Book Proposal materials by Stephen Ortiz

Field of Study: History

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Book Proposal for New York University Press

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2. Title and subtitle of book

"The New Deal for Veterans": Veteran Organizations and the Politics of Citizenship, 1929-1944

3. Core theme

By exploring veterans’ political mobilization between 1929 and 1944, this book will trace the significant role played by veteran organizations in the fundamental watershed of twentieth-century American political life: the transformation in the relationship between the federal government and ordinary citizens associated with the New Deal. The work argues that veteran organizations played a foundational role not only in the Bonus March and GI Bill, but also the New Deal dissident movement led by Huey P. Long and Father Charles E. Coughlin, and the isolationist movement of the 1930s. By rethinking interwar veteran political activism, the New Deal political narrative can be recast and the important relationships between social policy, state formation, voluntary associations, and electoral politics explored.
Last, the GI Bill of 1944 will be re-examined in light of this new understanding of New Deal-era veteran political activism. In passing the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill, Congress created the largest welfare service in the history of the country. The political origins of the GI Bill lay in the concerns over the reintegration of veterans into American society. The Bonus March, of course, symbolized the dangers of not easing veterans' readjustment into civilian life. GI Bill scholars correctly highlight the historical memory of the Bonus March, therefore, as an important contributing factor in the origins of the legislation. This book contends that the New Deal mobilization by veterans and the changed political fortunes of the veteran organizations were equally responsible. During World War II, the VFW originally supported a new Bonus policy for returning veterans, hoping to rekindle the dynamism of its 1929-1936 halcyon days. In 1943-44, it was the American Legion that pushed for expansive GI Bill benefits. The competition between these organizations—negligible before the Bonus issue arose in the late-1920s—drove an otherwise conservative organization to out-do its fierce new rival for returning veterans' allegiance. Organizational competition for new members and for the new bureaucratic jobs that an expanding federal veteran welfare system would create, propelled the Legion into promoting a federal policy antithetical to its avowed conservatism. If federal bonus policy had turned veterans into activist citizens, the robust associational rivalry that it indirectly created would serve American veterans well for the rest of the twentieth century.
Chapter 2: 
"The New Deal for Veterans": FDR and the Economy Act

Chapter 2 examines veterans’ reaction to FDR and the New Deal. The second piece of legislation that passed in the New Deal’s “Hundred Days,” the Economy Act, reduced veteran benefits by 400 million dollars. In the response to the Economy Act, many veterans immediately broke ranks with the FDR Administration and questioned the authenticity of the New Deal’s claims to helping the forgotten man. In their aggressive response to the Economy Act, the veteran organizations, in particular the VFW, joined with other early critics of the New Deal who chastised FDR’s unwillingness to reconfigure the nation’s political economy.

Chapter 3: 
The Vanguard of New Deal Dissent

In Chapter 3, the veterans’ efforts to reintroduce the Bonus into the political landscape are outlined. With no allies in the American Legion and the opposition of a popular President and his powerful Congressional stalwarts, the VFW managed to keep the Bonus issue alive, even securing its passage in the House of Representatives. These efforts, eventually supported by both Senator Huey P. Long and Father Charles E. Coughlin, kept the veterans of the VFW in the vanguard of New Deal dissent.

Chapter 4: 
The Bonus and the Political Origins of the Second New Deal

By examining the political mobilization for the Bonus between 1935 and 1936, Chapter 4 reconsiders the political origins and the political triumph of the “Second” New Deal. The Bonus aroused veterans against the FDR Administration, precipitating widespread veteran political activism. But it was also the point of convergence for a politically threatening coalition of Long, Coughlin, and veterans, a coalition whose activities built to a crescendo in the late spring of 1935. In exploring the struggle for the Bonus, then, one finds veteran political activism at the core of the New Deal political narrative.

Chapter 5: 
Veterans and Anti-War Activism: Foreign Policy and the Politics of Citizenship

Chapter 5 locates veterans in the U.S. foreign policy debates of the 1930s. Veterans’ mid-1930s foreign policy agenda continued to focus on the politics of citizenship and the restructuring of the American political economy. In so doing, veterans assumed a decidedly anti-war attitude highlighted by their support for neutrality legislation. This examination of veteran foreign policy attitudes helps reveal the dynamics of the shift in American public opinion before American belligerency in World War II away from isolationism. Moreover it explores the intersection of domestic and foreign politics in the interwar period.
My examination of the Bonus March's origins will challenge the long-standing interpretation of this significant episode in the Depression-era narrative.

C. A number of studies have been dedicated to veterans' relationship with the state. Pioneering studies such as Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Ann Shola Orloff, *The Politics of Pensions: A Comparative Analysis of Britain, Canada, and the United States, 1880-1940* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993) argued that twentieth-century welfare policies were conceived with veterans' welfare as a negative reference. Neither investigated the politics of veterans' pensions, however. Skocpol, refers to this as policy feedback, but since she relies on secondary literature, does not explore it. I refer to it as veteran politics, and it is central to this study.


E. Finally, since veteran politics is ultimately a contest over the meaning of citizenship, some of the works on 20th-century citizenship are worth listing. Most importantly for my purposes are two works that employ very different understandings of how citizenship is understood by Americans: Liz Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic* Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

By arguing that martial citizenship continued to play a powerful role in the debates over citizenship, I weigh in on this topic.

6. Author's qualifications/strengths.

Portions of this work will be published in the two major journals solely dedicated to military and political history—*Journal of Military History* and *Journal of Policy History*. For more details, please see accompanying CV.
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The Bonus March Reconsidered

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The Vanguard of New Deal Dissent

Chapter 4:
The Bonus and the Political Origins of the Second New Deal

Chapter 5:
Veterans and Anti-War Activism: Foreign Policy and the Politics of Citizenship

Chapter 6:
The Last Deal: Veteran Organizations and the Creation of the GI Bill

Epilogue:
Martial Citizenship in the Post-war Era

Annotated Chapters

Introduction:
Veteran Organizations and Veteran Political Activism in the Interwar Period

This opening chapter will introduce the reader to the major veteran organizations active in the interwar period. It will also outline the two major episodes of veteran political activism during the interwar period: the Bonus saga and the creation of the GI Bill. In doing so, the historiographical treatment of veterans and veteran politics will be discussed and the major arguments of the book will be summarized.

Chapter 1:
The Bonus March Reconsidered

In this chapter the Bonus March will be explored as the starting point of New Deal era veteran political activism. In doing so, the chapter argues that the supposedly unprompted Bonus Army that moved on Washington in the summer of 1932 actually responded to organized political activism orchestrated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The federal policy that outlined the Bonus’s deferred features inadvertently led to the rapid political mobilization by veterans. When the largest of the veteran organizations, the American Legion, failed to challenge federal policy, veterans first flowed into the VFW, and then onto the streets of the Capital. In short, the federal policies aimed at benefiting veterans instead transformed them into activist citizens. Only in rethinking the role of the veteran organizations in the March can the role of organized veteran political activism in the ensuing years be fundamentally recast.
Stephen Ortiz, *The New Deal for Veterans: Veteran Organizations and the Politics of Citizenship, 1929-1944*

Overall, Stephen Ortiz's book proposal, *The New Deal for Veterans*, based on a revision of his dissertation on the VFW and veteran politics in the New Deal decade, merits publication. It offers new insights into important questions—about the origins and process of policy formation; the growth in support for the federal welfare state; the historical forces and agents who shaped the New Deal; the significance of historical memory in politics; the power of veterans, one of the most important interest groups in American politics, in shaping federal social and foreign policies, and the uses of nationalism, individual sacrifice, and 'martial citizenship' as ways of gaining public support and legitimacy for veterans and their interests. All of these questions—and the original contributions that Ortiz makes to the answers—provide sufficient grounds for NYU Press to offer Ortiz a book project. The project itself is ambitious as well as significant—with the promise of revising and upsetting current historical thinking about the New Deal, and it is far enough along—even as a mostly unrevised dissertation—to suggest that it will fulfill that promise. *The New Deal for Veterans* also is a new entry in developing debates about the political effects of military service with regard to the state and the various rhetorics of social citizenship (Is it economically rooted or grounded, instead, in service to the state?). These debates make Ortiz's book-in-progress an attractive and viable acquisition for the press and should give the book when it is finished a ready and wide audience among historians (of the military, of politics, of the social welfare state), historical sociologists, political sociologists, and even policy wonks. It should have some course adoption possibilities (in advanced classes in social welfare, politics, history seminars) and even, possibly, some readers among VFW members. For all these reasons, I recommend accepting Ortiz's book proposal, with the usual provision that it is contingent on revisions.

The weaknesses of Ortiz's study, that he would have to address in revision, are these: It still is an unrevised dissertation; it does not engage fully with the literature, and it is too focused, despite its current goal of becoming a more general history of veterans' interaction with the federal state, on VFW history. This is true even in the revised chapter 2, on the Bonus March, but I think it can be resolved in Ortiz's revision. I believe he would be well-advised to consider that readers will compare the VFW to the American Legion, and they will want to know more about how the VFW interacted with the Legion, when it was more effective, but also when the Legion played a more powerful role in national politics and why. Most of this is analysis that can be played throughout the book and integrated into chapters, but the author should probably incorporate explicit comparisons within his introduction and conclusion. I also believe that there are times when Ortiz does not give enough space to specific language and the workings of politics around policy issues—For example, in his foreign policy chapter, we see more a list of policies and acts that the VFW supports or does not and not much about process. It feels a little shallow, and it also neglects an important point—that the VFW
Report on Stephen Ortiz, *Soldier-Citizens*

Overall assessment:

This study is an excellent model for a dissertation, wherein the author uses a fairly narrow case study to explore larger patterns of historical development. In this case, he uses the VFW to show how veterans understood their relationship to American society, politics, and economy more generally. In doing so, the manuscript makes an important and original contribution to scholarship on the period and deserves to be published as a book. Like most dissertations, however, it presents the problem of overcoming its own strengths in order to make the transition most effectively. In other words, Dr. Ortiz’s book will need to show his audience a wider meaning for the VFW than his dissertation currently does. I therefore recommend that NYU Press publish this book, but I offer below some suggestions on how to make this a book rather than a dissertation.

Most importantly, it is critical for the book to keep its analytic focus at the center. Parts of the book drift too close to a narrative discussion of VFW policies. The book must always use those discussions to push forward central interpretive points. This book should not be a history of the VFW, but a study of how the VFW shows larger patterns of US history. As an analogous model, Jennifer Keene was less interested in veterans *per se*, than in how veterans used their position to reshape the way the United States understood itself and its obligations. In parts of this manuscript, Dr. Ortiz risks straying a bit too far from the analysis in favor of narrative.

I recommend that Dr. Ortiz play up one of the book’s main point a bit better. The conventional wisdom associates veterans with conservative politics, although I imagine
p. 66 and elsewhere: Might it be useful to place the VFW within the history of lobbying groups? To what extent does the VFW’s behavior in the 1930s mirror that of other lobbying groups? Was the term even understood as such? Page 129 also needs more discussion on this topic. Is the VFW a veteran’s fraternal organization or a lobby?

p. 69 and elsewhere: It would be useful to carefully identify where VFW positions are not really so very different from those of the US population more generally.

p. 79: Legion ideology unclear here. Were they in favor of fiscal austerity even at the price of helping veterans?

p. 85: More here on how the VFW saw FDR before his election might help.

p. 105: Chapter four needs a stronger start.

p. 127: This illustration seems to me to be calling out for more analysis. How do points like #4 fit into the VFW ideology? The uniform pensions for widows, mothers, and orphans also needs further explanation.

pp. 129ff: The VFW seems to have tried to have it both ways by attempting to be non-partisan, but attacking FDR more and more vociferously. We need more analysis here.

pp. 134ff and elsewhere: The book could use more analysis of how closely the VFW’s various stands reflected the desires of its membership as opposed to those of the increasingly politicized Van Zandt and the VFW senior leadership.

p. 143: It strikes me as odd for the VFW to cast FDR as a friend of the bankers, when the bankers themselves did not see it that way. More analysis here of what was really going on?
Dear Debbie,

I received the reviews of my proposal/dissertation from your assistant. I have had the opportunity to look through them over the weekend and am very encouraged by both their praise for the project and by their respective criticism. On the praise, it is quite heartening to know that both reviewers found the proposed book not only worthy of publication, but also an important contribution. On their respective criticism, I will address each of the major issues individually, but let me say first that the issues they raise are ones very much anticipated by me in the formulation of my proposal and ones that I already planned on addressing at length in my revisions. As such, I find that the reviewers' suggestions will be very easily incorporated into my manuscript. Now, specifically on to the major points:

1. Both reviewers expressed concern that the project would follow a narrative history of the VFW rather than a more analytical perspective. I, too, found this to be the most important issue that needed addressing when drafting my proposal. As the title of the project suggests, the manuscript will broaden out my perspective by including the American Legion, but more importantly, it will seek an analytical perspective on veteran politics. The focal point of the study will be the triangular relationships involving the AL and VFW organizations, veterans' demands on the federal government, and how veteran politics impacted both electoral politics, and the attendant political transformations we have come to know as the "New Deal." Or, in other words, I am seeking to shine light on the nexus where civic organizations, citizens, and the state interact. I have no interest in writing an institutional history of the VFW, nor a combined one of the VFW and American Legion.

Admittedly, the revised chapter maintains more of a focus on the VFW—as one reviewer correctly points out. But, this chapter that deals with the Bonus March, the VFW’s role in the March, and the VFW’s rise as an important rival to the Legion for veterans’ loyalty, shoulders a special burden that makes the VFW-focus necessary. In discussing the veteran organizations of the New Deal period, I first need to establish their ideological perspectives, but also the new intensity of their rivalry. When the then dominant American Legion failed to challenge federal policy, veterans flowed into the VFW, transforming it into an important vehicle for those disaffected by the more conservative Legion. Empowered by this new institutional rivalry for members and for the corresponding political muscle, veterans could articulate a much more expansive understanding of what the role of the federal government should be, and gave the era’s politics a sharp ideological edge. Prior to this rivalry, the American Legion leadership had found it relatively easy to suppress veterans’ excessive demands on the state. After 1932, veterans found in the VFW a new, energetic, and increasingly powerful organization to champion their causes. The manuscript will show that veteran politics played an important part in the New Deal, but it must first explain how new veterans’ voices began being heard thanks to the institutional rivalry that emerged in this 1932 Bonus episode.
how this has not always been the case, and in so doing begin the investigation as to why this has become conventional wisdom.

4. Last, on the GI Bill, one reviewer comments that I should offer more empirical evidence on the GI Bill or I should relegate it to an epilogue. This is a very good idea. I have plans on two more research trips to fill out my study on the very issue of the GI Bill: a revisit of the FDR Library and a week at the Legion archives. When I wrote my dissertation, I tried not to engage the GI Bill directly since it had a number of studies already written on it. (I might add, Suzanne Mettler's new book on the GI Bill joins a host of others in the works.) I very much want to do this in the manuscript but it is entirely contingent on what I find. I think I have much to add to the discussion of this topic but will certainly consider consigning it to an epilogue if the situation calls for it.

I hope this is a sufficient answer to the reviewers. Please let me know if you would like any more information.

Best wishes,

Steve
Hi Steve:

Many thanks for this good reply -- and I am delighted to be at this stage. I am planning on preparing a big memo on the project, as per our protocol, which will include your proposal, the reviews, your reply, and a bunch of other things from me -- in essence my "pitch" for your book, market research, and a budget. I will get all of this to my boss next week, with the recommendation that I present to my committee (for consideration of a contract) on March 7. Of course, I need his thumbs up to do this, but based on the reviews and my own endorsement of the project, I would be very surprised if he did not agree with my recommendation.

Before I do that, however, I'd like you to embellish just a little bit further on a few things you mention below. My comments/suggestions are in caps, below. So, at your earliest convenience, can you address them and resend this reply back to me, w/ your comments included in the relevant places?

Many thanks!
DG

-----Original Message-----
From: Stephen Ortiz [mailto:sortiz@po-box.esu.edu]
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2006 3:03 PM
To: Deborah Gershenowitz
Subject: response to reviewers

Dear Debbie,

I received the reviews of my proposal/dissertation from your assistant. I have had the opportunity to look through them over the weekend and am very encouraged by both their praise for the project and by their respective criticism. On the praise, it is quite heartening to know that both reviewers found the proposed book not only worthy of publication, but also an important contribution. On their respective criticism, I will address each of the major issues individually, but let me say first that the issues they raise are ones very much anticipated by me in the formulation of my proposal and ones that I already planned on
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2. The second related issue raised by the reviewers is that the manuscript should contain a more sustained comparison of the Legion and VFW during the period. As the discussion above shows, the triangular relationship involving the AL and VFW organizations, veterans' issues, and the political process will be the focal point of the study. Therefore, the relationship between the two organizations-their differences, as well as their points of convergence-will be foregrounded in the introductory chapter and then carried out throughout the text [STEVE, YOU MAY WANT TO INSERT AN EXAMPLE HERE -- E.G., "FOR EXAMPLE, IN CHAPTER X I WILL DISCUSS HOW..."].

3. There are at least two more major issues that the reviewers touch upon and that will be a point of emphasis in the revised manuscript. These issues-paraphrasing creatively-are the importance of military service to understandings of citizenship and the accompanying special role of veterans in the constructions of nationalist historical memory. These issues have a historicity of their own and my work will very self-consciously address and expound on these points as the reviewers suggest [THIS IS IMPORTANT: EXPLAIN, IN A FEW SENTENCES, HOW YOU MIGHT ADDRESS AND EXPOUND ON THESE POINTS. EVEN IF YOU DO IT IN THE PROPOSAL, IT DOESN'T HURT TO REITERATE IT HERE]. As one reviewer commented, conventional wisdom places veterans at the core of conservative politics in the US. I hope my work will explicitly explain that this has not always been the case, and in so doing begin the investigation as to why this has become conventional wisdom.

4. Last, on the GI Bill, one reviewer comments that I should offer more empirical evidence on the GI Bill or I should relegate it to an epilogue. This is a very good idea. I have plans on two more research trips to fill out my study on the very issue of the GI Bill: a revisit of the FDR Library and a week at the legion archives. When I wrote my dissertation, I tried not to engage the GI Bill directly since it had a number of studies already written on it. (I might add, Suzanne Mettler's new book on the GI Bill joins a host of others in the works.) I very much want to do this in the manuscript but it is entirely contingent on what I find. I think I have much to add to the discussion of this topic but will certainly consider consigning it to an epilogue if the situation calls for it.
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Best wishes,

Steve
Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era

New York University Press, 2009

Stephen R. Ortiz

Introduction

Chapter 1: Veterans’ Policy and Veteran Organizations, 1917-1929

Chapter 2: Rethinking the Bonus March

Chapter Three: The “New Deal” for Veterans

Chapter 4: The Bonus Re-emerges

Chapter 5: “The Pro-Bonus Party”

Chapter 6: Veteran Politics and the New Deal’s Political Triumph of 1936

Conclusion: GI Bill Legacies

Postscript: “A GI Bill for the 21st Century”?
Introduction

In 1930, a dozen years after the conclusion of World War I, journalist Oliver McKee, Jr. predicted the impact military veterans would soon have on the American polity. McKee’s article in *The Commonweal*, “The Political March of the Veterans,” declared that already the “veteran of the World War has won a secure foothold in American politics.” By way of example, he pointed to the fifteen senators, sixty-three members of Congress, and multiple Cabinet members that had served in the Great War. McKee explained that the veterans’ ascendency in politics could be traced in great measure to the voluntary associations that nurtured them. Vibrant veteran organizations gave ex-soldiers a strong collective political voice and “the machinery” to enact national or state laws, and a training ground for the development of valuable political skills. Thus, McKee determined, “The American veteran of the World War has arrived on the political scene and . . . brought a new force into our political life. Hereafter, we must reckon with him.” He pointed to an emergent political terrain where military veterans and their organizations would once again, as in the years following the Civil War, play a significant role in national politics. McKee would be proven right, but not in ways that he anticipated. By 1932, veterans had launched a “political march” not through the respectable and conventional channels of government but with some forty thousand mostly unemployed and homeless World War I veterans descending on Washington, D.C., in what became known as the Bonus March.¹

The Bonus March dramatically catapulted veterans’ issues to the forefront of national political affairs. In 1924, Congress had awarded World War I veterans adjusted
after twelve years of Republican rule. Indeed, even Roosevelt privately declared the
election won upon receiving news of the Bonus March rout. Moreover, New Deal
chroniclers compare Roosevelt's magnanimous treatment of veterans in a far smaller
1933 Bonus March to the 1932 debacle to illustrate both the New Deal's concern for "the
forgotten man" and FDR's considerable political savvy. And yet, despite this centrality of
veterans to the New Deal era, after 1933 veterans normally retreat into the background in
discussions of New Deal politics.  

In 1944, veterans re-emerged into the spotlight of national politics with the passage
of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill. When FDR signed
the legislation on June 22, 1944, sixteen million World War II servicemen and
servicewomen found that their military obligations would accrue them generous postwar
social and economic benefits. The origins of the GI Bill lay in the concern over the
postwar readjustment of veterans to civilian life and the political consequences if that
process failed. To those who had experienced the prolonged aftermath of the Great War,
the Bonus March remained a potent reminder of the dangers posed to American society
by not easing veterans' social and economic reintegration. The GI Bill avoided this threat
by creating the largest social welfare program in the history of the country. Veterans
enjoyed federally financed vocational training and education benefits, a liberal
unemployment policy, easy access to home, farm, and business loans, and an expansive
healthcare entitlement. Some nine million veterans took advantage of the provisions
making the GI Bill arguably the most significant piece of legislation both in the history of
American social welfare policy and in the formation of postwar American society.
pensions, conflict over "the bloody shirt" and Civil War pensions, and World War I soldiers' benefits have located veterans at the heart of post-revolutionary political culture, Gilded Age partisan politics, and Progressive Era institutional development, respectively. To use the Bonus March as a springboard is to better address these larger issues of the New Deal era, an era critical to the formation of the modern American state.

Second, to study veterans and veteran political activism, scholars must come to grips with the organizations that advanced veterans' interests. But to do this, one must go beyond inward-looking institutional histories of the major veteran organizations. National veteran organizations such as the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars mediated veterans' relationship with the state, both with elected officials and the veterans' bureaucracy. They also provided the "machinery" that structured veterans' political involvement at the national, state, and local level. Even the Bonus March, uniformly depicted as a spontaneous protest movement unsupported by veteran organizations, begs for a reevaluation that takes these structures of organization seriously. Indeed, as Oliver McKee, Jr. pointed out in 1930, at the center of interwar veteran politics, stood veteran organizations.

Finally, this study employs the methods and perspectives of an expanding sub-field, policy history, to analyze veterans' issues of the era. The bifurcated nature of the existing literature on veterans of the interwar period reflects the lenses through which social historians and traditional political historians have addressed the issues: the Bonus March and Roosevelt's New Deal. Approaching the period from a policy history perspective offers an opportunity to reconcile the division between a grass-roots approach and a top-
in Progressive-minded ideals of bureaucratic efficiency and nonpartisanship sought to fashion a new system of benefits and pensions for Great War veterans. The corrupt, sectional, and partisan Civil war pension system created in the Gilded Age served as a negative point of reference when policymakers developed the Bureau of War Risk Insurance (1917), the Veterans Bureau (1921), and later the Veterans' Administration (1930) to tend to soldiers and ex-soldiers of the Great War. The Republican presidents of the 1920s and FDR viewed an expansive veterans' welfare system suspiciously, as a continued pocket of governmental waste and corruption, and contrary to the tenets of fiscal conservatism that they all held dear. But despite this, Congress continually voted to liberalize veterans' benefits and pensions, more often than not over presidential vetoes.  

By the early 1930s, two issues had come to dominate veterans' policy discussions: the Bonus and the liberalization of pensions. At the heart of the debate was the question, what did the federal government owe to veterans for their service during war? Few disagreements arose over service-connected disabled veterans who were wards of the state—although exactly what constituted disability and whether or not the disability could be proven to be service-connected continually dogged veterans, legislators, and administrators. But liberal pensions and the possibility of early Bonus payment rankled fiscal conservatives within and beyond the Roosevelt Administration. In 1933, FDR announced at the American Legion annual convention, “no person, because he wore a uniform must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries ever and above all other citizens.” He continued, “the fact of wearing a uniform does not mean that [a veteran] can demand and receive from his Government a benefit which no other citizen receives.” Congress, however, frequently disagreed. During election years especially, fear
orientation, ethno-religious ties, and disability, groups such as the Communist Party-
affiliated Workers’ Ex-Serviceman’s League, Jewish War Veterans, and the Disabled
American Veterans, also competed for veterans’ affiliations. Yet, the American Legion
and VFW far outdistanced the others in terms of membership and national political
influence, and became the major rivals among the associations. The Legion, founded in
1919 by members of the American Expeditionary Force, opened admission to all
honorably discharged veterans of World War I. After its founding in Paris, the Legion
became known as the Great War veteran organization. The VFW, however, traced its
origins to veteran groups of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars that
formed in 1899: the National Association of the Army of the Philippines and the
American Veterans of Foreign Service. After official consolidation in 1914, the VFW
offered membership to servicemen and veterans who served “on foreign shores or in
hostile waters in any war, campaign or expedition recognized by Congress with a
campaign badge or service clasp.” While active-duty doughboys were inducted into the
VFW during the Great War, some time passed before it became a serious rival to the
American Legion for those veterans’ affiliation. \(^{18}\)

In the interwar period, fundamental differences in ideology and in political power
distinguished the VFW from the American Legion. In particular, the VFW’s persistent
and vehement demand for the immediate cash payment of the soldiers’ bonus, and the
pointed critique of the political economy that informed its arguments, offered veterans an
alternative to the more conservative Legion. This is not to suggest that the two
organizations’ agendas were always opposed to one another. Undeniably, the VFW and
American Legion agreed on a whole host of issues and worked in tandem to realize most
between citizens and the federal government, a process normally associated with New Deal labor, social welfare, and relief programs. Therefore, the inclusion of veteran politics does not just supplement the New Deal narrative, it alters it.  

As the discussion above describes, the triangular relationship involving veterans’ policy, the Legion and VFW organizations, and the larger political milieu will be the focal point of this study. I contend that interwar federal policies provoked repeated political mobilizations by veterans and veteran organizations seeking to reverse or amend those decisions. Elected officials in Congress, bureaucrats, and Presidents, all were forced to conceptualize and implement veterans policy—and in many cases, re-conceptualize it and re-implement it—in response to the strength of veteran organizations’ political activism and in deference to the “soldiers’ vote.” In the process, veteran issues and veteran politics were at the epicenter of larger political battles.

Foremost, this book reconsiders the political origins and the political triumph of the “Second” New Deal.  

From 1933 to 1936, veterans’ protests against the Economy Act’s draconian cuts in veterans’ benefits and the bitter struggle for early payment of the Bonus pitted veterans against the Roosevelt Administration. This critical response to early New Deal policy situated veterans in the vanguard of the “New Deal Dissidents,” the social protest movement led by Senator Huey P. Long and Father Charles E. Coughlin. Indeed, in the late spring of 1935, the Bonus provided the glue that held a politically threatening coalition of Long, Coughlin, and veterans together while the battle for its passage brought the dissident movement to a crescendo. The payment of the Bonus in 1936 deprived the dissidents of their one common rallying cry, helping to undermine the strength of their third-party electoral challenge. Moreover, the massive cash infusion into the economy in
veterans' issues to spill over into larger political battles. But in 1929, a new set of circumstances emerged. Dissatisfaction with federal Bonus and pension policies empowered a new organizational voice in World War veterans' issues just as the ebullience of the 1920s came to an abrupt shattering end. This chapter ends, then, in 1929 with two precipitous events: the VFW national organization's vote to push for more expansive veteran benefits, including immediate payment of the Bonus, and the stock market crash that would lead to the Great Depression and fundamentally transform the nation's politics.

Chapter 2 will explore the Bonus March as the starting point of New Deal-era veteran politics. In doing so, the chapter argues that the supposedly unprompted Bonus Army that moved on Washington in the summer of 1932 actually responded to organized political activism orchestrated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars between 1929 and 1932. The federal policy that outlined the Bonus's deferred features inadvertently led to the rapid political mobilization by veterans. When the largest of the veteran organizations, the American Legion, failed to challenge federal policy, veterans first flowed into the VFW, and then onto the streets of the Capital. In short, the federal policies aimed at benefiting veterans instead transformed them into activist citizens. Moreover, the rise of the Veterans of Foreign Wars as an organizational rival to the American Legion during the late-1920s and 1930s bolstered the institutional resources and choices for veterans, aiding them in making further demands on the state. Only in rethinking the role of the veteran organizations in the March can the role of organized veteran political activism in the ensuing years be fundamentally recast.
explains how the Bonus issue further aroused veterans against the Administration, precipitating wide-spread veteran political activism. The Bonus battle of 1935, I contend, was also the point of convergence for a powerful and controversial alliance of Long, Coughlin, and veterans that raised the specter of a new party consisting of Long and Coughlin supporters, buttressed by the veteran vote. The chapter ends with FDR’s dramatic and unprecedented Bonus Bill veto delivered on May 22, 1935, to a joint session of Congress and a rapt national radio audience. The re-evaluation of veteran politics in this chapter offers a new interpretation of the political origins of the “second” New Deal.

Chapter 6 picks up the story in the wake of FDR’s veto, carrying it forward through eventual Bonus payment to the presidential election of 1936. Roosevelt used the veto of the Bonus to springboard into the landmark legislative program of the “Second” New Deal, a program that included the creation of the Works Progress Administration and the passage of the Social Security Act. The Bonus issue, however, would not lay quiet. On January 27, 1936, the Bonus passed over another FDR veto. But the passing of the Bonus in 1936 may well have been the must successful piece of "second" New Deal legislation, even if FDR did veto it. When veterans began receiving payments in June, nearly two billion dollars flowed into the national economy making 1936 the best economic year since the Crash. This fiscal stimulus boosted the economy just in time for the 1936 election. Moreover, the removal of the Bonus issue as the point of convergence, coupled with the death of Huey Long, meant that the dissident movement’s electoral challenge to Roosevelt amounted to very little. The resolution of the Bonus, therefore, contributed
In the period from 1918 to 1944, veterans' battled with the federal government over pensions, entitlements, and adequate compensation for war-time military service. The ultimate success of these battles concerning the federal governments' obligations to veterans dovetailed with a larger transformation in twentieth-century American political life: the era’s changing relationship between citizens and the federal government. While this process is typically associated with New Deal labor, social welfare, and relief programs, veterans' issues resonated throughout the American political and social order well beyond the end of World War II, and, indeed, beyond the New Deal political consensus forged in the 1930s. Despite the waning of New Deal liberalism and the conservative resurgence in the latter decades of the twentieth century, veterans' entitlements continue to be generous, and most Americans—and certainly most politicians—take for granted veterans' special claims on the federal government.
I am impressed with much of the work Dr. Ortiz has done to improve this manuscript. The analytic framework is clearer than it was in the first version of the project. The central argument of the book is easier to follow, which helps to resolve my most fundamental concern. I think there is still room to consider even more deeply the factors pushing these debates over veterans. On the surface it seems to be fiscal responsibility versus obligation to those who have served their country. More deeply, there seem to be other issues involved, including the remaking of the American political system (with veterans representing a large and potentially critical interest group), fear of veteran activism, and a struggle between the Legion and the VFW for the very identity of patriotism. These seems to be a kind of 1930s version of the culture wars going on here. While it would be fascinating to dig even more deeply into these questions I am aware that they are beyond the remit of this study. Still, in parts it might repay the effort for Dr. Ortiz to give them some thought.

I think this manuscript would benefit from a close copyediting. In general it is well-written, but in places the style is inconsistent and words like “capital” and “capitol” are still conflated. None of these issues are fatal and a good copy editor should be able to identify and smooth them. On chapter 2, page 3, it strikes me that more might be made of the Duff suggestion that the problem of veterans be first treated by big business. It seems to suggest a first take on the problem that was designed at finding a non-governmental solution to the problem.