choose the branch they went into, instead of the military choosing for you. Others saw the advantage of volunteering so they could potentially enter the army as officers instead of having to enter in as privates if they were conscripted. This began to impact the relationship with those who volunteered in this fashion with the commanders. Commanders began to yearn for the days, a year earlier, of the conscripted man who did their patriotic duty by registering and doing what they were asked by the commanders and the United States Army. Enlisted members began to connect their volunteering to a sense of service and patriotism and felt they should receive some special recognition, but the army went the other way and credited many of those who registered to serve through the draft. A poem “Only a Volunteer” ended with the line “For the drafted men get the credit, while I merely volunteered,” highlighting the frustration the volunteer portion of the United States army began to feel.<sup>9</sup>

When the war ended in 1918, these men began to enter veteran status. Men entered the war through a conscription process that was tied to their patriotic duty, and some would have risked ostracism from their communities or arrests if they failed to register or enlist when called upon. About a quarter of the army volunteered and some began to feel unappreciated by the commanders because the focus started to turn toward those who registered through the patriotic process of the draft. Many men were not chosen for military service, or were exempt for various reasons, and stayed behind to work jobs that fueled the military machine and were paid handsomely for their work. There was high unemployment among veterans when they returned

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<sup>9</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 15.

home and the War Department's Employment Office Service would not let any serviceman be demobilized until a job had been found for them. Issues like this would lead veterans to look for veteran organizations to help them not only locate jobs but work for legislation that would help them compensate for their loss of income in service to their country and other benefits many felt entitled to. In fact, one of those organizations, the American Legion, would take credit for placing 700,000 veterans in jobs in a 1922 jobs drive.<sup>10</sup> Organizations such as the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars formed in the 1910s, but began to grow significantly as a result of conscripted men, and volunteers as well, needing help to improve their lives after the war. These various opinions would be seen in the foundation of these organizations and led to the first major legislation impacting the compensation of veterans serving during the war.

The American Legion formed in the year following the end of World War I. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. played a significant role in an organization of veterans being formed to address issues they may face in the years following the war. Other organizations began to be discussed as well and somewhat of a competition began as to which one would emerge as the largest and most significant began. Some of the early threats to the success of the American Legion came from groups such as the Comrades of Service. The Comrades of Service, a bit more religious in nature than the American Legion, had a similar overarching goal and at one point in 1919 had recruited 200,000 members to the organization. Over time the members of the organization began to see that the American Legion had a similar ideology as the Comrades of Service and offered camaraderie among their fellow veterans, without the moral crusade of the chaplains.

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<sup>10</sup> Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*, 163.

This movement of veterans began a massive growth in membership for the American Legion in the first year of its existence.<sup>11</sup>

The American Legion was also in competition with the Private Soldiers and Sailors Legion of the United States of America. The group, known also as World War Veterans, had a declaration of their principles that was available throughout the United States in 1919. The organization was affiliated with the Communist party and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and initially appealed to the World War veterans because of the support of benefits for them. They even called out the American Legion portraying them as an organization of privilege. Once the Red Scare occurred in 1921, the World War Veterans organization floundered, and the Legion continued to emerge as one of the front runner organizations for veterans following World War I. In fact, by 1920, there were 843,013 members of the American Legion, and it wasn't until the second half of the 1920's that the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) began to rival the American Legion in membership.<sup>12</sup>

At its initial caucus in St. Louis, the American Legion took steps to develop their platform as an organization. Issues like deporting Bolsheviks and helping veterans obtain jobs and medical care were easily put on the platform. However, the issue of the veterans' bonus divided the membership. Even though many of the delegates at the caucus favored some form of a bonus from the government for their service, the leadership began to question it. In fact, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. spoke and challenged the American Legion to do something for the government, not to take things from it. This idea ended up carrying enough support and the membership of the American Legion after the St. Louis caucus was moot on a bonus.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 49-50.

<sup>12</sup> Pencak, *For God & Country*, 49,51.

<sup>13</sup> Pencak, *For God & Country*, 60-61.

Despite the national organization not taking a stance on the bonus, there are examples of local chapters having differing opinions. In October, the Arkansas State convention adopted the platform that laid the groundwork for the American Legion in their state. Amongst these declarations was the barring of African Americans from representation at the state convention, but they could form subposts in counties that were under the control of the local posts. In regards to the bonus the state convention showed their disapproval of any “...further bonus to soldiers by Congress” by issuing a resolution. The Arkansas vote took a specific stand on the issue of the bonus at the same time the national organization was quiet on the issue. This differing stances on the bonus from the local posts and state organizations from the national organization would be something that would be traceable in the years ahead.<sup>14</sup>

The issue of the veterans’ bonus was back on the table a month later at the Legion National Convention in Minneapolis. Congress by this time had introduced numerous bills on plans for a bonus, but they were hopeful that the Legion would help them decide what route to go. There was more than one idea generated by the American Legion as to what bonus platform to support, but it ended up being a lose-lose situation. It was still as divided of an issue as it had been earlier in the year at the caucus in St. Louis. So, to compromise with the various stances of Legion membership, including those who were anti-bonus, the platform was that the American Legion would support adjusted compensation but they did not support a specific plan. Even though they did not support a specific plan, the fact that they developed an initial platform on

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<sup>14</sup> Associated Press, “Legion Against Further Bonus: Arkansas Convention Also Votes to Bar Negroes,” St. Louis Post Dispatch, Oct. 10, 1919, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/legion-against-further-bonus/docview/578252387/se-2?accountid=14576>.

adjusted compensation was a reversal of what they had decided in St Louis. It also signaled a beginning of the activism that the organization would have on the issue for the years to come.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the American Legion saw significant growth in their first year of existence, it became apparent that it would need a clearer vision on how they viewed a bonus for the World War veterans. The balancing act to keep the pro and anti-bonus members content was surely a reason why the membership declined by the midway point of the decade. From 1920 through 1925 membership dropped by over 230,000 members, setting the active membership at 609,000 veterans. As the adjusted compensation issue was becoming a significant topic throughout the country, and membership was dropping as it was, it became time for the American Legion to decide where they stood in regards to the bonus issue.<sup>16</sup>

When the National Committee met at the beginning of 1920, it was decided that the American Legion would support the bonus. There were members of the Legion who considered their service to the country as a privilege and therefore did not want to receive anything extra for their time. Members who saw their service in this light began to flee the organization. Posts around the country that were predominantly anti-bonus began to pass resolutions to show their displeasure of the national organization. These posts were upset with the fact that the national organization had created rules that forbade dissension from the mandates of the convention. The activism of veterans on the issue of the bonus in the years to come can be seen within the American Legion itself in its initial year. There would continue to be defiance from local posts towards the national organization throughout the next 12 years on issues connected to the bonus as the American Legion evolved its stance on the issue.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pencak, *For God & Country*, 74-75.

<sup>16</sup> Pencak, *For God & Country*, 83.

<sup>17</sup> Pencak, *For God & Country*, 83.

An example of this defiance can be seen in 1922 in St. Louis. In February, 80 ex-servicemen not affiliated with the American Legion, met in St. Louis and signed what ended up being an advertisement in the local newspaper opposing the bonus bill that was currently pending in Congress. The advertisement encouraged other veterans to write to their representatives to show their displeasure with the pending bill and to encourage provisions for those who were wounded and disabled. The American Legion responded to these individuals who were anti-bonus as men of wealth and tried to differentiate them from the rank-and-file veterans by calling them “capitalists.” As the American Legion solidified its stance on the issue of the bonus, individuals, like these 80 men in St. Louis, began to look into options to show their unhappiness with this measure, and organizations began to spring up that would give a counter argument to the pro-bonus agenda of the American Legion.<sup>18</sup>

In 1922, the Ex-Service Men’s Anti-Bonus League was formed in New York. The purpose of the organization was to not only add a voice of a group of veterans against the payment of the bonus but to show their support for pensions for soldiers that were impaired in the service to the United States. Their logic behind this is that “...90 percent of the men who were not wounded, gassed or shell-shocked, came out of the army far better equipped physically and mentally to fight the battles of civilian life than when they went in.” The American Legion had worked its way into a position of showing support for the bonus, but by the end of the 1920s when the organization did not support the immediate bonus payment, they would have a similar

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<sup>18</sup> “80 Ex-Service Men Here Against Bonus,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Feb. 15, 1922, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/80-ex-service-men-here-against-bonus/docview/578824199/se-2?accountid=14576>.

stance to the Anti-Bonus League towards helping disabled veterans.<sup>19</sup>

By the end of 1922, the Anti-Bonus League had developed a plan to distribute a poll to see what the support was from veterans was towards a bonus. In a letter to New York Congressman Joseph W. Fordney, the Anti-Bonus League asked that bonus legislation stay on hold until the results of the poll were known. The platform of the Anti-Bonus League was that in 1922 there were only 700,000 members of the American Legion, but over 4,000,000 veterans of the war. There was also a working theory that the number of members of the American Legion would decrease after January 1, as that was the deadline for dues for membership the next year. The Anti-Bonus League also pointed to the fact that over 100 American Legion Posts had gone on record as against the bonus. Even though the Anti-Bonus League did not have a national presence like the American Legion, they were fighting to halt action by Congress on the measure until the voices of a more well-rounded representation of veterans could be heard.<sup>20</sup>

By October 1923, the Anti-Bonus League was still clamoring for a stall on the voting of the passage of a bonus bill using the same rhetoric they had nearly a year earlier. The poll result from every veteran in the United States was being promised to be delivered to Congress, but that was a promise that was initially issued at the end of 1922. Knowlton Durham, who was the president of the Anti-Bonus League, was concerned about the bill that was being discussed by Congress. Durham said, “there is not a single word or provision in the entire bill for the disabled

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<sup>19</sup> “Veterans Organize Anti-Bonus League: Will Combat All Legislation to Aid Those Physically and Mentally Fit. Against Pensions Also: Favor Provisions for the Proper Care of Soldiers Impaired In the Service.,” *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1922, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/veterans-organize-anti-bonus-league/docview/100147402/se-2?accountid=14576>

<sup>20</sup> “Says Veterans’ Poll Will Reject Bonus: Ex-Service Men’s Anti-Bonus League Asks Fordney to Withhold Bill Pending Ballot. Says Majority Opposes: Letter Declares American Legion’s Stand Misrepresents Views of Former Soldiers.,” *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1922, accessed August 13, 201, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/says-veterans-poll-will-reject-bonus/docview/99404080/se-2?accountid=14576>.

veteran nor for the dependents of those who were killed.” The concern from the Anti-Bonus League was that the bill would benefit the survivors of the war who were of good health rather than those who were negatively impacted by the war. The price tag of over \$5,000,000,000, and its impact on the United States Treasury, also worried Durham and the League. Rallying around the idea that “only a minority” of those who belonged to the American Legion, and veterans nationwide, supported the bonus, the Anti-Bonus League continued to be the counter argument in the movement to lobby Congress on the issue of the bonus.<sup>21</sup>

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) owe their foundation to soldiers who served in the wars connected to the Spanish-American conflict. Many who founded the early veteran groups that coalesced into the organization we now know as the VFW, served in Cuba, the Philippines, and points in between before returning to the United States. However, it was in Columbus, Ohio that the most significant step in the foundation of the VFW occurred. James C. Putnam, former member of the 17th Infantry Regiment, rounded up fellow veterans in the Columbus area and created the American Veterans of Foreign Service (AVFS). By 1899, Putnam not only wrote the constitution for the organization, but he also paid for the charter of incorporation out of his own funds. The headquarters for the AVFS was in Columbus, but other ‘camps’ emerged over parts of Ohio. Promising to “assist worthy comrades”, the new organization began to slowly attract members and laid the foundation for the veterans’ organization to come.<sup>22</sup>

Out west another organization significant to the foundation of the VFW formed. Brigadier General Irving Hale, who was a member of the 1st Colorado Volunteer Infantry

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<sup>21</sup> “To Fight Bonus Bill. League President Says Only a Minority of Veterans Favor It.,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1923, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/carter-goes-luxor-reopen-tomb/docview/100183021/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert Molloy Mason, Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, (Lenexa, KS: Addax Publishing Group, 1999), 37-40.

Regiment, sought to create a veterans' organization in Colorado dedicated to the veterans who served in the Philippines. The organization excluded men who served in Cuba and the Boxer Rebellion, only accepting those who served in the Philippines, or the sons of Philippines veterans. Calling the organization the Colorado Society of the Army of the Philippines, they held their first meeting in Denver in December of 1899. By 1900, over 1,000 veterans of the Philippines would come to Denver to attend the first national convention. Six years after this first national convention the organization numbered over 1300 members.<sup>23</sup>

In Pennsylvania, three veteran organizations formed by 1903. In Pittsburgh, the Philippine War Veterans organization formed under the guidance of G.H. Smith. By July 1901, an organization with the exact same name was established in Altoona. One year later, the American Veterans of Philippine and China Wars had been formed in Philadelphia. Since there were three newly formed veteran organizations in the same state they soon merged and formed the American Veterans of Foreign Service. Sharing the name with the organization formed by James Putnam in Ohio, the two groups had united by 1905.<sup>24</sup>

By 1910, the AVFS had turned its attention to the Army of the Philippines that was headquartered out of Denver. Believing that the two veteran groups would work better as one entity, but the group out of Denver turned down any offer to merge the organizations. In 1911, an amendment was passed at the annual meeting of the veterans of the Philippines that essentially stated that the organization should never enter into an agreement with any other organization. Yet, by 1913 it appeared that there was a softening of this sentiment and despite some strong arguments against it, the Army of the Philippines appeared open to a merger with the AVFS. On August 20, 1913, the two groups officially joined and a name of the new

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<sup>23</sup> Mason Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, 40-41

<sup>24</sup> Mason Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, 41-42.

organization had to be agreed upon. A year later, choosing from a list of three choices, the new organization settled on the name the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). By August 1914 the general order was released and the VFW was established.<sup>25</sup> The number of veterans eligible for this new organization was miniscule at the date of the founding of the organization, but the entry of the United States into World War I would change that. As veterans returned home after 1918, the organization had a new group of veterans to recruit to increase their membership and to dramatically alter the influence that the VFW would have in the years to come.

In the years that followed the VFW started to become active regarding issues that impacted veterans and active servicemen in World War I. These early years would be crucial for the organization as they laid the blueprint for the role they would play in the political realm. One of the early issues for the VFW was the Key Pension Bill for Spanish-American War widows and orphans. This bill was not having much success in Congress after initially being introduced in 1912. In 1916, Representative Thomas Crago of Pennsylvania, who was the chairman of the VFW's Legislative Committee, spoke on the bill at the annual encampment meeting. With the new attention the bill successfully made it through the House, but it died in the Senate. Despite the failure of the push, the fact that the VFW was making their members aware of key issues impacting veterans, and had members in Congress from the organization, would lead to successes in the near future.<sup>26</sup>

By 1921, the VFW had grown to a size of over 60,000 members. In the years following the war, it became apparent to the VFW that there needed to be some sort of legislative committee in Congress to deal with veterans' affairs. The House of Representatives, with the urging of the VFW, created the House Committee on World War Veterans Affairs. The Senate

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<sup>25</sup> Mason Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, 42-43.

<sup>26</sup> Mason Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, 46.

would also create the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs by 1925. These committees would become key for legislation throughout the 1920s and early 1930s that would impact veterans of the First World War. In fact, many of the prominent members of the VFW, and the other key organizations mentioned in this thesis, would be called to testify in hearings on legislation they were advocating or trying to reject. Just like the American Legion, the VFW would turn its attention to the Adjusted Compensation Act conversation that was starting to percolate by the early 1920s.<sup>27</sup>

A notable act of activism was displayed in the streets of New York City in October 1920. On October 16, thousands of former veterans of the United States military put on their uniforms to march through the streets to demand a national bonus for their service in World War I. Heading up Fifth Avenue, the procession, containing military bands and a large number of American flags, would take over two hours to pass a given point along the parade route. The VFW Commander, Chief Robert G. Woodside, was at the front of the line which featured members from not only the VFW, but the American Legion and other military organizations as well. Disabled veterans rode in taxicabs up the streets and were given a place of honor during the procession. Five Native American Chiefs who were wounded in France dressed in their tribal costumes and took part in the march. Mothers who lost sons were given places of honor on the reviewing stand to view the festivities. Throughout the procession signs such as “Omit the Flowers; Say it With a Bonus” and “We Favor a Bonus” were seen in abundance so those who came out to see would see the overall purpose of the march. One sign, perhaps, sums up best

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<sup>27</sup> Mason Jr., *VFW: Our First Century*, 56, 60.

what the veterans were bringing attention to that day; “What We Gave Cannot be Replaced.”<sup>28</sup>

Over the next four years the American Legion, VFW, and other veteran organizations would continue to take stances and support various versions of bonus bills to be debated by Congress. These organizations would have members attend committee hearings in Congress and letters and telegrams would be sent from local posts to members of Congress to encourage support for a bonus bill. Despite the activism by these notable organizations, not every veteran would be on the same page and would work against the passage of the bill. Some individual veterans would write to voice their opinion against the measure and in some locations organizations of veterans would form to create a voice against the bonus bill. The many voices for and against the bill would foreshadow the conversation to come in the second half of the decade during the debate for the immediate payment of the veterans’ bonus.

In 1920, Warren G. Harding was elected the 29th President of the United States. In 1921, conversations about a bonus for the veterans of the World War began to be discussed in Washington D.C. As plans for the 1921 budget were being discussed, the issue of the bonus was a major part of the discussion. Harding, a fiscal conservative, felt that a program to procure a bonus to such a large number of people would be against the Administration’s concept of keeping government expenditures low, and stated that it would “virtually defeat the Administration's program of economy and retrenchment.”<sup>29</sup> Harding, and his Vice President Calvin Coolidge, wanted the legislators to focus on tax cuts. The goal for Harding and Coolidge was that if they could stop the momentum of the members of the House and Senate, the pressure

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<sup>28</sup> Associated Press, “War Veterans By Thousands Parade in Bonus Demand: “Say It With a Bonus,” Typical Banner in Large Uniformed Procession at New York.,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct. 17, 1920, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/war-veterans-thousands-parade-bonus-demand/docview/578946223/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>29</sup> Amity Shlaes, *Coolidge*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 230.

from veterans and veteran organizations may slow down. Eventually President Harding achieved his hope as the Senate defeated the bonus by a vote of 47-20. To get this result a compromise was struck with a deal to replace the War Risk Bureau with the Veterans Bureau and funding would be increased from \$600 million to \$700 million per year. This new organization would build hospitals and help veterans across the country.<sup>30</sup>

By 1922, the adjusted compensation legislation was back on the table, this time in a midterm election year. Nothing had changed on the side of President Harding as he still opposed the legislation, but political pressure back home likely motivated the members of Congress to bring the legislation for another round of debate. In late January and early February of 1922, the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on H.R. 1, which was to provide for the adjusted compensation for veterans of the World War, and for other purposes.<sup>31</sup> The legislation that was introduced in 1922, was very similar to the bill that was ultimately failed by the Senate in 1921. It would have allocated a bonus of \$1.00 a day for domestic service, but \$1.25 per day for service overseas. The bill introduced by the House of Representatives did not provide any provisions for funding the bonus and therefore would have required money to come from the Treasury. This would have required deficit spending, something President Harding wanted to avoid.<sup>32</sup>

By this time the American Legion and the VFW had taken their stances on the bonus issue and had ranking members speak on the issue at the hearing. In a precursor of days ahead, veterans who were speaking out against the legislation also had the opportunity to state their

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<sup>30</sup> Shlaes, *Coolidge*, 230-231.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R.1, Day 1, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. (1922).

<sup>32</sup> John W. Dean, *Warren G. Harding*, (New York: Times Books: Henry Holt and Company, 2004),107,110.

reasons for opposition. On January 31, 1922, the first day of the committee hearing on the pending legislation, both the American Legion and VFW had their chance to show their support for the pending legislation and be questioned by members.<sup>33</sup> By having this esteemed position on the hearing agenda it gave these organizations the opportunity to set the tone for the conversation to come in the days ahead.

The American Legion had the first chance to issue statements on the opening day of the hearing and three representatives of the organization were present. These included the Vice Chairman of the National Legislative Committee John Thomas Taylor, Chairman of the Legislative Committee Daniel Sterk, and the National Commander Hanford MacNider. All three individuals spoke on behalf of the measure saying it had the full support of the legislation. Referencing the most recent meeting in Indianapolis, Vice Chairman Taylor stated that the issue of adjusted compensation “was reaffirmed.” Even though the National Executive Committee had shown support for the bonus, at the time of the hearing no national convention of the American Legion had voted to show support of the bonus. Members of the House of Representatives were clearly aware of that and questioned Chairman Sterk if they actually represented members of the American Legion. Sterk responded by saying that the “executive committee...between conventions acts for the national body.” Sterk was also questioned on if he had communicated with the four million veterans of the World War, but he stated that he could only speak for American Legion members. Sterk did go on to say that if the legislation did become law that the organization would “carry on an extensive campaign of education among all ex-servicemen of the country.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R. 1, Day 1, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. (1922).

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R. 1, Day 1, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. 14, 21 (1922).

This line of questioning would be one of the largest criticisms of the veteran organizations and their support for the bonus as their membership would never equal the total number of veterans. The fact that by this point the American Legion, an organization that had received a Congressional Charter, did not have a vote from their national convention that showed support for the bill did provide the ammunition necessary for that kind of attack. Chairman Sterk almost seems aware of the number of veterans that may not support their executive committee vote in his response to questioning by stating that the American Legion would launch the education program to encourage veterans to sign up for the adjusted compensation. By the end of 1922, the American Legion would have a vote of support from the National Convention and that would give them greater leverage with the members of Congress as the push for a bonus bill continued in the years ahead.

The VFW had the last three slots on the first day of the hearing and echoed for the most part a similar message as that of the American Legion. The VFW was represented by the Commander in Chief of the organization Colonel Robert G. Woodside, the Chairman of the National Legislative Committee Captain Edwin S. Bettelheim, Jr., and the Junior Vice Commander in Chief Richard Seelye Jones. Colonel Woodside said in his opening remarks that the “organization stands with the American Legion” towards the current bill. Woodside stated that in the previous year he had traveled the country and visited various posts and from his visits he felt that the majority of veterans he met supported the measure. Captain Bettelheim discussed the support of members of the VFW and stated how past national encampments had shown support for adjusted compensation, including the previous fall in Detroit. Bettelheim also stated that posts around the country had been sent memorandum to spread to see what support was for the new measure before Congress. According to Bettelheim, on the day of the hearing he could

verify 5,476 names, but that morning there were enough names to increase the number to over 7,500 and more letters had arrived that day. Ending the day, Jones stated unequivocally what the VFW's message was that "the Veterans of Foreign Wars - and I believe the other organizations will agree - is that we desire to see this considered as a constructive and helpful move for the whole American people and to remove from it the idea of grabbing something from the Treasury."<sup>35</sup>

Despite the two major veteran organizations showing support for the bill, no Congressional hearing would be complete without allowing those who oppose the legislation to speak their minds. In this case, there were not any organizations that did not show support for the bonus measure, but an individual veteran addressed the committee. Harold Claypoole Eustis from Cincinnati, Ohio, who was still officially a member of the American Legion, used his opportunity to speak in front of the committee to not necessarily oppose the bonus, but to state his objection to the bill in the form that it was currently in.<sup>36</sup>

Mr. Eustis, in his testimony, talked about the fact that he had to come to grips with the idea that some stayed home during the war and made far larger amounts of money than he did serving his country. "I came home resenting that injustice, and I think rightfully," Eustis said to the committee. However, he stated what was important was getting the veterans back to industry so they could earn the wages going forward. Citing the good economy of the early 1920s, Eustis felt it would not "...be just to the taxpayer or the whole country to pass the bonus bill at this time." Mr. Eustis did not blame veterans for wanting the bonus, nor would he fault them for taking it, but he felt there were voices that needed to be heard that weren't from the American

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<sup>35</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R.1, Day 1, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. 35-36, 40, 43-44 (1922).

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R.1, Day 4, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. 241 (1922).

Legion or VFW. "I am expressing the belief of many men who are in business..., and a great many of my own acquaintances, my own friends, who are ex-soldiers,...who will accept the bonus if it is paid,...but those men do not have organizations and can not be heard here."<sup>37</sup> Mr. Eustis' statement that many of the veterans are not represented will be echoed by anti-bonus organizations and veterans who oppose bonus legislation in the years to come.

Eventually the bill would be introduced to the House of Representatives and the Senate for a vote. Set in a midterm election year, it had the potential to have an impact on the result of the November tally, given the growth and the growing influence of the American Legion and the VFW. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved the measure by a 330-70 vote. The Senate heard debate next and before they had an opportunity to vote, President Harding weighed in. He informed the Senate, just as he had a couple of years earlier, that he would veto the measure if the bill came to his desk. His reason continued to be the impact it would have on the budget and it was not in his plan to deficit spend. The American Legion began to lobby the Senate and the President in a last-minute effort to impact the legislation. It worked in the Senate as they passed the measure over a vote of 36-17, but many Senators did not participate given the impact it could have at the polls later that year. It was now up to President Harding, with about two months until election day, to decide what course of action he would take.<sup>38</sup>

Some thought that the President may change his mind on the legislation knowing that it could have political consequences in the midterm and impact the second half of his term in office. However, on September 19, 1922, Harding vetoed the legislation as promised and while he showed his understanding of the plight of the veterans at the time, he felt it was unfair to the

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<sup>37</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Soldiers' Adjusted Compensation: Hearings on H.R.1, Day 4, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 67th Cong. 242 (1922).

<sup>38</sup> Dean, *Warren G. Harding*, 110.

rest of the Americans to add to the national debt to help around five million citizens. The House of Representatives overrode the veto, but the Senate sustained it, ending another attempt to compensate veterans for their service. This decision would have a lasting impact on veterans' legislation as the Congress elected in 1922 would be the one that finally achieved in passing the Adjusted Compensation Act into law.<sup>39</sup>

President Harding would not live to see the next debate on the Adjusted Compensation Act in 1924. On a trip to the West Coast in the summer of 1923, the President's health began to deteriorate. While in San Francisco in August 1923, he passed away just shy of his 58th birthday. Calvin Coolidge, who was not on the trip, soon received word and took the oath of office to assume the office of the Presidency.<sup>40</sup> President Coolidge, who had similar beliefs to Harding towards the funding of a bonus bill for the veterans, would enter the debate over the next year as momentum shifted to debating another version of the Adjusted Compensation Act.

The American Legion and the VFW would play an active role in the upcoming conversation about the Adjusted Compensation Act. They would encourage their members, and veterans as a whole, to contact their members of Congress to encourage them to vote for the legislation. Some new members of Congress would enter into the conversation as a result of winning a seat in the 1922 election. One of those men would be Ralph Lozier of Missouri who would enter into the House debate on the future version of the bill and be encouraged by veterans and veteran organizations of his state to support the measure. The impact the American Legion and the VFW would have on its pending success is quite significant, but the voices of veterans who were not represented by them are quite important as well. There were veterans who opposed legislation for reasons as they served because it was their patriotic duty, echoing the

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<sup>39</sup> Dean, *Warren G. Harding*, 110-111

<sup>40</sup> Dean, *Warren G. Harding*, 151-152

frustrations of soldiers who enlisted voluntarily to the war effort. As 1924 approached, a new conversation was on the horizon, with veterans engaged in a political process, a new President in the White House, and a new Congress eager to see the Adjusted Compensation Act to the finish line.

## Chapter 2

As the calendar flipped to 1924, it became clear that Congress was going to take up the issue of adjusted compensation for World War I veterans. Veteran groups, such as the American Legion and the Anti-Bonus League, began to write members of Congress to lobby for a vote on their particular side of the issue. President Knowlton Durham wrote to all the Senators on behalf of the League accusing the American Legion of “defamation.” Durham voiced an opinion that the American Legion needed to “...base their case upon fact instead of attempting to besmirch the character and the intentions of public citizens who, through a sense of duty, are opposing the proposed bonus grab.” The Anti-Bonus League continued their message that the American Legion didn’t represent the true majority of veterans on the issue of the bonus.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the continued push from the Anti-Bonus League the bill began to take shape. The law, officially called the Adjusted Compensation Act, would most often be referred to as the Bonus Bill. This “bonus” would be awarded as a deferred interest-bearing certificate, or if the veteran passed away, his beneficiaries could collect. The certificate could not be redeemed as payable until 1945. In 1945 additional compensation of \$1.00 per day for World War veterans, and \$1.25 per day for those serving overseas during the war, including a four percent interest rate. The values of these certificates varied with the location and also the number of days the veteran served in the armed forces. The average value of the certificates was around \$1,000.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Cable to The New York Times, “Legion Accused of ‘Defamation’: Investigation of Its ‘Campaign’ Asked by Ex-Service Men’s Anti-Bonus League. Letters Sent To Senators: Attacks on Secretary Mellon and President Coolidge Denounced by Knowlton Durham.” *The New York Times*, February 19, 1924, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/french-church-bars-woman-singing-voice-too/docview/103429150/se-2?accountid=14576>.

The legislation also allowed the veteran to take out a 22.5 percent loan from the Veterans Bureau in the amount of the certificate's face value.<sup>2</sup>

Fiscal conservative President Calvin Coolidge, who was finishing up the term of the deceased Warren G. Harding was opposed to the Bonus Bill. Uniquely, Coolidge as Governor of Massachusetts passed a Bonus Bill through his approval. This was common as several states passed measures to compensate veterans. Coolidge's Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon did everything in his power to thwart the bonus moving through both chambers of Congress.<sup>3</sup> Despite the threat of a presidential veto, the House of Representatives moved on with the legislative process. In the days leading up to a vote in Congress, local posts of the American Legion actively lobbied through correspondence to get votes in their favor on the Adjusted Compensation Act.

Veterans, and the organizations that represented them, used their growing influence to impact the passage of legislation by a letter writing campaign to members of Congress to encourage them to vote for various forms of veterans' legislation. Of most interest was the Adjusted Compensation Bill of 1924, but various other veterans' issues would be addressed throughout the decade. While it can be assumed that a good portion of the Congressional representation would have been lobbied for support, two Congressmen will be looked at specifically to provide a lens into how the veterans activism was seen during the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s. These Congressmen include Ralph Lozier of Missouri and Wright Patman of Texas. While Lozier was a congressman from 1923-1935, Patman wasn't elected until 1928, but would play a significant role in veterans' legislation.

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 27.

In the 1922 midterm election Lozier, a Democrat, won the seat to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent Missouri's second district. His election to the House of Representatives in 1922 was the first of six election victories for Lozier.<sup>4</sup> As legislation pertaining to the bonus for World War veterans continued in the years ahead, Representative Lozier would receive correspondence from veterans in his congressional district, as well as other locations in the state of Missouri, showing activism amongst veterans in furthering the cause for the bonus. The correspondence to Representative Lozier will be used not only to analyze the significance of the activism toward the 1924 bill, but provide an insight into activism for the upcoming fight for the early payment of the bonus.

In March of 1924, Lozier received correspondence from veteran groups urging his support on the bill. American Legion posts in Missouri wrote to him to show their support of it. One post in Sumner, Missouri, The Milford-Purvis Post, sent in a vote of their members taken February 25, 1924. This vote showed unanimous consent among the members of the post as the vote total was 91 "for the bonus" and zero "against the bonus."<sup>5</sup> It appeared that veteran groups in Missouri were unanimously in favor of passage of the Adjusted Compensation Act, which echoed the opinion of the national organization as well.

Lozier responded more than once to these veteran groups. He ensured them that the veterans' bonus had his full support. On March 14, 1924, four days before he would cast his vote, Lozier responded to the vote at the Milford-Purvis American Legion Post. Lozier stated "I wish to assure you and through you to assure your comrades and the people of your community

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<sup>4</sup> United States Congress, "Lozier, Ralph Fulton, (1866-1945)," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-Present, accessed August 15, 2021, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000489>.

<sup>5</sup> E. Smart to Ralph L.[sic] Lozier, Letter, February 26, 1924, folder 4300: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

that I stand now where I always stood, aggressively and unalterably in favor of the soldiers bonus, and I shall vote and work for this measure.”<sup>6</sup> There was worry among the members of Congress that President Coolidge would veto the bill after passage, but there was consensus that they had enough votes to override a possible veto. Lozier reassured the constituents at the American Legion Post that this would be the case stating that he was “confident” that both Houses would override a Presidential veto.<sup>7</sup> With this confidence, the members of the House of Representatives were set to take a vote on March 18, 1924.

On the day before the vote Lozier received a telegram from the American Legion Commander in Missouri, H.D. McBride. The telegram, written by McBride’s secretary Louis W. Kane, stated the 153,000 ex-servicemen in Missouri “expected” Lozier to be on the House floor the next day to exercise his vote in support of the Adjusted Compensation Act. The letter stated the meaning of this bonus for the veterans of Missouri by saying “...we do not ask for a bonus we do not seek a gift we only ask to be treated in exactly the same way the war workers were...”<sup>8</sup> The next day the House gathered to vote on the Adjusted Compensation Act. There was resounding support for the bill in the House of Representatives as the vote came out 355 for the bill and 54 votes against. Congressman Lozier cast his vote in support of the measure as he promised many that he would.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly after the vote Lozier responded to the telegram from the Missouri American Legion Commander. Lozier wrote that he “...all along had been wholeheartedly in favor of an

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<sup>6</sup> Ralph F. Lozier to E.J. Smart, Letter, March 14, 1924, folder 4300: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>7</sup> Ralph F. Lozier to E.J. Smart, Letter, March 14, 1924, folder 4300: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>8</sup> Louis W. Kane to Ralph Lozier, Telegram, March 17, 1924, folder 4308: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>9</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, vol. 65, pt. 5: 4444.

adjusted compensation bill.”<sup>10</sup> The letter goes on to describe that he felt it wasn’t a perfect bill, but it was the best that could be given at that time. He continued by saying if this bill becomes a law that “...in my opinion some succeeding Congress will amend it by giving the service men the option of commuting their policies and accepting their present cash value.”<sup>11</sup>

Lozier echoed these sentiments on the House floor just four days after the vote. In a passionate speech that drew applause on multiple occasions Lozier discussed voting for the Adjusted Compensation Bill. Lozier said he only voted for the bill because “it was the only bill I had a chance to vote for.”<sup>12</sup> Lozier was in favor of a bill that would allow the veterans to have a chance to choose a cash payment or an insurance policy as he said “I most certainly would have voted for such a measure.”<sup>13</sup> Lozier expanded on his speech in Congress by indicating his support for such a measure was a platform for which he ran for Congress on. “I am not a new convert to the policy of granting soldiers of the World War an adjusted compensation. I was nominated and elected on a platform one plank of which called for the immediate enactment of a fair, just, and liberal soldiers’ compensation law.”<sup>14</sup> Lozier on his first major veterans’ bill showed full support of the veterans in his district and state and would continue doing so in the months ahead.

The Senate did follow up the House approval of the bill with their own passage of the Adjusted Compensation Act. It then headed to President Coolidge’s desk where he vetoed the bill. Coolidge said he vetoed the bill for issues regarding the budget and he also felt it was not

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<sup>10</sup> Ralph Lozier to Louis W. Kane, Letter, March 22, 1924, folder 4308: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>11</sup> Ralph Lozier to Louis W. Kane, Letter, March 22, 1924, folder 4308: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>12</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess. 1924, vol. 65, pt. 5: 4767.

<sup>13</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess. 1924, vol. 65, pt. 5: 4767.

<sup>14</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess. 1924, vol. 65, pt. 5: 4767.

right to favor one group of citizens over all Americans.<sup>15</sup> Once the veto was administered, it fell to the members of Congress to override the Presidential veto if they wanted to see the Adjusted Compensation Bill become law. This also brought out more activism from veterans and anti-bonus groups to lobby for their particular side of the cause.

Even though veterans and organizations lobbied heavily through the letter writing campaign to encourage the passage of the bill, Anti-Bonus veterans were doing their part to try to make sure the adjusted compensation bill did not become law. It appeared the true battle would come after the veto of President Coolidge. Organizations for and against the legislation knew this and began to ratchet up the lobbying of members of the House and the Senate to help their particular agenda be achieved in the veto override phase. This can be seen in the March 21, 1924, edition of "The American Legion Weekly." A lengthy article published just before the passage of the bill by the Senate, is meant to enlighten the American Legion members that the veto override is the battle that needed to be won. The article also referenced Senator David A. Reed from Pennsylvania and contact he had with the Ex-Service Men's Anti Bonus League. According to the article, Senator Reed believed that there were five votes that would need to be flipped to make sure the veto isn't overridden, and he thought he could get three, but isn't certain all five would happen. The article also makes it known that the five Senators that needed to be convinced were not known for certain, so it would be likely that the "antis would be after your Senators." Signaling that the Anti-Bonus League would continue the fight to the end, the article stated the importance of the American Legion to stay engaged in the fight and see it through.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *The American Legion Weekly*, March 21, 1924, Vol. 6, No. 12, "Wanted: Five More Pallbearers," 7, 18-21.

On May 17, 1924, the culmination of activism by veterans on both sides of the issue of the Bonus Bill was reached. The House gathered to attempt to override the veto of the President on the Adjusted Compensation Act, and by a vote of 313 to 78 the House achieved that goal. Once again Congressman Lozier voted in the affirmative showing his support to the veterans on this measure.<sup>17</sup> Two days later the Senate met to vote on the override of the veto. Needing two-thirds majority of those voting it looked to be up in the air if the veto would be overridden. Eleven senators did not vote, which left the 59 that did support the override enough votes to allow the bill to become law.<sup>18</sup> The Adjusted Compensation Act became the law of the land.

Not all of Lozier's constituents were satisfied with his vote to override the veto of President Coolidge and Lozier's support of this legislation. Corporations and other businesses in the state appeared to have some opposition to the bill. One such company was the Shale Hill Brick and Tile Co. in Chillicothe, Missouri. They sent a telegram to Lozier on the day of the vote which asked him to sustain the veto of the President.<sup>19</sup> This was like the national criticism on the passage of the Adjusted Compensation Act as Pierre S. DuPont and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce were also vocal against this bill.<sup>20</sup> Lozier responded to the telegram a week after the vote and laid out his reasons one final time why he had to vote to override Coolidge's veto. Lozier told the company that he supported the bill because it was a pre-election promise on this type of legislation. However, he also told the company that he supported the legislation because he believed "...we owe a moral obligation to the ex servicemen who were withdrawn from business industries during the period when times were good and profits great, and as a result the

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<sup>17</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, vol. 65, pt. 9: 8813-8814.

<sup>18</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, vol. 65, pt. 9: 8871.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Lozier to Shale Hill Brick & Tile Co., Letter, May 24, 1924, folder 4341: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>20</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 26.

ex servicemen had no opportunity to participate in the prosperity that came to all other classes.”<sup>21</sup> This statement firmly placed Lozier in the camp of the veterans and showed that he understood the plight of the veteran who lost valuable compensation to serve the United States during the First World War.

This law was the first major legislation to compensate the veterans of the First World War for their services rendered to the country. In the 1924 election, the same one that saw Calvin Coolidge seek to win four more years in the White House, Representative Lozier would be running for re-election for the 2nd district of Missouri. Being a Democrat, Lozier did not have to fear the repercussions of voting against the Republican President. This vote by Lozier, and the members of the House and the Senate allowed a bill to become law that would create a series of activity between veteran groups, local Congressmen like Lozier, and the federal government in Washington.

Throughout the 1920's, Lozier continued to show his support for veterans of the First World War. As he predicted, future Congresses would have to decide on amendments to the Adjusted Compensation Act and other veterans' issues that would come up. These amendments would allow veterans to take out loans on their certificate and provide disability for higher ranking veterans. Lozier would stay steadfast in his support for the veterans of the World War in his votes on veterans related legislation throughout the rest of the 1920's.

Lozier was re-elected to a second term in 1924, but it wasn't until 1926 that he voted on an amendment to the Adjusted Compensation Act. This amendment changed minor items in the original Adjusted Compensation Act passed in 1924. Many veteran groups, including the American Legion, supported this amendment. On July 1, when the House voted to pass this

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<sup>21</sup> Ralph Lozier to Shale Hill Brick & Tile Co., Letter, May 24, 1924, folder 4341: Correspondence, 1923-1924, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

amendment, Congressman Lozier voted for the amendment. The amendment passed the House by a resounding 291 to 1 vote.<sup>22</sup>

Lozier entered his third term in office after being re-elected in 1926. In 1928, a vote was taken on the House floor to override a Presidential veto on a bill designated to help disabled emergency officers of the World War. This act, introduced by the Senate, and voted in the affirmative by Lozier and the House, would make “eligible for retirement, under certain conditions, officers, and former officers of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps of the United States, other than officers of the Regular Army, Navy, or Marine Corps, who incurred physical disability in line of duty while in the service of the United States during the World War.”<sup>23</sup> The act became law as the Senate also overrode the veto.<sup>24</sup>

Lozier would run for re-election in 1928 and was successful and entered his fourth term as the Congressman from Missouri’s 2nd district. In 1929, the same year the stock market crashed, Lozier had established himself as a friend of the veterans. As the 1930’s began, several new discussions on bills supporting the veterans of the World War, and other veteran groups, started to increase as the Great Depression took hold. These discussions and bills would shape the debate in 1932 that would lead the veterans to activism on the immediate payment of the bonus.

Calvin Coolidge did not seek re-election in 1928, and Herbert Hoover won the Republican nomination. Hoover was the Secretary of Commerce during both the Harding and Coolidge administrations and was a very strong candidate for election in 1928. The Republican easily defeated the Democratic nominee Al Smith and looked to build on the economic upturn of

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<sup>22</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 69th Cong., 1st sess., 1926, vol. 67, pt. 11: 12570.

<sup>23</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 70th Cong., 1st sess., 1928, vol. 69, pt. 9: 9769-9770.

<sup>24</sup> Walter J. Stewart and Gregory Hines, *Presidential Vetoes 1789-1988* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), 231.

the 1920s. It didn't appear as much would change regarding policy under the Hoover Administration, yet during these years there were some victories for veterans.

The Congressional Election in 1928 saw a significant member of Congress for veteran benefits win election for the first time. Wright Patman was born on August 6, 1893, in Northeast Texas. During his high school years, he became interested in government service. He studied law at Cumberland University just outside of Nashville, Tennessee. He left school in 1916 just a year before the United States declared war on Germany and entered World War I. In July 1917, three months after the United States declared war, Patman enlisted as a private at Fort Sam Houston. Patman was diagnosed with a heart problem and did not see any overseas service, but that did not stop him from rising through the ranks. A year after his enlistment, he had become a First Lieutenant. In January 1919, he received an honorable discharge from the Army. This service would allow him membership in the American Legion as a veteran of the US Army.<sup>25</sup>

After his discharge, Patman became involved in politics in the state of Texas. Prior to his run for Congress, he was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1920 and in 1923 was appointed to the district attorney of Bowie and Cass Counties.<sup>26</sup> By the late 1920's, Patman had put himself in a position to run for Congress. He ran for the seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from the 1st Congressional District in Texas. In a campaign speech in February 1928 Patman criticized the concentration of wealth in the United States and advocated for farm relief. In the same speech, Wright Patman also showed his support for the early payment of the soldiers' bonus from the Adjusted Compensation Act. Patman defeated the incumbent Eugene

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<sup>25</sup> Nancy Beck Young, *Wright Patman: Populism, Liberalism, and the American Dream* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000.), 11-15.

<sup>26</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 16-20.

Black in the Democratic Primary and was elected to serve the 1st District of Texas later in the year.<sup>27</sup> He would serve that district until his death in March of 1976.

When Patman arrived in Washington D.C., he backed up the promise he made to the veterans during the campaign. On May 28, 1929, Patman introduced H.R. 3493 which was to grant immediate payment of the adjusted service certificates. The purpose of this legislation for Patman was to increase the amount of dollars in circulation in the rural part of the country. In addition, it was noted that the veterans of the First World War only received \$60 severance pay, compared with the higher wages of those civilians who worked during the war. The inflated economy of the 1920's created economic hardships for some of the World War I veterans, especially in rural areas. At this time, Patman did not have overwhelming support from members of Congress. In a speech, Patman referred to this early payment of the certificates as a 'bonus.' This term was often used against him by those who were against his legislation. H.R. 3493 never received a vote, but in the years that followed, the bills that Patman introduced would often be referred to as "bonus bills." It is important to note that Patman was not the only member of Congress who supported early payment, but his actions put him in a position to become the leader of the movement in Congress.<sup>28</sup>

A key strategy to Patman's efforts was the motivation of grassroots activism amongst the veteran groups across the country. Garnering support among outside groups with a vested interest in a piece of legislation was new to Washington and Patman felt that he needed to get the American Legion on his side. If the American Legion supported the immediate payment of the soldiers' bonus, then perhaps he could get the members of Congress to come on board as well. To gain support from the American Legion he would send copies of his speeches and wrote

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<sup>27</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 23-27.

<sup>28</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 32-33.

articles to the local chapters to help lobby the national organization to develop a strong stance on the issue of the bonus.<sup>29</sup> This kind of work by Patman is the seed for the increase in veteran activism to support the early payment of the bonus, but another organization would be the key to increasing veteran support of this issue.

The local American Legion members seemed to support Patman's efforts, but it was difficult to get the national organization to jump on board. For example, the 1930 National Convention blocked any kind of debate on the issue of the bonus from the floor. To continue with the grassroots support of the issue, Patman turned his attention to an organization whose numbers were growing significantly in the 1930's, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). By turning his attention to garnering support from the VFW, and the Disabled American Veterans, Patman was not only recruiting the services of a competing organization but would also make the VFW the most vocal organization in the early 1930's on the passage of the bonus issue.<sup>30</sup> Once the VFW signaled support of the immediate payment of the bonus, the numbers of members would increase to near 200,000 by 1932.<sup>31</sup>

The bonus issue was important for Wright Patman because of the economic benefit he felt it would bring to citizens during the early years of the Great Depression. He recognized that a good number of men from the previous generation had served in World War I. Therefore, the bonus for Patman was a way to not only address unfair provisions to veterans but also to move some much-needed currency to rural areas of the country. It would also address a few other economic issues facing Americans at the time.<sup>32</sup> In addition to that, veterans were facing a severe unemployment situation. In May 1931, the American Legion stated that 750,000

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<sup>29</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 35

<sup>30</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 36

<sup>31</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 32-34.

<sup>32</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 36.

veterans nationwide were out of work.<sup>33</sup> This high unemployment rate among veterans created a higher sense of urgency to get an immediate payment bill passed to get relief to those veterans who were genuinely in need. To do this, Patman had to get out on the trail to get local chapters of veteran organizations to support the cause of the bonus bill.

Since Patman was the most vocal voice in Congress for the early payment, and for purposes connected to tracking veterans' issues in this thesis, it is important to connect him to Representative Lozier. In fact, Patman, in 1934, would state that Lozier was a "sincere and consistent friend to the Veterans of all wars."<sup>34</sup> This would be easy for Patman to say about Lozier as he would continue to show support with his affirmative votes on several pieces of legislation supporting veterans. The similarity in the two in their voting records will allow us to assume they received similar correspondence from veterans regarding the issues impacting them leading up to the 1932 immediate payment of the bonus vote.

Over the next three years Lozier and Patman continued the push for veterans' legislation. In 1930, World War veterans' legislation was once again voted on by the House of Representatives. On April 24, 1930, a bill that would give additional benefits to soldiers of the World War, was voted on in the House. Lozier, voting on the same line as Wright Patman, showed support for the bill.<sup>35</sup> This legislation would make its way to President Hoover's desk. Hoover vetoed the bill and it was returned to Congress to override the veto. The House of Representatives voted on June 26, 1930, to override the Presidential veto. Lozier and Patman voted to not sustain the Presidential veto, but this time it was to no avail. The measure failed and

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<sup>33</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> Wright Patman to R.W. Bozworth, Letter, June 22, 1934, folder 1551: Endorsements for Lozier, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>35</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930, vol. 72, pt. 7: 7673-7674.

this attempt to help the veterans did not succeed.<sup>36</sup> Later the same day the House voted to pass H.R. 13174. This bill was to fix some of the problems with which veterans would get help in the bill vetoed by the President. It passed with a resounding vote of 365 to 4, with Lozier and Patman both voting in the affirmative.<sup>37</sup> Over the course of 1931, three more bills were voted on regarding veterans' issues. All three saw Lozier vote with Wright Patman. The most significant of these involved overriding a Presidential veto to increase the amount of loan payments World War veterans could take against their adjusted service-certificate. Both houses of Congress voted to override the Presidential veto and the amount of the loan was increased.<sup>38</sup>

During the same stretch of years Patman was by far the most nationally known of the two Congressmen. Whenever a bill would be introduced to Congress, and it required a hearing, Patman was often called to give his opinion on the matter. One such time occurred at a hearing on Amendments to the Adjusted Compensation Act held by the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives in February 1930. In this hearing the advocacy of issues pertaining to veterans that would become synonymous with Wright Patman can be seen. This amendment was to focus on extending the time to apply for benefits, and Patman used his time with the committee to address this issue significant to payment of adjusted compensation.<sup>39</sup>

Patman advocated for the permanent extension of the deadline to apply for adjusted compensation because it appeared that in his district there were many people who were able to apply that had not done so yet. In his short statement, Patman referred to the fact that he had gathered names of those from his district who had died during the war. This list of names was

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<sup>36</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930, vol. 72, pt. 11: 11828.

<sup>37</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930, vol. 72, pt. 11: 11842.

<sup>38</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 71st Cong., 3rd sess., 1931, vol. 74, pt. 6: 6171.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Amendments To The World War Adjusted Compensation Act: Hearings on H.R. 9102, Day 2, Before the Committee on Ways and Means, 71st Cong.* 38 (1930) (statement from Hon. Wright Patman, A Representative In Congress From The State of Texas).

then submitted to the Veterans Bureau to see how many of their dependents had applied for an Adjusted Compensation certificate. According to Patman "...75-90 percent of them had not applied." His stance on this issue was that the law passed in 1924 was not given adequate publicity and therefore still needed to have the application process continued.<sup>40</sup> Patman showed with this statement that he was not the typical representative when it came to adjusted compensation and he would continue to push the envelope on the reforms to the bonus issue passed in 1924.

In 1931, Patman was once again called on to give a statement on issues pertaining to Adjusted Compensation, this time in the Senate. In late January and early February 1931, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing on the Payment of Veterans' Adjusted Service Certificates. Leading off the day on January 29, Patman began a lengthy stay with the committee. Being the author of the bill that was to pay the veterans 100 percent of the face value of the certificate, the committee would be quite interested in what he had to say. This hearing would be a precursor to the battles that would come in 1932 and the bonus vote that summer.<sup>41</sup>

Fulfilling the campaign promise he made back in 1928, Patman was able to speak fully on why he supported the 100 percent payment of the certificate. Patman referenced the \$60 that the soldiers received at the end of service after the war, but most of that went to canteen fees and other services, not to mention being designated to some beneficiaries. His proposal was to pay the debt to the veteran as of the time the service was rendered with a 6 percent interest rate compounded annually. He expected that the biggest issue is the fact that the government may

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Amendments To The World War Adjusted Compensation Act: Hearings on H.R. 9102, Day 2, Before the Committee on Ways and Means*, 71st Cong. 38 (1930) (statement from Hon. Wright Patman, A Representative In Congress From The State of Texas).

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Payment of Veterans' Adjusted-Service Certificates: Hearings on S.1222, S. 3324, S. 3966, S. 5060, S. 5811, H.R. 15589, and H.R. 17054, Day 4, Before the Committee on Finance of the United States Senate*, 71st Cong. 79 (1931) (statement of Hon. Wright Patman, A Representative in Congress From the State of Texas).

not be able to afford a bill like that by paying off all of the certificates, but he argued it would not impact the national debt any more than they thought it would when the initial law was passed.<sup>42</sup>

The Adjusted Compensation issue did not get resolved the way that Congressman Patman had hoped, but the fight would be continued in the 1932 Congressional Session.

Shortly after the hearing in front of the Senate, Patman continued visiting veterans to spread the message to continue the fight for the immediate payment of the bonus. On February 14, 1931, he visited a group of Legionnaires in Charlotte, North Carolina. He discussed the defeat that the bill just had in Congress and encouraged the members of the American Legion that the fight was just beginning. Patman rallied the crowd “We have a just cause. We are right. I’m hopeful this legislation will pass this session...If it does not pass this session the fight has just commenced, and we are going to stay right in there and pitch until it is paid 100 per cent.”<sup>43</sup>

This type of barnstorming was common for Patman as he used it to spread his message, gain veteran support, which led him to be the most significant member of Congress for the veterans.

Even though Patman was rallying local Legionnaires, it didn’t always resonate with the national leadership of the organization. The national leadership of the organization continued to have a different point of view on the bonus than some of the local posts. In January 1931, the National Commander of the American Legion sent a letter to Patman which stated that “the Legion should not initiate or sponsor any legislation for cash payment of compensation certificates.” Patman responded to the national organization by issuing his own statement that

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<sup>42</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, *Payment of Veterans’ Adjusted-Service Certificates: Hearings on S.1222, S. 3324, S. 3966, S. 5060, S. 5811, H.R. 15589, and H.R. 17054, Day 4, Before the Committee on Finance of the United States Senate*, 71st Cong. 79-86 (1931) (statement of Hon. Wright Patman, A Representative in Congress From the State of Texas).

<sup>43</sup> Associated Press, “To Press Fight For Bonus: Patman Tells Legionnaires That It Has “Just Commenced.”” *The New York Times*, Feb. 15. 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/press-fight-bonus/docview/99108922/se-2?accountid=14576>.

the rank-and-file members, and local posts, needed “to let their members of Congress know that this legislation was needed and expected.”<sup>44</sup> As could be expected this would lead to a plethora of letters and telegrams being sent to members of Congress.

A great example of this divide of the national leadership and the local posts can be seen in Missouri a year later. On April 12, 1932, more than 400 members attended a meeting in Hannibal, Missouri. A statement from this meeting called for the impeachment of the National Commander of the American Legion, Henry L. Stevens Jr. The impeachment was on the grounds of “misrepresenting the will of the majority” of Legionnaires. They also called on Missouri Congressmen to support legislation pertaining to the immediate payment of the bonus.<sup>45</sup> This provides us proof that the local veterans and posts were not only challenging their national leadership but were encouraging their local members of Congress to support legislation for the immediate payment of the bonus. In this case, one of those members of Congress was Ralph Lozier.

As 1931 progressed and veteran groups were voicing their opinions on the bonus issue, President Hoover decided to embrace the American Legion as they agreed with him in regards to not paying the bonus early. He attended the 1931 American Legion National Convention in Detroit, in hopes that he could quell any momentum to change the Legion’s stance on the issue. The night before his speech Wright Patman rallied members of the American Legion at the Armory regarding the bonus. Patman mentioned his travels across the country and found that

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<sup>44</sup> Associated Press, “Legion Bars Backing Cash Bill, O’Neil Says: Commander, in Letter to Patman, Cites Action of Convention on Compensation.,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/legion-bars-backing-cash-bill-oneil-says/docview/99168776/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>45</sup> Associated Press, “Demand For Impeachment Of Legion Commander: Hannibal Group Charges He ‘Misrepresented Will of Majority on Bonus.’” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, April 13, 1932, accessed February 18, 2018, ProQuest, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/docview/1874995502?accountid=14576>.

there was overwhelming support for loans on the full value of the bonus certificates.<sup>46</sup> With this happening mere hours before the President took the stage, the way Hoover would handle the situation could impact the stance the American Legion would have going forward.

When the President took the stage at the convention there was no certainty how the members of the American Legion would respond. The President took the podium and gave what ended up being a ten-minute address to the convention hall. He spoke about the economic depression and placed the blame for the downturn on events in Europe. To the members of the American Legion, he appealed for their help in the “war against world depression.” Even though some of his initial comments brought boos from the crowd, most of the speech was received with cheers and great support from the audience. These cheers encouraged the President that the American Legion was opposed to the idea of the bonus, calming his initial fears. The organization supported resolutions for disabled veterans, widows, and other dependents more than they did the full payment of the bonus. While President Hoover had successfully convinced the American Legion convention to maintain their stance against the bonus, Wright Patman continued to encourage veteran activism to convince members of Congress to support the measure.<sup>47</sup>

Wright Patman criticized President Hoover’s address at the convention in Detroit. Patman was a staunch supporter of Prohibition so he charged President Hoover with promising the delegates legal beer in return for not supporting the bonus. Despite Patman not being accurate with this accusation it does illustrate the frustration he had with the influence Hoover

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<sup>46</sup> Associated Press, “Hoover’s Move Likely to Halt Bonus Demand: Change Seen In Legion View Through Trip of Executive. President Boards Train For Detroit: Convention Action on Liquor Viewed as Certain by Veteran Heads.,” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/hoover-s-move-likely-halt-bonus-demand/docview/150225432/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>47</sup> Donald J. Lisio, *The President and Protest: Hoover, Conspiracy, And The Bonus Riot*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 44-45.

had on the American Legion delegates.<sup>48</sup> Even though the setback was a hurdle for Patman, the bonus was political capital for him and he was becoming more and more the face of the movement. He still planned to introduce legislation in the upcoming session of Congress in 1932. Knowing it would bring over \$4 million to his district, not to mention the \$2 billion it would bring to the entire country, much needed relief would be distributed to those impacted by the Great Depression.<sup>49</sup>

Between the Convention and the beginning of the legislative session in 1932, Patman continued to show his determination to get attention to the bonus issue. As the election year dawned, Patman turned his attention to Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon as he was an obstacle in the Executive Branch to garner support for the bill. On January 6, 1932, Patman spoke on the House floor and called for the impeachment of Mellon for high crimes and misdemeanors. He charged the Secretary with conducting private business while in public office, among other charges. The House Judiciary Committee did take the impeachment charges and considered the merits of Patman's accusation. President Hoover, looking to avoid the political damage an impeachment of a member of his Cabinet could have during an election year, took the opportunity to appoint him to the newly opened ambassador to the Court of St. James. The transfer, slowing down the political storm, was seen by some as a political victory for Patman going into the new push for bonus legislation.<sup>50</sup>

While Patman stayed busy regarding matters pertaining to the bonus, veterans around the country were taking part in similar measures to make members of Congress aware of their support for the legislation. Three weeks after the President's speech at the American Legion

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<sup>48</sup> Lisio, *The President and Protest*, 45.

<sup>49</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 42.

<sup>50</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 42-44.

convention, President Hoover received a 2,000-word petition to demand the immediate payment of the bonus. It was brought to the President by Darold Decoe, the National Commander in Chief of the VFW. The demand from the VFW not only showed support of the immediate cash bonus, but also the need for widow and orphan pensions. President Hoover posed with Commander Decoe for a photo opportunity, but it was apparent that the demand would fall on deaf ears. While the goal was not going to be achieved with this visit, Decoe referenced a VFW campaign to get over 10 million signatures from American citizens to show public support for the cash payments. The VFW would remain active in the push for the immediate payment and become the primary veterans' organization showing support for the movement.<sup>51</sup>

In December 1931, veterans from across the country had been trickling into Washington D.C. On December 5, three veterans from Oregon arrived in the city and were the first of 30 World War veterans who were heading in behind them. According to these men from Oregon, they were just a small amount of the number of veterans who were expected to arrive in Washington once Congress convened to demand the bonus.<sup>52</sup> By December 13, a request was put in to the Superintendent of Police Pelham D. Glassford, for a parade on Pennsylvania Avenue. This parade would be a demonstration of 1,000 World War veterans to march through Washington to demand payment of the soldiers' bonus. With a request that would foreshadow the 1932 march on Washington, the letter requested that food and shelter be provided to the

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<sup>51</sup> Associated Press, "President Receives Full Bonus Demand: Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander Delivers Signed Petition.," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 16, 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/president-receives-full-bonus-demand/docview/150188219/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>52</sup> "Leaders of Bonus March Arrive Here From Oregon: 3 Veterans In Vanguard of Group Making Pilgrimage to Seek Full Payment of War Script in Plea to Congress.," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 5, 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/leaders-bonus-march-arrive-here-oregon/docview/150104752/se-2?accountid=14576>.

group when they arrived in the city. While the letter was sent to Glassford, he said it was not his request to give and referred it to the Vice President, Charles Curtis.<sup>53</sup>

Captain Henry Woodhouse, who led the bonus parade on Washington attended a meeting in 1932 in the caucus room of the House Office Building. The meeting consisted of 300 former service members that represented 17 states. Speakers urged members present to support the immediate cash bonus and to “relieve suffering among veterans and their families in all parts of the United States.” These speakers included members from the Disabled American Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The speakers also included members of the House of Representatives and also the District of Columbia Commander of the American Legion. Representing the local American Legion at a meeting like this continued to show how some local posts disagreed with the national delegation's stance on the bonus issue. Veterans and veteran groups continued to raise awareness and lobby their members of Congress to show support for the bill in the upcoming legislative session.<sup>54</sup>

The timing of these veterans arriving occurred at the same time as the opening of a new session of Congress. On December 7, 1931, the 72nd Congress officially took their seat and would remain in session until the summer of 1932.<sup>55</sup> While it would be another month before Wright Patman would introduce his new attempt for the early payment of the bonus, having the members of Congress present initiated the next push of veteran activism.

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<sup>53</sup> “Bonus Brigade Asks Permit for Parade: Letter Says 1,000 Veterans Will Come on Friday to Present Petition.,” *The Washington Post*, Dec. 13, 1931, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/bonus-brigade-asks-permit-parade/docview/150204834/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>54</sup> “Veterans Present Full Bonus Pleas: One Collapses as 300 Tell of Plight in Caucus Room of House.,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 1932, accessed August 13, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/veterans-present-full-bonus-pleas/docview/150322370/se-2?accountid=14576>.

<sup>55</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 72nd Cong., 1st sess., 1932, vol. 75, pt. 2: 1983.

Since 1929, Lozier and Patman voted together as Democrats on many issues regarding the benefits of veterans of the war. However, as the calendar moved into 1932, the Great Depression increased the number of veterans calling for the early payment of the bonus. The Depression did not start the call for the immediate payment of the bonus by veterans, but it did bring about the urgency for the rallying cry. In May 1931, the American Legion stated that 750,000 veterans nationwide were out of work.<sup>56</sup> The high unemployment rate of veterans reached the politicians in Washington and Wright Patman would once again become center stage sponsoring the bill that called for the immediate payment of the bonus, but this time Ralph Lozier would not cast a vote for the veterans' cause.

The year of 1932 would also bring a significant campaign to President Hoover to encourage his support for a bonus bill. As the year went on it became increasingly obvious that the President would not sign off on any legislation that would pay an immediate bonus to the veterans of the World War. Throughout the first part of the calendar year, veterans would organize and descend upon Washington D.C. to demand the payment of the bonus. As the spring turned into summer this group would increase in numbers just as the deciding votes would be cast by the United States Congress. This would culminate in a much more visible act of veteran activism that would alter the 1932 Presidential Election, veterans' issues, and change opinions on the matter for veteran organizations and citizens around the country.

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<sup>56</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 33.

### Chapter 3

At a meeting of the press at the White House in 1932, President Hoover stated that he opposed the new bonus legislation that had been introduced by Congressman Patman. The Ways and Means Committee was scheduled to hear testimony on the bill in April. President Hoover was against the legislation largely because of the financial burden that would be placed upon the citizens. The enacting of this legislation in Hoover's mind would "...undo every effort that is being made to reduce Government expenditures and balance the budget."<sup>1</sup> This would remain Hoover's stance for the remainder of his presidency.

The stance of the President on the bonus matter was printed in newspapers across the country, giving veterans a chance to respond to it. Shortly after making the ultimatum, a letter was sent to President Hoover from Rev. Joseph W. Harrison, the Chaplain of the Department of Texas, Veterans of Foreign Wars. This letter explores the complexities that the national message of support by the VFW may not have been joined by all levels of the organization. Harrison recognized the stance that Hoover had on veterans' issues to this point in his presidency, especially for those of disabled veterans, widows, and orphans. In regards to the veto stance, Harrison stated "as one who has served both State and Church, the public at large, and the Veterans since the World War, may I say that it is my conclusion that the calm and sober judgment of the American people will heartily endorse this stand on the part of the President."<sup>2</sup> Harrison's letter to the President, which appeared on Veterans of Foreign Wars letterhead, is also a challenge from the home state of Wright Patman. This letter from Texas is a microcosm of

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<sup>1</sup> The Associated Press, "Hoover Flatly Opposes Passing New Bonus Bill: President Apprehensive That House Favors Giving 2 Billion More to Ex-Service Men. Statement Made At Press Meeting: "Such Action Would Undo Every Effort To Reduce Expenditures and Balance Budget.,'" *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, March 29, 1932, accessed August 15, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1874998784?accountid=14576>.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Joseph W. Harrison to Hoover March 30, 1932, Box 414, f. 1, Hoover Papers

how veterans will view the upcoming early bonus debate, while it will be apparent that a good number of veterans support the early payment, there were some who feel like they did their duty and it is not a good time for this legislation to be introduced.

Despite this letter from Texas, the VFW continued to rally around the immediate payment of the bonus. As the upcoming hearings on the payment of the bonus were approaching, thousands of VFW members arrived in Washington just days before the hearing. On April 8, 1932, between 1,500 and 2,000 veterans arrived at the Capitol building alongside the VFW band. Many of the Congressmen who were supporters of the bill greeted the veterans, including Representative Patman himself. It was at this event that the members of the VFW presented the members of Congress with petitions that were signed by more than two million people, including around 281,000 from former servicemen. These petitions showed support for the payment of the bonus.<sup>3</sup>

President Hoover's veto threat hovered above the hearings in the House of Representatives that started in April. Congress knew that they not only needed enough votes to pass legislation, but they also needed a two-thirds majority to override the likely veto of the President. As the Ways and Means Committee convened for its first hearing on Adjusted Compensation Legislation on April 11, 1932, Congressman Patman opened up the hearing on the legislation he had become synonymous with.

During his initial statement, Patman entered into the record a series of correspondence and newspaper clippings. Some of these letters come from non-veterans who supported the measures, such as bankers. An example from an Oklahoma banker indicated that the bill

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 46.

supported by Patman is “the only simple, reasonable, and practical one that has been offered”<sup>4</sup> By showing support of a banker, Patman had the opportunity to show support by individuals who understood the financial situation and the impact it would have on the millions of veterans who had certificates. Yet, the most significant group that Patman needed to show support from was the veterans themselves, and most of the letters and news clippings that enter the record showed support from this group.

Some of the letters and clippings included into the record spoke directly to the hearts of the Congressmen by educating them about the dire situations some of the veterans were in around the country. This included the California veteran whose wife was sick, his four children were starving, and his house was taken from him by “the man” after he could not keep up with his payments. The out of work veteran who was gassed during the war, had a pregnant wife who would soon be out of work, and the uncertainty of how they will be able to handle expenses. Finally, a Detroit newspaper ran a letter from a veteran’s wife written to the mayor. It illustrated that they had to send their baby girl away, was hoping for work for a few days a week for her husband, and how they were living off two dollars per week that they received as rent. The clipping ended with a plea stating “Fifteen years ago Mrs. B’s husband was ready to give his life for his country. Now it is up to his countrymen to make his life worth living.”<sup>5</sup> These powerful

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 1, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 9 (1932)* (Letter from M. Gorman to Hon. Wright Patman).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 1, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 13 (1932)* (Letter from a California Veteran to Hon. Wright Patman) (Clipping from a Detroit paper).

letters, among others, highlighted the struggles of veterans around the country and provided Patman ammunition to gain support among his colleagues.

The letters written to Patman continue to show the ways war veterans around the country were actively pursuing the issue of the immediate payment of the bonus. It is of note that the letters and clippings represent areas outside Patman's congressional district, further showing his significance among veterans and veteran groups across the country. Patman indicated that he had received thousands of letters like these and recognized that the suffering during the Great Depression was just not a veteran issue. However, Patman said that "by paying the veteran this debt will stimulate economic conditions and help everybody."<sup>6</sup>

As the hearing progressed, veterans began to appear in front of the committee to show their support for the bill. Many of them represented organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other organizations as well. While these testimonies are influential to Patman and his push to get the bill to the floor of the House of Representatives, some in fact challenged organizations who were not on board with the immediate payment. There was hope among certain veteran groups that there could eventually be solidarity among the World War veterans across the country.

S.J. Stember was chosen to represent the Ex-Service Men's League and discussed the need for the bonus. At the time of his statement, the American Legion National Organization still stood opposed to the early payment of the bonus. Stember railed against the organization saying that Henry L. Stevens, the national commander of the American Legion, "...strays from

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 1, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 15 (1932) (Statement of Hon. Wright Patman, A Representative in Congress From the State of Texas).*

the truth when he states that the majority of the men do not want it.” Stember even goes as far as to call the American Legion the “most outspoken and bitter enemy” of the war veterans. He challenged the organization to let the rank-and-file vote without interference from the high-ranking members of the organization to prove that their message of support for Hoover and opposition to the bonus does not represent the majority of the organization.<sup>7</sup>

The April 12, 1932, meeting in Hannibal, Missouri of the American Legion mentioned in the previous chapter is evidence that Stember was correct about his assumption. This meeting called for the impeachment of the National Commander Henry L. Stevens Jr.<sup>8</sup> It is likely, and almost certain, that other American Legion posts from around the country felt the same way that the members in Hannibal did, and that number likely increased by the summer of 1932. Regardless, seeing a veteran like Stember, who was not a member of the American Legion, and a post like Hannibal challenge the national organization, represented the grassroots movement and silent activism by veterans that the fight for the bonus would include.

Stember did not stop at criticizing the American Legion, he provided suggestions for veterans around the country to become engaged in the process to achieve the bonus. He encouraged veterans to organize bonus committees and wanted to create additional posts for the Ex-Service Men’s League. Stember encouraged all war veterans to not put faith in the actions of the members of Congress to act, but that it would be their “mass pressure that will force

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 4, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 183 (1932) (Statement of S.J. Stember, New York City, Representing The Worker Ex-Service Men’s League).*

<sup>8</sup> Associated Press, “Demand For Impeachment Of Legion Commander: Hannibal Group Charges He ‘Misrepresented Will of Majority on Bonus.’” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, April 13, 1932, accessed February 18, 2018, ProQuest, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/docview/1874995502?accountid=14576>.

Congress to heed to our demands.”<sup>9</sup> This mass pressure would be seen later that summer with the Bonus Expeditionary Force, but also the continuation of mass correspondence to members of Congress and President Hoover himself.

As the hearing advanced, individuals continued to address the committee as to why the bill should not be approved. On April 25, World War veteran Gaylord Lee Clark addressed the Ways and Means Committee regarding his stance on the Patman Bonus Bill. Clark volunteered for the army and was a Captain of infantry during the war. In his opening statement to the Committee he identified himself as not belonging to the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This makes his statement apolitical in the national perspective as he does not have to side with an organization’s stance on the matter. By not being affiliated with any of these major organizations Clark gave a perspective that is needed to represent the common veteran of the country.<sup>10</sup>

Clark directly pointed out a glaring omission from the petition that has been submitted to Congress that had 2.5 million signatures of veterans in support of the immediate payment of the bonus. By referencing the fact that there are four million veterans of the First World War, he insinuated that there are a possible 1.5 million veterans who could potentially not be in favor of the payment. He attempted to cut down the value of the document by stating how easy it is to get signatures on a petition. In fact, Clark provided the idea that the veterans were possibly led

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 4, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 183 (1932)* (Statement of S.J. Stember, New York City, Representing The Worker Ex-Service Men’s League).

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 10, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 505-508 (1932)* (Statement of Gaylord Lee Clark, Baltimore, MD).

astray by those who asked for their signatures. Clark urged the committee to "...listen to the silent voice of the veterans who are not in favor of the payment of the adjusted-compensation certificate at this time, but who are reluctant to take a public stand against their old comrades."<sup>11</sup>

It is also possible that at this point that Clark is misinformed about the number of signatures by former servicemen on the petition. It has been noted in other works of scholarship that the signatures were over two million, but the number of former servicemen was 281,000.<sup>12</sup> The question then arises, if true, who were many of the signatures on these petitions? Likely they were wives of the veterans, and other members of the community who supported the payment of the bonus. To echo Clark, if only 281,000 ex-servicemen signed the petition, what about the silent majority of the veteran population who did not sign it, which apparently could be over three million veterans.

This idea of the silent voice of the veterans has been present throughout this thesis and will remain the focus going forward. The grassroots activism in the letters written to members of Congress support this. The Bonus Expeditionary Force would get headlines going across the country, as would the Bonus Army once settled in Washington D.C. The national organizations would get votes recorded and opinion pieces in the newspapers to advance their cause. Wright Patman would rally crowds at VFW posts across the country to get his bill a national following. However, the veterans represented by Gaylord Clark are a significant part of the story. Those veterans of the First World War who were not part of the two national veteran organizations, veterans who were against the payment, or the veterans who were actively supporting the bonus

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Payment of Adjusted-Compensation Certificates: Hearings on H.R. 1, H.R. 27, H.R. 94, H.R. 4493, H.R. 4535, H.R. 4539, H.R. 5461, H.R. 6180, H.R. 6584, H.R. 6693, H.R. 7726, H.R. 8016, H.R. 9593, H.R. 9694, H.R. 9929, H.R. 10096, H.R. 10367, H.R. 11117, H.R. 11300, H.R. 11674, Day 10, Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, 72nd Cong. 505-508 (1932) (Statement of Gaylord Lee Clark, Baltimore, MD).*

<sup>12</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 46.

but could only afford to send letters, or attend local rallies, are a worthwhile study to this movement and their activism is just as significant.

In May 1932, as the Bonus Expeditionary Force was leaving Portland for their trek across the country and the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee concluded their 17 days of hearings on Adjusted-Compensation Certificate, letters began to arrive at the White House from veterans from across the country. Just as was seen in the testimony given in the Ways and Means Committee, there were veterans who were not in support of the immediate payment of the bonus. Some letters indicated that the veterans belonged to organizations but some never identified themselves as belonging to any veteran organizations.

Hoover, as has been previously established, did not show signs that he would support the legislation if it came to his desk. On May 6, 1932, the bonus bill introduced by Wright Patman was tabled in the Ways and Means Committee.<sup>13</sup> As a response, veterans who supported the defeat of this measure showed their support to President Hoover. George H. Childs, a member of the Signal Post No. 343 of the American Legion, was "...opposed to the principle of any bonus although having served during the World War." Childs' opinion lines up with the viewpoint of the bonus legislation the national organization of the American Legion had, but he is critical that "...such an organization...should in any way be a political influence for representatives who likewise have taken a similar oath to uphold the constitution of the United States."<sup>14</sup>

An even harsher take on the push from veterans for the immediate payment legislation came from Philip Carret of New York. Carret, in a letter to Hoover dated May 6, 1932, does not identify himself to any established veterans' organization, but just as "...a veteran of the World

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<sup>13</sup> Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from George H. Childs to Hoover May 10, 1932. Box 414, f. 3, Hoover Papers

War with a record of sixteen months service in France.”<sup>15</sup> Carret very easily could have been a member of an organization, but it is not outside the realm of possibility he was not very well connected with one, or could have been completely unaffiliated. Regardless, he went on the attack the veterans who were campaigning so vehemently for the bonus. Carret empathized with the citizens of all backgrounds during the Great Depression by stating “...I know of no obligation upon the tax-burdened citizens of this country to devote one single cent to the support of this privileged class.”<sup>16</sup> This statement is powerful because not only does it identify those veterans that will be active with the push for the immediate payment of the bonus, it is also a precursor of some of the attitudes of veterans towards those who will arrive in Washington D.C. to even more actively demand the payment of the bonus. Given the fact that Carret is a veteran himself, his criticism of his fellow veterans, and support of President Hoover in the heart of the 1932 battle, is significant.

On May 10, a visible activist movement began its push across the country. In Portland, Oregon, 250 men departed for Washington D.C. to demonstrate and create momentum for the immediate payment of the bonus. The tabling of the Bonus Bill by the Ways and Means Committee was the catalyst needed for the beginning of the movement. Using trains, the Bonus Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.), as they became known, reached St. Louis by May 22, 1932. After a brief slowdown due to some disputes with the B&O railroad, the veterans arrived in Washington D.C. by May 29th, and with that came the opportunity to interact with some of the people who would be significant to the events later that summer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Letter from Philip L. Carret to Hon. Herbert Hoover, May 6, 1932, Box 414, f. 3, Herbert Hoover Papers President’s Subject Files, 1915-1967, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, IA.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Carret to Hoover, Box 414, f. 3, Hoover Papers

<sup>17</sup> W. W. Waters, *B.E.F. The Whole Story of the Bonus Army*, (New York: The John Day Company, 1933), 16-17, 41, 55-64

In addition to the group from Oregon, veterans from other regions of the country also began to descend upon Washington D.C. to join the B.E.F. Veterans would board trains, as they did out of Texas, and head east to join the unified march. In the North Carolina Piedmont region veterans, both black and white, were leaving the cities and rural areas to head north to demand the payment of the bonus. Reports were present of a large number of African American veterans moving towards Washington D.C. with some groups being integrated with other white veterans while other groups remained segregated in their travels.<sup>18</sup> As these groups arrived in Washington both black and white veterans would end up in camps together with the common goal of demanding the early payment of the bonus.

The leader of the B.E.F. was Walter W. Waters. Waters scheduled a meeting with Wright Patman upon his arrival in Washington. According to Waters, Patman complemented the character of the group that had traveled across the country and that they had behaved themselves in a manner that reflected discipline. Yet Waters pointed out that Patman was very nervous that he would be connected as the inspiration of the group descending on Washington. According to Waters, Patman “asked me to do everything possible to avoid connecting him directly with it.”<sup>19</sup> It does appear that Patman, though comfortable with being the front man for the immediate payment of the bonus in Congress, does foresee potential issues and possibly conflict that a group like this in Washington could potentially create.

The other significant figure that Waters met on his first day in Washington is Police Commissioner Pelham Glassford. General Glassford was a veteran of the World War himself, and his courteous nature caused Waters to find it difficult to imagine Glassford as a former

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic*, (New York: Walker & Company, 2004), 88.

<sup>19</sup> Waters, *B.E.F. The Whole Story of the Bonus Army*, 62.

Brigadier General of the Army. By meeting with Glassford, he received the arrangements for housing for the men he was leading into Washington. Glassford by every measure seemed cooperative with Waters, and Waters reciprocated that nature. Waters informed Glassford that in two weeks he expected twenty thousand veterans in Washington.<sup>20</sup>

By the summer of 1932 the number of veterans in Washington were estimated to be between 10,000 and 20,000.<sup>21</sup> African American soldiers were included amongst the ranks as well. Roy Wilkins, who was a reporter for the NAACP's official magazine *The Crisis*, spent time amongst the bonus marchers. He reported that the segregation that was seen from the U.S. Army during World War I was not present in the bonus camps he visited. In fact, he wrote that "...the Bonus Marchers gave lie to the notion that black and white soldiers...couldn't live together."<sup>22</sup> The veterans who descended on Washington did not do so in a segregated manner and therefore were unified in the goal of demanding the early payment of the bonus. While the sources used do not specify, it can be implied that letters written to members of Congress and the President included both black and white veterans.

While the B.E.F. took up most of the headlines, the letter writing campaign behind the scenes continued to try to sway the vote on the Patman Bill. This highly likely played out all across the country, but the focus will remain on the Democratic Congressman Ralph Lozier of Missouri. Up to this point, Lozier had a strong record of voting on veteran issues and had voted for the Adjusted Compensation Act in 1924.<sup>23</sup> Despite accolades from Patman on his support of

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<sup>20</sup> Waters, *B.E.F. The Whole Story of the Bonus Army*, 63-64.

<sup>21</sup> National Park Service, "The 1932 Bonus Army," accessed October 24, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-1932-bonus-army.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus Army*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> Wright Patman to Ralph F. Lozier, Letter, June 30, 1933, folder 3248: Political Miscellany, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

veterans, Lozier would be in a state of debate regarding how he would cast his vote on the immediate payment issue.

Lozier received a plethora of non-veteran correspondence voicing their opinion on how he should vote on the bill, but veterans of the war were just as vocal. The Congressman continued to receive letters from veteran organizations. Correspondence was also sent by companies that employed veterans trying to use their platform to advocate what they thought was best for the individuals they employed. Individual veterans would also put pen to paper or send a telegram with an opinion for Lozier. Many veterans would encourage Lozier to vote for the bill, but there were also exceptions to that rule.

Companies out of St. Louis wrote Lozier to encourage his vote against the bill. Corporations in general tended to be against the bill for a variety of economic reasons, but it is quite possible that these corporations, and those they employed, were experiencing a dramatically different Great Depression than the unemployed veteran of 1932. Regardless they spoke with significant strength and presented their thoughts on company letterhead. The Stupp Bros. Bridge and Iron Company made remarks regarding the impact the bill would have on the tax situation. The President, Edwin A. Stupp, stated that the current taxes were “overbearing,” and the debts were increasing.<sup>24</sup> Stupp was a veteran and he added to the argument against the bonus by including his “experience as an ex-soldier, who served in France, and an American businessman” who was trying to make ends meet during the difficult times in 1932.<sup>25</sup> Other companies, such as Mallinckrodt Chemical, wrote Lozier to speak for the veterans they

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<sup>24</sup> Edwin P. Stupp to Ralph F. Lozier, Letter, June 11, 1932, folder 3309: Telegrams and letters from constituents advising proper vote on Patman Bonus Bill, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>25</sup> Edwin P. Stupp to Ralph F. Lozier, Letter, June 11, 1932, folder 3309: Telegrams and letters from constituents advising proper vote on Patman Bonus Bill, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

employed. The St. Louis company contacted Lozier to voice opposition to the bonus. The president, O.L. Biebinger stated that “those in our own organization who served abroad of which there are many that agree with our views.”<sup>26</sup> The veterans continued to represent a significant part of this activism, whether it be specifically writing as one as Stupp did, or companies representing the veterans that they had hired. Regardless, these letters illustrated that even in June of 1932, there were still plenty of veterans nationwide who did not support the Patman Bill. Lozier would side with those like Stupp and Biebinger and vote against the immediate payment of the bonus.

On June 15, 1932, the House of Representatives took up the vote for the immediate payment of the bonus. The House passed the bill by a vote of 211 to 176, despite the fact that the President had said he would veto the passage of the bill. A couple of days later the Senate took up the bill, but soundly defeated it. At this point, it became clear that the mission of the B.E.F had failed and they would leave Washington as Congress would not return to session until after the midterm elections in November.<sup>27</sup> This would not happen as quickly as some would have hoped and would set the stage for the Bonus Riot later that summer.

Congress would remain in session for another month following the defeat of the Patman Bill in the Senate. There was still hope that another bonus bill could make its way through the House and the Senate, but it was unlikely given the limited time and the fact that it was an election year. On July 9, President Hoover signed a bill that enabled \$100,000 in transportation loans to help veterans that were in Washington D.C. to return home. This was initially supposed to be requested by July 14 but was extended until July 24 to help achieve a more realistic

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<sup>26</sup> O.L. Biebinger to Ralph F. Lozier, Telegram, June 13, 1932, folder 3309: Telegrams and letters from constituents advising proper vote on Patman Bonus Bill, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>27</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus Army*, 127-130.

timetable of veterans to leave the city. Every day during that stretch, long lines could be seen in front of the Veterans Administration Building to apply for these funds for transportation.<sup>28</sup>

According to the Veterans Administration records, 5,160 had their transportation costs paid and a total of \$76,712.02 was spent.<sup>29</sup> It is fair to say as the days passed through the month of July the number of veterans who occupied areas in and around Washington D.C. were significantly less than those during the peak in June.

On July 28, 1932, tensions reached a level that escalated to violence. Up to this point, General Pelham Glassford and the police force were left in charge to maintain order with the B.E.F that remained behind. On the afternoon of the 28th, a brick was thrown that hit officer Miles Znamenacek and someone grabbed officer George Shinault's nightstick and began to hit him with it. In response, Officer Shinault fired two shots which struck two men. Veterans William Hushka and Eric Carlson were struck by the shots from the officer. Hushka died instantly and Carlson was mortally wounded and would pass away later. At that point, Glassford learned that the military had been called out and were gathering at the Ellipse.<sup>30</sup> Once the military became involved the visuals that followed would shift public opinion on the way President Hoover handled the situation of the Bonus Army.

By 4:30 PM, the military began their mission. With a force of more than 200 troops, they began to spread across the city, heading down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capitol. Generals, such as Eisenhower and MacArthur followed the group in staff cars. Troops used force, tear gas, and tanks to drive the veteran force out of Washington D.C. By 9:00 PM, the

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<sup>28</sup> Donald J. Lisio, *The President and Protest: Hoover, Conspiracy, And The Bonus Riot*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 123.

<sup>29</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, *VA History in Brief*, accessed August 15, 2021. [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/archives/docs/history\\_in\\_brief.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/archives/docs/history_in_brief.pdf), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus Army*, 168-169.

veterans had been driven to Anacostia Flats, a location outside of the city that became a shanty town during the B.E.F. occupation. MacArthur then ordered the army to continue into Anacostia Flats to drive the B.E.F from the property. As the Battle for Anacostia began, a message from Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley arrived. This message informed General MacArthur that President Hoover did not wish for the military to force the evacuation of Anacostia that night, but MacArthur and the troops marched on. Around 10:00 PM that evening a request was made of General MacArthur to allow a one-hour truce so the camp could be evacuated. However, at a point later that evening rows of huts were sent ablaze and tear gas once again began to be used to drive out the residents.<sup>31</sup> By the end of the day buildings had been set ablaze signifying the end of a tumultuous day in the Nation's Capital.

As the news began to break that the United States military had gathered to evacuate the Bonus Army contingent out of Washington, the focus turned to the President. It should be noted that President Hoover was reportedly angry at MacArthur the day following the forced evacuation, but MacArthur was able to hold the loyalty from the President. Hoover began to shoulder the blame for the incident himself, even refusing to accept MacArthur's resignation. It is also important to remember the legislative efforts President Hoover had endorsed during his Presidency. Yet, on July 29, President Hoover began to justify the actions of the previous day by rallying around ideas such as "subversives" and "mob rule." Hoover stated, "Government cannot be coerced by mob rule...There can be no safe harbor in the United States of America for violence." As historian Donald J. Lisio noted Hoover failed to show any regret for using troops against the veterans and showed no sympathy toward the situation.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus Army*, 173-175, 177, 179-181.

<sup>32</sup> Lisio, *The President and Protest*, 228-230.

Citizens across the country began to write to President Hoover. It is often conveyed that this event was the final dagger in the re-election campaign for President Hoover, and that veterans began to show their support for the election of Roosevelt in November, yet not all veterans were opposed to the way the situation was handled. Starting on July 29, there is evidence of letters sent to President Hoover from veterans of the World War, who supported how the President handled the situation. The activism of the silent majority continued after the most visible form of veteran activism was put down in this violent manner.

These letters of support from veterans of the World War were mostly individually written. It is significant to note the emotion that these individual veterans wrote with as they showed their support for the President while at the same time degrading the efforts of the veteran groups that had marched on Washington. In a letter from C. Lloyd Thomas, a Lieutenant in the World War, described the marchers as “so-called ‘Veterans’ who have been degrading the name and disgracing the country by their outrageous actions in Washington.”<sup>33</sup> At a time when so many veterans were writing to the President expressing outrage at the events of July 28, and veteran organizations were criticizing the President, those words signify a different narrative. Perhaps the frustration could be summed up best by Lawrence Burton who wrote a letter to President Hoover on a letterhead representing Food Industries in New York City. In his post script, he suggested to the President to use “...a little insect powder for Congressman Patman and Smedley D. Butler.”<sup>34</sup> The President’s secretary Lawrence Richey did not respond directly to that question, but did thank Mr. Burton, as he did on most positive letters, for the support and the consideration for supporting the President.<sup>35</sup> These two examples show directly that there were

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<sup>33</sup> Letter from C. Lloyd Thomas to Hoover, July 29, 1932. Box 410, f. 09, Hoover Papers

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Lawrence V. Burton to Hoover, July 29, 1932. Box 410, f. 09, Hoover Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Lawrence Richey to Lawrence V. Burton, August 1, 1932. Box 410, f. 09, Hoover Papers.

veterans of the war who distinctly supported the President and were against the major figures of the bonus movement.

There were also letters of support from older citizens who had the ability to speak from experience of previous generations. These individuals had the ability to criticize the modern veterans who were trying to change the way soldiers were compensated for enlisting. One such example came in a letter from J.C. Crisp, who discussed living in the period following the Civil War. The day following the incident, Mr. Crisp discussed the respect that his generation of veterans had and they never asked for compensation until after they could not work anymore. Crisp chastised the veterans who were calling for the immediate payment of the bonus as “laying down on their duty(as) citizens and expect a benevolent government to keep them in idleness the balance of their life.”<sup>36</sup> While it isn’t clear if Mr. Crisp was a veteran of earlier wars, his age and denouncement of the way the veterans were conducting themselves can help us develop a picture of what earlier generations of citizens, and possibly veterans, would have thought of the way the World War veterans stood up to their government.

The American Legion had been opposed to the immediate payment of the bonus, but the impact of the violent scenes out of Washington would eventually change the stance the national organization of the American Legion would have on the issue. Yet, in the days following the expulsion of the veterans from Washington, a telegram was sent to President Hoover from the Crosscup Pishon Post in Boston, Massachusetts. The telegram voiced support for the actions of the President and denounced the marchers by saying that “we know that the action of this group has neither the support the sympathy nor the respect

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<sup>36</sup> Letter from J.C. Crisp to Hoover, July 29, 1932. Box 410, f. 09, Hoover Papers

of the true veterans of this country.”<sup>37</sup> The way these veterans viewed the violent situation of the summer of 1932 can be assumed to be influenced by the circumstances in which they enlisted or also the impact the Great Depression had on them. It cannot be known for certain, but at a moment where many veterans were changing their opinions of the administration, this is another example that supported President Hoover.

The drafted response from the White House gives a glimpse into the way the President viewed those that were representing the veterans on July 28, 1932. This unsigned, and possibly unsent letter, which could have been from the President’s Secretary or perhaps Hoover himself, branched off the typical response from the White House. It denounced the character of the men who are representing the veterans in Washington, which could be an example signifying the White House message of communists infiltrating the B.E.F. In fact, the response indicated that they believed half of the men in Washington, since the adjournment of Congress, served during the World War. Regardless, this response from the White House used some tough rhetoric to defend their actions as to why they took the action that they did.<sup>38</sup>

There are plenty of examples of the World War veterans who wrote the President and were highly critical of the actions in Washington on that late July day. These came from all over the country and peaked in the days following the July 28. In an example of veteran activism, many of which could not be in Washington for a variety of reasons during the Depression years, the correspondence showed quite how vocal this group had become. Beneath the spectacle that is the Bonus Expeditionary Force, was a letter writing force who persisted just as much as those that marched on Washington.

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<sup>37</sup> Telegram from Edward C. Edwards, Commander of the Crosscup Pishon American Legion to Hoover, July 29, 1932. Box 410, f. 09, Hoover Papers.

<sup>38</sup> Response from White House to Commander Edward C. Edwards, July 29, 1932. Box 419, f. 09, Hoover Papers.

As would be expected, in the days following the riot, letters from VFW Posts began to arrive at the White House. From Ohio, the Veterans of Foreign Wars signaled that they were not supportive of the bonus, but they could not support the inappropriate actions of the President.<sup>39</sup> A similar letter was sent from the Mahoning Valley Post in Youngstown, Ohio echoed similar sentiments. They suggested that President Hoover "...consider the honor of our nation before committing (sic) an act which must reflect humiliation upon our veterans and only dishonor upon the office in which you hold."<sup>40</sup> These two letters reflect several more sent from the VFW organization to the President, but other organizations and veterans chimed in as well.

At this time the American Legion still did not support the bonus nationally, but local posts prior to the Bonus Army incident had started to disagree with the national organization. In the days after the event, this was even more apparent. One such example came from the Fountain Hill Post in Pennsylvania. The letter criticized President Hoover for his stance that the B.E.F. had been infiltrated by Communist Reds. The commander indicated that he knew two of those who were beaten and stated that they showed no signs of being connected to communism. As the commander of the Post, he congratulated the President on his "sadistic principles of government" and let the President know that there would be a meeting of the organization in the coming days, perhaps threatening a vote of disapproval or signaling support of the bonus.<sup>41</sup>

Letters even arrived from former members of the B.E.F. John C. Burt, who claimed to be in the first wave of the B.E.F to arrive in Washington, was "pained" by President Hoover's description of the marchers as communists. He referenced the fact that these men were the heroes of 1917, but now "the government was determined...to take their life and liberty."<sup>42</sup> Even

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from WB Wannamaker to Herbert Hoover, July 30, 1932. Box 411, f. 03, Hoover Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Commander R.K. Militz to Herbert Hoover, July 30, 1932. Box 411, f. 03, Hoover Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from William B. Rice to Hoover, July 29, 1932. Box 411, f. 02, Hoover Papers.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from John C. Burt to Hoover, July 30, 1932. Box 411, f. 03, Hoover Papers.

though Mr. Burt had left Washington, as several did after the Senate vote in June 1932, the activism he showed by marching on Washington continued after the events of July 28.

One of the most interesting examples of a critique of President Hoover was from Congressional Medal of Honor recipient M. Waldo Hatler. Mr. Hatler had received the medal for his actions in gaining information on the Germans by swimming a river, and reaching German lines, while another soldier with him had drowned.<sup>43</sup> He felt compelled to write the President as a veteran of the Argonne and as one of those who served in the Honor Guard that followed the unknown soldier to Arlington. With these accolades he could not see his “comrades trampled down by horses hoofs” without voicing his protest.<sup>44</sup> Indicating that he was a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient makes this protest stick out among others that were sent to President Hoover.

After the Bonus Army incident, veterans began to also focus on the election of 1932. The President became an easy target as the defeat of Hoover became a focus for veterans across the country. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Democrat candidate in 1932, also did not support the immediate payment of the bonus. In early July 1932, as Roosevelt prepared to accept the nomination for the Democrat party, he received a phone call from Senator Huey Long of Louisiana. The purpose of the call was to persuade Roosevelt to take a stance in support of the immediate payment of the bonus and in doing so would clinch the nomination. Roosevelt stated that he was opposed to the bonus and could not say he was in favor of something that he was against.<sup>45</sup> In fact, as Roosevelt read the papers on the morning following the incident, he told an

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<sup>43</sup> Hall of Valor Project, “M. Waldo Hatler,” accessed August 15, 2021, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/2285>.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from M. Waldo Hatler to Hoover, July 30, 1932. Box 411, f.03, Hoover Papers.

<sup>45</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus March*, 138-139.

aide that there was no longer a need to campaign against Hoover.<sup>46</sup> This implied the fact that the images coming out of Washington would be enough to help Roosevelt defeat Hoover. However, the veterans' activism through the letter writing campaign also played a part in organizing not only the defeat of Hoover, but also making re-election bids difficult for those who voted against the bill in the halls of Congress.

As the election approached, veterans referenced the fact that they would not be voting for Hoover in 1932. Some of these were voters for Hoover in 1928, but the incident made them immediately change their mind. Lawrence Pugh, once such veteran, stated in a letter to the President that "the members of the A.E.F. can but express themselves at the polls and I will vote against you every time I have the opportunity."<sup>47</sup> Veterans like Pugh that changed positions on a Presidential vote showed the impact this had on the veterans' community. Organizations of veterans used their strength in numbers to inform the President what the impact will be for the actions of July 28. The Chairman of the National Executive Committee of American Veterans of All Wars stated emphatically that the "American people will never forgive politically a President declaring war against unarmed peaceful citizens."<sup>48</sup> This telegram does not directly mobilize the veterans in activism against the President, but it does give the implication that the impact of his actions will cost him the election. Finally, some veterans went as far as to say specifically who they would vote for in the coming election. M.M. Carrette, who described himself as a Republican voter for the previous ten years, stated that he "would rather see a Communist elected than to have you (Hoover) returned to the Capitol as President." Carrette even stated he would be casting his vote for the Socialist candidate Norman Thomas in November.<sup>49</sup> Stating

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<sup>46</sup> Dickson and Allen, *The Bonus March*, 184.

<sup>47</sup> Letter from Lawrence Pugh to Hoover, August 6, 1932, Box 411, f. 11, Hoover Papers.

<sup>48</sup> Telegram from J.H. Stolper to Hoover, July 29, 1932, Box 411, f. 02, Hoover Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from M.M Carrette to Hoover, July 29, 1932, Box 411, f.02, Hoover Papers.

this during a period where Communist paranoia was rampant, and after Hoover said most of the B.E.F. that was driven out of Washington were Communists, provide some powerful words. The evidence is overwhelming that veterans were turning on Hoover and they would be a powerful voting block that could easily sway the election for Roosevelt.

The members of the B.E.F. had a message they wanted to send to the President as well regarding his chances in November. These individuals from Phillipsburg, New Jersey resented the use of Federal Troops to remove their fellow veterans from the camps in Washington. They challenged the President's message that less than half of the men who remained in Washington in July served in the American forces, saying rather bluntly "we are not communists." This group of B.E.F. was adamant about their thoughts on their hopes for Hoover in November. In the letter they stated that "a far stronger manifestation that we are exerting from now until November 8th reveals in the form of a fervent prayer that you are serving your last days of a very inglorious public career." The letter had 28 signatures attached to it, but the close of the letter signed it as "American Citizens."<sup>50</sup> It is apparent that a growing number of veterans around the country were dissatisfied with the actions of the President and were going to do their part to make sure he was not re-elected, but there would need to be a change of Congress as well. The Patman Bill passed the House without a majority large enough to override a veto, but the Senate failed the bill. Veterans also needed to campaign against those members of Congress who opposed the bill in the House and Senate vote.

In Missouri, Congressman Lozier was preparing for his re-election campaign. The Bonus Army incident took place five days before the Missouri primary as Ralph Lozier was looking to get placed on the Democrat ballot in Missouri. The Missouri election for the House of

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from American Citizens to Hoover, September 8, 1932, Box 411, f.11, Hoover Papers.

Representatives would run in a unique fashion in 1932. Missouri had lost three representatives due to the 1930 census and starting in 1933 would only have 13 representatives. The state of Missouri was not able to draw new district lines by the time the 1932 elections occurred, so it was determined to be an at-large election with all 13 individuals elected to the House of Representatives representing the entire state, not just their district.<sup>51</sup> Thirteen Republicans and Democrats would be nominated at the August primary and then all 26 would be put to a vote in the general election in November. The decision on the at-large election would be instrumental in the veteran organizations' activism throughout 1932.

Of the 16 sitting representatives from Missouri in 1932, eight voted against the Patman Bill. All four Republicans from Missouri stayed with most of their party and voted no on the measure. The four Democrats voting nay included Rep. Jacob Milligan (3rd district), Rep. Clarence Cannon (9th district), Rep. John Cochran (11th district), and Lozier.<sup>52</sup> It should be noted that Milligan and Cannon were also members of the House in 1924 and voted for the Adjusted Compensation Act then, but voted against the early payment in 1932.<sup>53</sup> Quickly veteran groups in Missouri, especially the VFW, began to mobilize for the upcoming August primary to try to get the message out to vote against those who had not supported the bill.

The VFW was active in getting word out to veterans as to who voted against the Patman Bill leading up to the August 2nd Primary. Posters stated which Congressmen voted against the bill and used phrases such as "These Men Fought You!! Fight Them - Scratch Them!!" The same posters listed the representatives who voted for the bill and asked members to support

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<sup>51</sup> "Missouri History: United States Representatives," Missouri Secretary of State, accessed August 15, 2021, <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/history/historicallistings/usreps>.

<sup>52</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 72nd Cong., 1st sess., 1932, vol. 75, pt. 12: 13053-13054.

<sup>53</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 68th Cong., 1st sess., 1924, vol. 65, pt. 5: 4444.

them. The posters were used to impact the veteran vote and encouraged them to have their friends and relatives vote the same way.<sup>54</sup>

Despite all the criticism of veterans leading up to August 2nd, Lozier, and several other Democratic congressmen who voted against the Patman Bill, found success and achieved one of the 13 Democratic spots for the November general election. The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* even noted that on August 6, as results were still coming in, that all the Missouri Congressmen who voted against the bill were “certain of nomination.”<sup>55</sup> Despite the best efforts of the veteran groups in the primaries, the Congressmen who voted against the veterans still found their way onto the November ballot.

It took until September, but the American Legion finally changed their national stance on the issue of the bonus. In that month, the American Legion held their 1932 National Convention. The American Legion prior to 1932 had nationally been against the immediate payment of the bonus, but there had been examples of local chapters and Legion members having the opposite stance on the issue. It was only a matter of time, especially after the Bonus Army incident of July, for the American Legion to change their official position to support the payment of the bonus. President Hoover advised the American Legion prior to the vote not to support the bonus as it could prove “fatal” to the recovery process of the country. However, in resounding fashion

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<sup>54</sup> Wm A. Moody to Ralph F. Lozier, Letter with enclosed circular from “The Public Inc.”, October 18, 1932, folder 3266: 1932. Democratic primary, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>55</sup> “Leaders In Race For Congress Are Holding Position: Clark, 6424 Ahead and Dickinson With 17,924 Plurality Only Ones Final Returns May Displace” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, August 6, 1932, accessed August 15, 2021, ProQuest, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/docview/1875026168?accountid=14576>.

the American Legion voted in favor of the immediate bonus by a 1167-109 margin.<sup>56</sup> Once the American Legion officially supported the bonus, coupled with the public opinion of the handling of the B.E.F., activism began to pick up to make sure those candidates who did not support the payment of the bonus were removed from office in the November election.

In the November election all thirteen Missouri Democrats soared to an easy victory in the at-large election. Even though Lozier did win re-election, I would suggest it happened more because of the Democrat blue wave that was a result of the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President combined with the unique election of Missouri representatives in 1932. One cannot deny the impact the veteran groups tried to have on this election, regardless of the outcome. The letters written to Lozier during 1932 and the activity of the VFW to try to discourage veterans to vote against Lozier show the activism was very strong. It is significant to note that the Missouri Congressional districts would be determined by the 1934 election, and Lozier would be defeated in his re-election during a midterm election that saw the Democrats gain nine seats. If Lozier was attempting to win a Congressional District in 1932, and not part of the unique statewide election, would his vote on the Patman Bill and the subsequent veteran activism been enough to turn the election? History won't reveal that answer, but the dynamics could have been different.

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<sup>56</sup> Associated Press, "Cash Bonus And Repeal Called For By Legion: Resolution Requesting Payment of Compensation Passed 1167-109-Opponents Booed and Shouted Down. Veterans Ignore Hoover's Advice. Dramatic Speeches and Disorder at Closing Session at Portland Convention-War Department Censured," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 15, 1932, accessed August 15, 2021, ProQuest, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/historical-newspapers/september-15-1932-page-1-32/docview/1875025057/se-2?accountid=14576>.

## Conclusion

In 1933, as the Roosevelt Administration began its first term, several pieces of legislation went through both houses of Congress. The Economy Act of 1933 became the first to affect the lives of veterans. The Economy Act lowered the amount of benefits the World War veterans would receive, in some cases significantly. It was opposed by veteran groups nationally, most vocally the Veterans of Foreign Wars.<sup>1</sup>

The Economy Act was introduced by a Democratic President but saw some interesting voting amongst the Democrat members. Wright Patman was opposed to this measure as he viewed the way it impacted the veterans in a negative way and he voted against it. Ralph Lozier went with his party and for the second time in less than a year voted for legislation that was broadly perceived to negatively impact World War veterans around the country. His vote for the legislation helped the Economy Act pass by a vote of 266 to 139.<sup>2</sup> It would become law shortly following this vote.

Earlier in this session Wright Patman had introduced another bill, H.R. 1, to once again call for the immediate payment of the bonus. Over the course of 1933, this bill would find its way through committees and eventually work its way to the House floor for a vote in 1934. It faced some opposition from President Roosevelt as Lozier would later reference. As the vote for the resolution neared, Lozier received numerous letters from constituents including many veterans, to ask for his vote for this bill. Wright Patman needed 145 signatures on a petition to get it to a vote on the House floor, and by February he was still short. The VFW Post #1003

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 75-77.

<sup>2</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 73rd Cong., 1st sess., 1933, vol. 77, pt. 1: 217-218.

Commander, Arthur Bassman wrote a telegram to Lozier voicing such concerns stating, “We are depending on you to sign petition and then vote for the immediate passage of HR #1.”<sup>3</sup>

On February 28, 1934, a letter from Lozier appeared in the Moberly Monitor-Index where he indicated his support for the measure. “The soldiers’ so-called ‘Bonus Bill’ will be considered in the House on March 12th, as 145 members (of who I was one) signed a petition forcing such consideration,” said Lozier. The letter also outlined that he believed the government was “justified” in delaying payment to “veterans that are rich.”<sup>4</sup>

On March 12, the vote came to the House floor. Lozier gave his support to the Patman Bill as he said he would. He addressed on the House floor the concept that Roosevelt did not support the measure. “Perhaps there is a striking difference of opinion between the President and this House as to the wisdom of the pending legislation.”<sup>5</sup> The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 295 for the measure and 125 against. Lozier cast his vote along with Wright Patman for the Bonus Bill.<sup>6</sup>

As the summer approached Lozier had to turn his attention to a re-election campaign. A congressional district map had been approved and Lozier inherited a district that included several new counties that he had never served before. He was challenged in the Democratic primary by William Nelson. Nelson had served as congressman of the 8th district from 1925 until 1933 but was a casualty of the at-large election of 1932. That summer, Lozier began writing veteran groups in the state for support. In these letters he would remind these organizations that he was one of the 145 members of the Congress to sign a petition to get the 1934 Patman Bill out of

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur Bassman to Ralph Lozier, Telegram, February 2, 1934, folder 1067: Veterans, 1934, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>4</sup> “Lozier Explains Stand On Bonus,” *Moberly Monitor-Index*, February. 28, 1934, accessed April 23, 2018, Newspapers.com.

<sup>5</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1934, vol. 78, pt. 4: 4315.

<sup>6</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1934, vol. 78, pt. 4: 4337.

committee. He would also reference that other veteran organizations should endorse his platform. Lozier would end these letters with “I am certainly entitled to the endorsement” of the particular veterans’ organization.<sup>7</sup>

Harry McCarty, the past Department Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars responded poignantly to one of these requests. He pointed out that Lozier was against the veterans starting with the Patman Bill in 1932 and referred to the vote on the Economy Act in 1933. According to McCarty, Lozier began to side with the veterans again starting with the Patman petition in 1934 and stated that it was “rather odd that the last three bills which occurred during this year, the year of the election” that he voted for the veteran. He also stated that all members in his district had access to this information.<sup>8</sup> Lozier had been shown on record stating that he did want to support the veterans on the issues that were important to them, but when he factored in the complete story he couldn’t vote for one specific group, as seen in the Patman Bonus Bill vote. The veterans of Missouri did not take the time to look at the big picture, and despite Lozier’s best attempt at reelection, he was not successful as he did not win in the Democratic Primary.

After winning re-election, Wright Patman continued the push for the passage of the veterans’ bonus. By 1935, Patman’s legislation was competing with a bill from Kentucky representative Fred Vinson. Patman was an advocate for a controlled inflation policy while Vinson wanted to separate the inflation fight from the push for the bonus. The American Legion supported the Vinson bill which led to some public feuding between the organization and Wright Patman. The House debated both bills and eventually the Patman version was approved by the

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<sup>7</sup> Ralph Lozier to Harry A. McCarty, Letter, July 6, 1934, folder 1068: Veterans, 1934, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

<sup>8</sup> H.A. McCarty to Ralph F. Lozier, Letter, July 12, 1934, folder 1068: Veterans, 1934, C.2655: Ralph F. Lozier Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia.

House of Representatives with a veto proof margin. In May 1935, the Senate approved the measure and it went to President Roosevelt who, as expected, vetoed the bill. The House overrode the veto, but the Senate fell ten votes short and once again immediate compensation failed to become law.<sup>9</sup>

The next session of Congress occurred in 1936 and Wright Patman concluded that the election year could provide the catalyst necessary for successful passage of a bonus bill. He also decided that he needed to partner with Congressman Vinson and co-sponsor a bill that would garner enough support to override President Roosevelt's likely veto. Patman did this because he needed to partner with the American Legion and came to agree with Vinson that the first goal would be to approve the immediate payment and then deal with other financial measures at a later date. In January 1936, legislation was introduced and became known as the "unified front" bill. It accelerated through the approval process in both the House and the Senate and passed by the end of the month. On January 24, President Roosevelt vetoed the bill, but just three days later both houses of Congress had overridden the veto.<sup>10</sup> The long fight for passage of the bonus bill had finally yielded success.

Veterans played a significant role in helping to encourage various pieces of legislation that compensated them for their service in World War I. They joined organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion that would be the initial advocates of legislation. While these organizations throughout the time period discussed in this thesis had differing opinions on veteran legislation, they were voices for veterans in Congressional Hearings. Organizations also formed that provided veterans who disagreed with the mainstream

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Beck Young, *Wright Patman: Populism, Liberalism, and the American Dream* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000.), 57-61.

<sup>10</sup> Young, *Wright Patman*, 61.

opinions of the bonus to have their voices heard. Yet, through letters to members of Congress and President Hoover, individual veterans were able to voice their opinions and encourage action on matters pertaining to the bonus. During the Great Depression, these letters illustrated the struggles veterans were experiencing in hope they could encourage their elected leaders to pass legislation for immediate relief. These organizations and individuals demonstrate the veteran activism that was necessary to slowly achieve the successful passage of the law in 1936 and demonstrated the importance of compensating those who enlist in the United States military. As a legacy of this veteran activism, the passage of the GI Bill after World War II would enhance the lives of veterans after their service in the military was complete.

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