Protection of the President

Changing Views of the Secret Service and the American Executive, 1901-1951

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An Honors Thesis Submitted to the
History Department of
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
New Brunswick, New Jersey
April 2013
I feel—though the tax on my time is heavy—that no hours of my day are better employed than those which thus bring me again within the direct contact and atmosphere of the average of our whole people. – Abraham Lincoln, 1863
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Introduction

At every public appearance, serious-looking men and women in suits and sunglasses surround United States President Barack Obama. Although an unknowing observer might mistake them for presidential aides, the earpieces and subtly holstered firearms indicate that they are in fact agents of the United States Secret Service, tasked with protecting the life of President Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and their respective families, as well as past presidents and foreign dignitaries. Today, such protection appears normal, a necessary precaution to protect these important men and their families from the ever-lurking dangers generated by the prestige of the offices in which they serve. However, many Americans would be surprised to discover that Secret Service protection is a fairly recent development in American history, and that its beginnings caused great controversy in a nation that prides itself on the everyman qualities of its elected officials.

For much of early American history, the president went without any formal protection. Although military guards protected them in times of crisis and war, the United States government did not initially provide presidents with a formal guard. In many ways, this was due to the limited role of the presidency in American government. Although many early American presidents had charismatic personalities, lingering fears of monarchical rule kept political power with the states and the legislative branch. The president’s greatest strength is in foreign policy, a limiting factor in early America’s agricultural-based economy. Furthermore, in the early American political system, parties, not the president, dictated the policy agenda. In addition, while the decisions and actions of presidents made it into the press, their faces did not. In 1817, President James Monroe and his entourage stopped at a small inn in Altona, New York, and went
completely unrecognized until the president revealed his identity over supper. During a visit to New York City in 1847, President James Polk was frequently mistaken for his traveling companion, Alabama Senator Dixon Hall Lewis, causing many people to assert that the slender president was “the fattest man they ever did see.”\(^1\) In practical terms, the personal danger to a man that most people wouldn’t even recognize was remote. However, as the United States advanced and these situations changed, so did the necessity and atmosphere for protection of the president.

Non-military protection began with President Grover Cleveland. After an increased number of threatening letters spooked his wife during his second term, in 1894 Cleveland asked the Secret Service chief for two or three agents to guard his summer residence and provide protection for him and his family, a duty that was not consistent with the organization’s mission at the time.\(^2\) The Secret Service had been created at the end of the Civil War to fight rampant counterfeiting, but at the time its agents were the only federal officials with law enforcement experience. Although Cleveland left no explanation for his choice of Secret Service agents for guard duties, in a later memo Secret Service Chief John Wilkie surmised that the men were chosen from the Secret Service and paid through the usual appropriation for the suppression of counterfeiting due to their “training and experience.”\(^3\) Although this was the first known use of Secret Service agents as a protective force, it was not an organized venture. Secret Service agents were not used again for presidential protection until the start of the Spanish-American War in

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\(^1\) Richard J. Ellis, *Presidential Travel: The Journey from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 3


1898. When the war started, a special appropriation of $50,000 was made for the Secret Service agents to perform espionage services for the government and provide protection for President William McKinley. Part of that allotment was used to fund a special twenty-four-hour detail of agents to guard the White House at the request of the Secretary to the President. After the war concluded, this protection ceased, but McKinley was still accompanied by a member of the Service on trips. Although President William McKinley was one of the earliest presidents to utilize the Secret Service for protection, many Americans did not know of it. Even after the assassinations of Presidents Abraham Lincoln in 1865 and James A. Garfield in 1881, there was no outcry for greater presidential protection.

However, McKinley’s assassination in 1901 finally shifted the conversation in favor of greater protection of the president. McKinley was the third president to be assassinated in a span of less than forty years. His death shocked the nation and prompted a vigorous and thorough discussion of the dangers facing the American democratic institution at the dawn of the twentieth century. After the assassination, the necessity and appropriateness of providing formal protection to his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, and other future presidents was a frequent topic of discussion both in the press and in Congress. Before McKinley’s death, the popular image of the president was that of a man of the people, one treated just like any other citizen. Three assassinations in less than forty years challenged this assumption. Providing formal protection naturally involved further restricting the general public’s access to presidents. Over the next several months, as Roosevelt assumed the office, the discussion of how to provide protection

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would dominate the news cycle, with reporters including details about security arrangements along with policy statements. Writers were concerned with the protection of the office of the president, not simply the man himself. Since the office was worthy of sufficient protection, then, there appeared to be a level of comfort with a strong chief executive.

However, there was significant controversy at the time over the role of the presidency and the privileges and powers that should come with the office. Newspapers and journals dedicated countless inches to the debate. In the halls of Congress, legislators took up the question of whether the federal government could—or should—do more to protect the president. In this way, presidential protection was caught up in a much larger debate about the role of the presidency and its proper place in American democracy. After a vigorous debate produced no results, formal protection remained in legal limbo. Over time, Congress and the public came to accept Secret Service protection of the president as necessary to safeguard both the man and the office, and Secret Service protection was finally recognized through a permanent statute during the Truman presidency. Yet even after fifty more years of ever-increasing protection, questions and doubts about the visibility and role of the president remain today.
Chapter 1

The Aftermath of an Assassination

“I had no feeling against the President. I shot him because he was the ruler, and held such power as I do not think any man should have.” – Leon Czolgosz

On September 6, 1901, President William McKinley attended the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York. That afternoon, McKinley held a reception at the Temple of Music so he could informally meet members of the electorate. A large crowd had gathered, and the president was happy to oblige as many people as possible with a handshake as he basked in the attention. Although McKinley has often been portrayed as a contrast to his bombastic successor, Theodore Roosevelt, McKinley was by no means a recluse as president. He greatly valued the opportunity that speaking tours gave him to promote his presidential agenda. The Pan-American Exposition was simply one stop on the tour, and the day prior he had given a speech he hoped would encourage Senate action on several pending trade treaties. He was not the first to conduct such tours, but their success in promoting a legislative agenda would provide an example for future presidents.

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At approximately four o’clock, as the *New York Times* wrote, “a medium-sized man of ordinary appearance and plainly dressed in black, approached as if to greet the President.”\textsuperscript{9} His hand was covered with what appeared to be a bandage. When the man was about two feet from McKinley, the President reached out to shake his hand. Suddenly, multiple shots rang out, and the President fell with bullet wounds in his chest and abdomen. Pandemonium ensued as Secret Service agents, attending the reception to provide crowd control, and bystanders jumped on the president’s attacker. The assailant was soon identified as Leon Czolgosz, a man who claimed to be a follower of prominent anarchist activist Emma Goldman.\textsuperscript{10}

Initially, the prognosis for President McKinley was positive. After the attack, the president was rushed to a nearby hospital, and the team of physicians entrusted to his care issued a statement the next day declaring McKinley “free from pain and resting well.”\textsuperscript{11} News reports remained optimistic for the next week as the president continued to recover, and it was expected that Vice President Theodore Roosevelt would declare a “day of special thanksgiving” for McKinley’s survival and apparent recovery. Meanwhile, an investigation was taking place to determine if Czolgosz was part of a larger anarchist conspiracy, and authorities debated whether or not it was possible to charge Goldman for inciting the attack.

Although at the time it appeared likely McKinley would recover and return to his presidential duties, some saw the incident as the end of the receiving lines and public receptions that McKinley enjoyed. On September 10, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson told a *Chicago Tribune* correspondent:

\textsuperscript{11} “President Shot at Buffalo Fair,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1901.
We cannot again subject any President to the peril of being compelled to meet and shake hands with a long line of unknown men, any one of whom may be his murderer even before the people at his side can interfere. It will be no loss of the democracy of our Presidents if we separate them a little more from possible assassins, and the people at large will be the first to recognize the wisdom of this step.\textsuperscript{12}

Wilson went on to suggest that abolishing public receptions would be a likely result of Czolgosz’s assault. Although the idea of completely abolishing public appearances, with the handshaking and baby-kissing so deeply ingrained in the image of American politicking, may appear extreme for those used to the strategies commonly utilized in today’s presidential politics, the attack proved that in a world without metal detectors and pat-downs, the president’s security could no longer be guaranteed.

Throughout the first years of the republic, Americans had valued the fact that the president could be seen as a man of the people, easily accessible to the public. After Andrew Jackson’s inauguration, he held a raucous party at the Executive Mansion. A senator present at the scene disdainfully described a “mob of boys, negroes, women, children, scrambling, fighting, [and] romping” through to greet the president, causing untold mayhem and destruction.\textsuperscript{13} Although Jackson’s brand of populism was still considered an outlier in the American political tradition, the accessibility of the American president was thought to be a democratic value. Unlike the monarchs of Europe, Americans almost expected to see their president casually in public. As president, John Quincy Adams was famous for his exposed (in multiple senses of the word) morning swims in the Potomac. Secretary Wilson appeared to be one of the first officials to acknowledge the dangers posed to the president of the fast-growing democracy and suggest that the importance of the duties performed by the nation’s chief executive outweighed the


\textsuperscript{13} Ellis, \textit{Presidential Travel}, 2
accessibility and standards of equality that Americans valued. Over the previous few decades, the United States had experienced dramatic population growth and rapid industrialization. At the same time, new means of communication and transportation had begun to increase the president’s ability to engage with a greater portion of the general public and pursue policy goals. McKinley’s speaking tours had demonstrated the power of the office to affect policy being formed by the legislature. Although Wilson’s idea of restricting the president’s access to the public never actually came to fruition, his statement exemplified the conflict over the sometimes-conflicting values of openness of the office and protection of the man himself.

McKinley’s condition soon took a turn for the worse, and he passed away on September 14. An autopsy revealed that the bullet track through McKinley’s abdomen had become gangrenous and that his death was unavoidable. As the nation struggled to make sense of his death and the manner in which it occurred, Vice President Roosevelt took the oath of office and ascended to the presidency. Three days after McKinley’s death, Roosevelt began to take charge of the nation and conduct the day-to-day business of the executive branch, which the San Francisco Chronicle described as “almost at a standstill” out of respect for the fallen president. One might have expected Roosevelt to desire greater protection in light of the obvious risk, but the new president was not the type to hide in the face of danger.

Theodore Roosevelt entered the White House with an energy and youthful vigor that was unprecedented in presidential history. He had achieved fame as much for his boisterous personality as his political accomplishments. As a public figure, Roosevelt became known for his

headstrong manner and his admiration for “rugged individualism.” From his aggressive leadership style as second-in-command of the “Rough Riders” during the Spanish-American War to his big game hunting experiences, Roosevelt was not a man who would look favorably upon the need for armed guards. As a child, he had suffered from asthma and poor eyesight, which led him to pursue physical strength and vigor throughout his adult life.16 Throughout Roosevelt’s career in politics, he had built an image of toughness and self-reliance that had proven useful in pursuing his policy goals and augmenting his public image. Some of his friends even questioned whether or not he would be able to accept a guard. Frederick Remington, a friend of Roosevelt’s, wrote in a letter published by the Chicago Daily Tribune, “I fully realize that the idea that he cannot take care of himself is irksome to him, and the thought of guards oppresses, yet we must demand it of him…he is not immune from the attack of political body lice.”17 For Roosevelt, accepting armed guards would have implied that he was personally powerless against the dangers he faced, an untenable situation for the proud man.

Already, amidst reports that he had walked from the White House to Secretary of State John Hay’s residence without any police or Secret Service escorts, newspapermen and Washington insiders were widely discussing Roosevelt’s apparent disdain for armed accompaniment. In another report, the new president left a cabinet meeting and walked to go to lunch with his sister, “disdaining a carriage” yet apparently attracting little attention from the general public (although the papers knew his exact route).18 Critics quickly rose to lament what

16 Lewis L. Gould, Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4-6
17 “Urge President to Have Guard,” Chicago Daily Tribune, September 25, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune (1849-1989).
the *San Francisco Chronicle* called the new president’s “bravado and recklessness” that was looked upon as further evidence of Roosevelt’s “restless, aggressive egotism.”\(^{19}\) In response to these claims the *Chronicle* wrote, “Plainly President Roosevelt does not feel in need of any further protection than the citizen Theodore Roosevelt had and does not mean to have it.”\(^{20}\) The paper continued to explain that despite Roosevelt’s obvious disdain for anything that would interfere with his manly appearance, his assertion was not based on a “spirit of bravado,” but rather his own disbelief that guards could have prevented McKinley’s assassination.\(^{21}\) Neither the *Chronicle* nor President Roosevelt contemplated the possibility that improved protection procedures could have made a difference. Instead, they both appeared to accept that the president would only ever allow a minimum level of protection (and that the public had similar expectations), and that this level would likely be unable to prevent future assaults. The *Tribune* also commented on the controversy, sympathizing with Roosevelt’s perceived struggle to balance his own personal safety with the risks faced by whoever held the office.\(^{22}\) Even in the immediate aftermath of President McKinley’s tragic death, the democratic ideal of the president as a man of the people held strong. The paper appeared unwilling to admit that the president could no longer safely wander the streets.

However, that is not to say that President Roosevelt went without any sort of protection. A *Chicago Tribune* article covering McKinley’s funeral arrangements noted that Roosevelt’s

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\(^{19}\) *Ready for Assassins: Belief That Roosevelt Goes Fully Prepared to Protect Himself,* "*San Francisco Chronicle,* September 25, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *San Francisco Chronicle* (1865-1922).

\(^{20}\) “Roosevelt Takes Reins,” *San Francisco Chronicle,* September 21, 1901.

\(^{21}\) “Roosevelt Takes Reins,” *San Francisco Chronicle,* September 21, 1901.

\(^{22}\) “Urge President to Have Guard,” *Chicago Daily Tribune,* September 25, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *Chicago Tribune* (1849-1989).
bodyguards were stationed well to the rear of the president’s carriage on the funeral train—likely a compromise between Roosevelt and his more security-minded advisors. The bodyguards were a mix of Secret Service agents and local police officers, and although they remained separated from the president, observant reporters noticed that they would be able to easily intercept anyone who dared approach him. One reporter noticed that the driver of the carriage, George Foster, one of the agents who had been with McKinley in Buffalo, drove with a revolver surreptitiously stashed in his sleeve. Despite idealistic visions to the contrary, these men had a subtle yet significant presence during the funeral. Roosevelt himself had stated that armed guards were acceptable when handling large crowds at public events, yet he found them an unacceptable hindrance to daily business and social life. The Tribune even suggested that Roosevelt would be able to ensure his own protection in a report that the president kept an army pistol in his hip pocket. However, despite his wishes to avoid the extra commotion and hassle while appealing to his own machismo, the president would no longer be taking trips without a guard. Furthermore, an article in the Washington Post reported that every president since Lincoln had been under almost constant surveillance by the local Washington police, calling President Roosevelt, “one of the most closely watched and carefully guarded men in the world, at least while he was in Washington.” Although President Roosevelt may have wanted to walk anonymously through the streets, the police apparently attempted to keep tabs on his whereabouts.

Although Roosevelt had shot down the idea of a constant entourage of armed guards, the weeks after McKinley’s death were filled with news reports and opinion pieces advocating

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widely varying opinions on how to prevent future assaults and assassinations. Rather than focusing on protection procedures and guards, most commentators focused their attention on the supposed menace that had been revealed through the assassination: the growing threat of militant anarchists. At a memorial service at Princeton University, former President Grover Cleveland declared that a combination of new laws and a collective attempt to teach civic virtue and repudiate anarchist ideas was necessary to prevent future assassinations. He then called upon colleges and universities to take a prominent position in “the battle against the tendencies of anarchy.”

Rather than viewing the assassination as the fault of bad security procedures mixed with a president anxious to reach out to the public, Cleveland chose to focus on a single class of people, whom he viewed as a menace that would stop at nothing to destroy the American way of life. Instead of accepting that the president would always face such dangers, Cleveland advocated educational initiatives that would demonstrate the folly of anarchy and prevent it from gaining new converts.

Anarchism had become a growing problem in Europe, where several monarchs had already been assassinated. However, Americans felt that the ideals and freedoms of their nation precluded such troubles, determining that anarchism in Europe grew out of frustrations from monarchy. Before McKinley’s assassination, it was assumed that anarchism would never gain much appeal in the land of democracy and opportunity the way it had amidst a history of repressive autocracies in Europe.

In the days after the assassination, speculation grew about a wider anarchist conspiracy. A headline in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* proclaimed, “Anarchists May Crowd Prisons,” and

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described federal officers poring through statute books for any law that might add on to
Czolgosz’s punishment. Although evidence of a conspiracy never materialized, the
assassination sparked a growing discussion about ways to suppress a movement that stood in
conflict with the founding principles of American government. In late September, the New York
Times explored some sociologists’ claims that Czolgosz committed the murder out of frustrations
with American society and injustices done to the working class. The Times, however, examined
his life and determined that he had been employed and had not appeared to suffer the poverty
one might expect would induce someone to kill. The paper concluded that in light of this
information, most would simply view Czolgosz as a “beast that killed.” The ease with which
the Times dismissed any rational motivations Czolgosz had for the assassination demonstrated
just how foreign anarchist ideas were to Americans. They appeared dangerous and irrational,
creatures that could only be counted upon to destroy the American way of life.

Attention soon turned to anarchists and the danger they supposedly posed to American
democracy. At a memorial for the late president, Republican Senator Jonathan Dolliver of Iowa
lamented that the government had given little attention to anarchist organizations in the United
States. He compared anarchy to atheism, saying that McKinley’s “assassination was an incident
of the standing challenge of atheism against the peace and order of society.” Although Dolliver
brought a religious element to the debate, his speech underscores the perplexing nature of
anarchist theory, which to many Americans appeared to be a strange belief that was unnatural
and unholy at first glance. On September 22, the New York Times carried a long piece written by

27 “Anarchists May Crowd Prisons,” Chicago Daily Tribune, September 10, 1901, ProQuest
Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune (1849-1989).
28 “Topics of the Times,” New York Times, September 23, 1901, ProQuest Historical
John R. Dos Passos (father of the famed “Lost Generation” writer of the same name) titled, “Anarchy and How to Repress It,” which attempted to examine the underlying ideology of the anarchist menace and suggest legislative redresses. Anarchy was dangerous, not just because it was in opposition to the American style of government, but also because it advocated against the types of institutions that societies throughout civilization had decided were necessary for the preservation of law and order. The author laid out several proposals to stop anarchy. In addition to educational initiatives and greater international cooperation in dealing with anarchists, he also briefly addressed a popular measure of mandating the death penalty for those who attack the president or vice president. Dos Passos, however, decided it would be a futile measure, as the actions of other anarchists demonstrated them to be immune to deterrence. Instead, he favored the banishment of foreigners who supported anarchist beliefs as well as labeling the holding of anarchist meetings and creation of anarchist literature as felonies punishable by significant jail time. Furthermore, not once in the article did Dos Passos mention any new rules or regulations to provide for the protection of the president. Many observers believed that a determined attacker would always be able to reach the president, so emphasis should be put on ways to stop those who might attempt to hurt the president before an attack could take place. Still, Americans appeared ready to go to great lengths to prevent future assassinations and repress anarchist ideas. The attention given to the political affiliation of the assassin showed that many writers felt that anarchist ideas, rather than inadequate protection procedures, had ultimately led to McKinley’s death.

McKinley’s assassination by an avowed anarchist appeared to signal a new danger facing American political leaders. Before McKinley’s assassination, attacks on presidents had simple
motives that could be traced back to the individual assailant. John Wilkes Booth gunned down Abraham Lincoln in Ford’s Theatre because he was angry over the South’s defeat in the Civil War. James A. Garfield was shot while waiting at a train station in 1881. The assailant, Charles J. Guiteau, was apparently distressed that he was unable to obtain a federal office, though some concluded that he was mentally unbalanced. Guiteau had visited the White House dozens of times in search of job and been turned away, and finally unleashed his anger and frustration through the barrel of a gun. While a proper viewing of this attack might have spurred changes to presidential protection, the public instead felt that it demonstrated a need for civil service reform.\(^{31}\) In addition, it took more than three months for Garfield to finally succumb to his wounds, allowing the attack itself to fade from the public consciousness. Although there may have been little difference between the circumstances of these attacks, McKinley’s assassination seemed different. He appeared to be targeted not due to a grievance over a policy decision or a personal slight, but because he was the sitting president of the United States of America.

Czolgosz himself had stated that he had shot the president, “because he was the ruler” even though he had no personal feelings against the man himself.\(^{32}\) Czolgosz would have assassinated any man who held the office, no matter his politics or policies. Whether or not a true distinction existed between the circumstances of the three attacks was irrelevant. In the public’s mind, if McKinley could be assassinated for simply holding the office, even George Washington might suffer the same fate had he been resurrected for another term. The office was under assault, not the man himself. The assassination opened the doors to greater protection of the president, not

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\(^{31}\) “Assassins Killed Three Presidents,” *New York Times*, November 2, 1950, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2009); Ellis, *Presidential Travel*, 108-110. In January 1883, Congress passed the Pendleton Act, which stipulated that government jobs should be given on the basis of merit. At the time, it appeared a reasonable solution to the problem.

\(^{32}\) Burrows, “The Need of a National Legislation Against Anarchism.”
necessarily because he faced greater danger, but because he had assumed the highest office in the nation.

Although the general suppression of anarchy dominated the debate in the wake of the assassination, more specific measures to protect the president were also discussed. Less than a month after McKinley’s death, the Atlanta Constitution added to the growing push for legislation that would alleviate the obvious security concerns faced by the president. A column in the Constitution pointed to the United States’ rapid population growth. With the population reaching more than 70 million, the article said, the presence of residents motivated to assassinate political figures should not be surprising. Noting that attacks had become a way to gain notoriety, whether political or personal, the Constitution advocated for expansion of the current Secret Service force, which would focus on intercepting attackers before they were in a position to do harm. While other newspapers had focused on anarchists, the Constitution acknowledged that threats could come from many places and should be treated accordingly. Simply banishing the anarchists would not allow the United States to return to its previous innocent state. While legislation relating to anarchists would remain on the table, the column aptly pointed out that the situation could not be dealt with in such a specific manner.33

In concurrence with Secretary Wilson and another quoted state department officer, the Constitution declared that Roosevelt would show more courage by eliminating risky public appearances, “leading in a movement toward the better protection of the presidential office, than by continuing its subjection to the risks of the past.”34 It is clear that the paper valued the protection of the office of the president, not simply the man himself, and that changes in

33 “New Plans to Protect Our Presidents,” Atlanta Constitution, October 6, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution (1868-1945).
34 “New Plans to Protect Our Presidents,” Atlanta Constitution, October 6, 1901.
American society warranted changes in the public role of the president. During early American history, organized and visible protection would have been thought unnecessary. At the time, as one state department official stated in the article “Washington was a country town.”35 The Constitution also denounced “yellow journalism,” which it blamed for using sensationalism to foment discontent. The article quoted a Minnesota representative who claimed that uneducated immigrants took the sensationalistic writing as fact and therefore held political leaders accountable for their own unfortunate situation, facilitating interest in anarchist ideas. Although there is no evidence to suggest that yellow journalism directly led to McKinley’s assassination, the article suggests that greater distribution of newspapers created wider recognition of the president and his policy decisions. With the president becoming more visible in the public consciousness, security concerns would only increase.

As debate over the proper response to the McKinley assassination grew in the following months, The North American Review published an issue partly dedicated to the subject. In three separate articles, prominent Americans expressed their views on how to provide for the security of the president. Senator J.C. Burrows, a Republican from Michigan, laid the blame for the assassination squarely upon anarchist teachings, declaring that McKinley would be alive had the main advocates of anarchism been punished. A supporter of McKinley, Burrows made no effort to hide his affection for the late president, calling him, “the best-beloved man who has ruled over this country since Abraham Lincoln.”36 He expressed an alarmist view of the threat, asserting that unlike a monarchy with endless familial succession, the line of executive power in the United States only consisted of the president and nine other men, what he termed ten lives,

35 “New Plans to Protect Our Presidents,” Atlanta Constitution, October 6, 1901.
36 Burrows, “The Need of a National Legislation Against Anarchism.”
“between government and anarchy.” The fact that Burrows completely neglected the other two-thirds of the federal government demonstrated the increased stature the American president had attained. While American society was unlikely to collapse solely in the absence of a chief executive, Burrows nevertheless pointed out a thorny problem in a country that continued to place greater emphasis on the office of the president. Although others attempted to make a distinction between the assassinations in order to draw attention to the anarchist threat, Burrows noted that, since Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley were killed due to their office, legislation providing for capital punishment after an assault upon the president constituted a just reaction. As such, the senator advocated for deportation and immigration limits on anarchists as well as making an attack on the president a capital offense.

Burrows’s theorizing about the role of a government to protect its leaders was seconded in another *North American Review* piece, written by Edgar Aldrich, a United States District Judge for New Hampshire. Aldrich began his article by stating that McKinley was killed “because he represented the idea of law and government.” He also laid out a position for stiff penalties for assaults upon those in the presidential line of succession as well as anyone who advocated anarchist principles. Aldrich even included a sample bill for legislators. He justified the harsh sentences included in the bill through the “general welfare” clause of the Constitution, which he felt gave the government the power for self-defense. It is clear that Aldrich and Burrows felt the American way of life was under assault, and harsh sanctions were necessary to put a stop to presidential assassinations.

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37 Burrows, “The Need of a National Legislation Against Anarchism.”
General Lew Wallace, a former Union military governor, cast doubt upon the effectiveness of many of the already proposed solutions. He ridiculed attempts to assign soldiers to guard the president or implement a protective force through a detective agency, calling it an unnecessary burden upon an otherwise free man. He reminded his audience that as commander-in-chief, the president already had the power to utilize the Army for his own protection. He even provides his own bemused image of Roosevelt rejecting a guard, saying, “The ways of the great and good Emperor William are for Germany…We are satisfied to patronize his beet sugar, without imitating his style of mustache or borrowing his idea of a nickel-plated bodyguard.”

Wallace obviously found the image of the manly Roosevelt with a bodyguard unfathomable. Instead of forcing protection upon an unwilling president, Wallace favored granting the president an appropriation to be used for subtle Secret Service protection that would avoid the pomp and circumstance of European monarchs. Once the presidential protection issue was finally debated in Congress, the avoidance of such imperial appearances was on many minds. Although McKinley’s assassination had showed many citizens and Congressmen that bodyguards might be necessary for future presidents to serve out their terms, such protection needed to occur without elevating the president’s appearance to that of a quasi-monarchical figure. His comparison to the Kaiser’s mustache suggested that the key difference was in style—the concern was not with the idea of special privileges for the president, but rather whether these privileges could be presented in a way that would not clash with accepted norms of American democracy. It is clear that Americans found a significant distinction between the president and the German Kaiser, one that they were eager to keep despite an obvious need to provide protection to the president. Together,

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these articles adopted a hard line against anarchists but still acknowledged other issues relating to the complications of providing appropriate protection for the president.

As momentum built for a resolution, it was obvious that the future of presidential protection would end up being debated in the chambers of Congress. The idea that the president could safely walk the streets like the average citizen was, in certain respects, no longer appropriate in the twentieth century. By 1901, no one would expect a new president to be obligated to open up the White House like Jackson had after his inauguration. Public officials and the press had assembled a large assortment of ideas that would need to be narrowed down into concrete legislative solutions. While many dealt directly with the supposed dangers anarchism posed to American society, there was also a collective push toward a protective force, whether through the military or a detective force such as the Secret Service. From this point on, it would be up to Congress to determine the proper course of action to ensure that future presidents would be safer from assassination attempts.
Chapter 2

A Legislative Solution?

“I would object on general principles that it is antagonistic to our tradition, to our habits of thought, and to our customs that the President should surround himself with a body of janizaries or a sort of Pretorian guard” – Stephen A. Mallory, Democratic Senator of Florida

In the months after McKinley’s assassination, pressure grew for Congressional action to provide protection for the president. Already, cabinet officials, congressmen, and columnists had offered their own suggestions for ways to increase presidential security in the face of what appeared to be a growing threat to the life of whoever happened to be the sitting president. As 1901 came to a close, members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate were preparing bills for their respective chambers. Within weeks of the opening of the 57th Congress on December 2, 1901, several bills were introduced in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each sought to provide punishment for assaults upon the president, with some enacted through amendments to the Constitution.\(^{41}\)

By January 1902, support began to coalesce around two bills, one in the House and one in the Senate. The first, introduced by Representative George Ray of New York, was reported back favorably from the Judiciary Committee on February 8. George Hoar of Massachusetts brought the other before the Senate in December, which came back from the Judiciary Committee on February 10. Ray decided to wait and see the results of the Senate bill before bringing his own version before the full House.\(^{42}\)

\(^{41}\) Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1901 vol. 35, index 555, 120, 428.  
\(^{42}\) Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 1490, 1495.
On March 1, 1902, Hoar presented his bill to the Senate. Hoar was a career politician who was first elected to the United States House of Representatives as a Republican in 1869, where he served until 1877, when he was elected to serve as one of the state’s senators. He had first entered Congress as a Radical Republican, but as the nineteenth century progressed, he came to be known as one of the leaders of the Half-Breed Republicans who got their name as they fought for civil service reform. He favored increased foreign trade and limited federal regulation, and he was one of the leading Republican anti-imperialist voices. By 1902, Hoar was one of the elder statesmen of his party.

The bill that Hoar presented, titled, “A bill for the protection of the President of the United States, and for other purposes,” laid out his plan to provide statutory protection for President Roosevelt and those elected after him. The first section of the bill declared that anyone who would, “willfully kill or cause the death of the President or Vice-President of the United States, or any officer thereof upon whom the powers and duties of the President may devolve…[or] of the sovereign or chief magistrate of any foreign country, shall be punished with death.” The fact that this provision was the first to be listed under the proposed bill demonstrated Hoar’s strong feelings about the severity of the crime and articulated a desire for revenge that had spread throughout the country. Although he had very publicly disagreed with McKinley on several issues, including the American occupation of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, Hoar was very fond of McKinley personally. After McKinley’s death,
Hoar was appointed chairman of an ad hoc Senate committee tasked with attending and coordinating the late president’s funeral rites and he had given McKinley a heartfelt tribute at the conclusion of the Massachusetts Republican State Convention.\(^48\) Clearly, Hoar intended that, in the future, a presidential assassin would receive no mercy from a grieving public.

The next few sections of Hoar’s bill spelled out punishments for other transgressions. Attempted murder of the president or another executive official would also have been punished by death, while any action to “instigate, advise, or counsel” such an act would be punished by no more than twenty years imprisonment. Again, the sections applied to all those in the presidential line of succession and foreign heads of state. This provision was directly related to the threat that the United States currently faced, as some worried that anarchists would orchestrate a plot to eliminate the entire executive branch leadership or even attack foreign leaders visiting the nation. As Hoar explained, the majority of the committee felt that the federal officers protected by the bill were “essential to the continuance” of the United States government and that any attack against them was an offense “against Federal authority” which gave Congress the constitutional power to enact the legislation.\(^49\) The bill demonstrated that the president and his successors and foreign equivalents were essential parts of the governments of their respective nations.

Anarchism’s threat to the government endangered the public order, and the possibility of assassination of political leaders was the most direct and extreme form of this threat. In the minds of Hoar and the bill’s other supporters, state laws against assault and murder were no longer sufficient. The changing world had left them no choice but to take action.

\(^{48}\) “Mr. Hoar’s Tribute to the Late President,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1901, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The New York Times* (1851-2009); Welch, Jr., *George Frisbie Hoar and the Half-Breed Republicans*, 291.

\(^{49}\) *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2275.
One did not have to actually participate in an assault upon the president or another federal officer to come under the purview of Hoar’s proposed legislation. Even the speaking or writing of words to “threaten to kill, or advise or instigate another to kill” would lead to imprisonment not exceeding ten years.\textsuperscript{50} In his signed confession, Czolgosz had declared that he had been inspired to become an anarchist after listening to and reading works by Goldman, and those statements clearly struck a chord with Hoar.\textsuperscript{51} While Czolgosz would be punished by the state of New York for the murder, no state statute could reach Goldman for words spoken in another state, and federal officials in the Justice Department had tried in vain to find a statute they could use to exact punishment.\textsuperscript{52} However, with Hoar’s bill, Goldman would have received a stiff sentence, whether or not she had ever even known of McKinley’s assassin. Hoar did not mention Goldman in his original introduction of the bill, but she was referenced several times during the debate as the prime example of someone who could have been punished for advocating the death of the president.\textsuperscript{53}

The final section of the Hoar bill gave the Secretary of War the power to “detail from the Regular Army a sufficient number of officers and men to guard and protect the person of the President of the United States without any unnecessary display.” The bill also authorized the

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Congressional Record}, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2275.
\textsuperscript{52} “Anarchists May Crowd Prisons,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, September 10, 1901; The Department of Justice had almost given up on finding a statute to charge Czolgosz with, but finally found a law that punished conspiracies against “the elective franchise and civil rights of citizens.” In the end, the prosecution did not proceed, especially since the punishment was much less severe than New York’s punishment for murder.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Congressional Record}, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2491, 3119 During the House debate in June, Ray did specifically mention Goldman, using her actions as an example of the one way that the House bill did not go far enough: “Shall we kill the viper and have no redress against those who hatch vipers and place them in the pathways where the feet of humanity must tread?” (\textit{Congressional Record}, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6334.)
secretary to create rules for the new guard’s “dress, arms, and equipment and duties.” Unlike the other measures of the bill, which were meant to be a deterrent for would-be assassins, this section actually provided for full-time physical protection. In his initial presentation of the bill, Hoar declared that the three presidential assassinations would not have occurred had there been appropriate protection. At the time the bill was being debated, the Secret Service had started to provide occasional protection for President Roosevelt, under the arrangements made by the president’s secretary and the chief of the Secret Service. Under the bill, however, these duties would be given to the regular Army. Hoar believed the Secret Service was not up to the task, noting the three assassinations between 1865 and 1901. As Hoar presented the bill, he claimed, “the detective corps on which we trust for such things certainly has not accomplished its purpose in three important cases.” He decided these duties should be assigned to the Army due to the failure of the Secret Service to adequately provide protection not just for McKinley, but for Lincoln and Garfield as well; he felt the Army would provide more efficient protection in general. Based on this view of the Secret Service, it is not surprising the bill’s supporters decided the Army would be a more appropriate protective force.

Although it went unchallenged within the Senate chamber, Hoar was incorrect in his assessment of the Secret Service’s performance as a protective force. He stated, “There should have been security provided by that force” to prevent Booth from reaching Lincoln’s box and assassinating him at Ford’s Theatre. There was one problem with his assertion—the Secret Service had barely been established at the time of Lincoln’s assassination. The force was created in 1865 specifically to investigate the rampant counterfeiting of Greenbacks during the Civil War

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54 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2275.
55 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2275.
56 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2275.
that threatened to worsen the warring nation’s high inflation rate.\textsuperscript{57} No protection was provided by the Secret Service to President Garfield at any point during his term in office, as President Cleveland was the first to receive any protection. While President McKinley had some Secret Service protection, a memo from Secret Service Chief John Wilkie to Franklin MacVeagh, President William Taft’s Treasury Secretary, revealed there was “no systematic arrangement for protective measures.”\textsuperscript{58} Three Secret Service agents had accompanied McKinley during his trip to Buffalo. However, Wilkie maintained they could not have stopped the assassination since the police had done nothing to restrict the items brought into the tent by the crowd. As soon as shots rang out, the agents immediately jumped on the assassin and disabled him, although they received no credit for it in the news.\textsuperscript{59} Although Hoar was not correct in his history, his words revealed a lack of understanding of and trust in the capabilities of the Secret Service. That a personal protection provision was inserted into the bill demonstrated that the senators viewed it as a true necessity for a twentieth century presidency, even if it was deemed secondary to creating a death sentence for presidential assassins.

Only one other senator spoke at the time of the bill’s presentation: Senator Edmund Pettus of Alabama. Pettus, a Democrat and former brigadier general in the Confederate Army, was serving his first term in the Senate.\textsuperscript{60} Although Pettus took issue with several portions of the bill, he took the time to praise the inclusion of the section providing for military protection of the president. According to a \textit{Washington Post} article published the next day, Pettus had insisted that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Wilkie, untitled memorandum on the protection of the president, n.d. (March 1910?), Franklin MacVeagh papers, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Wilkie, untitled memorandum on the protection of the president, n.d. (March 1910?), Franklin MacVeagh papers, 3-4.
\end{itemize}
the seventh section be included in the bill.\(^{61}\) He reminded the assembled senators that the Secret Service was not authorized by law to protect the president, despite whatever protection they had been performing at that time. He then reaffirmed his support for a military guard by rejecting the Secret Service as drawn from a “class of citizens” that could not be expected to provide proper protection since they were expected to “hunt up and detect,” whereas a military officer’s honor necessitated a “constant vigilance” against assassins.\(^ {62}\) Even though Hoar wanted to do no more than present the bill to the chamber, Pettus insisted on critiquing the Secret Service. He made no attempt to hide his disdain for the agency, declaring it “not composed of the kind of men to whom ought to be intrusted (sic.) such an important duty.”\(^ {63}\) Pettus obviously did not trust these men whose job description involved cunning and manipulation, deeming them beneath the honor and dedication of a military officer. Although Pettus did not want the president’s guard to have a martial feel, he felt that the Army, with its dignity and honor, was more suited for protective duties. As a former general, Pettus likely believed that military control of protection would be the most effective, yet he was clearly suspicious of the type of men who comprised the Secret Service and possibly even of the power the president would obtain through his ability to use them for personal protection. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Secret Service was the only federal organization with the power to investigate civilians, and thus it would be able to conduct the investigations and surveillance necessary to provide proper protection.\(^ {64}\) Although granting protection duties to an organization with this power may have appeared a natural choice given the needs of the mission, Pettus might have been concerned that the president would be


\(^{62}\) *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2276.

\(^{63}\) *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2276.

dangerously able to expand the Secret Service’s activities beyond the mandate expected by Congress and use protection as an excuse to conduct unwarranted investigations into personal or political enemies. In comparison, a presidential guard provided by the military would be strictly for physical security and would not have conjured the same fears of presidential overreach.

Before the day ended, Senator Bacon of Georgia took the floor to offer amendments to Hoar’s bill. Although Hoar was eager to keep the bill moving, he allowed Bacon to offer amendments and give the full Senate time to consider them before debate began. Bacon, a Democrat, would serve as one of the main voices of opposition during the debate that would later take place on the Senate floor.65 Bacon’s amendments expressed concern about the scope of the bill Hoar had written. Unlike Pettus, who had taken the time to comment upon and offer his support for a military guard for the president, Bacon stood in opposition to the provisions that outlined punishments for an assault upon the president and other federal officers. His amendment added a phrase, “because of his official position”—meaning that the law would only apply if an assault or assassination took place as a direct result of performing one’s official duties.66 Although he left his explanation for the amendments to the floor debate, the amendments offer a hint of the suspicion with which Bacon and others regarded any attempt to bolster the power of the presidency by placing its duties on a level above those of other government positions.

The concerns of Bacon and other opposing legislators can best be summed up as opposition to an increase in federal and executive power. Ever since the first debates over the Constitution, politicians in the United States had waged intense battles over the role of the federal government and the executive branch. That document had been specifically designed to

66 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2288.
limit the power of the executive branch through a system of checks and balances. Although some nineteenth-century presidents had charismatic personalities, the man holding the office was not typically known as the driving force behind policy in his party. However, by the time the presidential protection bill came to the Senate floor, some members had grown concerned with what was perceived as a dangerous and unconstitutional expansion of federal and presidential power.

In the years after the 1902 presidential protection debate in Congress, some political writers and theorists began to express their apprehension about the increase in presidential power that had become quite obvious after the presidencies of Roosevelt and Wilson and revealed evidence for some of the concerns expressed by southern Democrats. Henry Campbell Black, a legal scholar and the founder of Black’s Legal Dictionary, published a book in 1919 titled Politics and People: The Ordeal of Self-Government in America, in which he expressed concern that the balance between the legislative and executive branches of the federal government had been “gravely disturbed” since the ratification of the Constitution. He found that the Spanish-American War in 1898 had made the president was the nation’s foremost figure in military and foreign affairs, and thus reawakened the potential powers of the executive. He predicted that the United States’ rapidly increasing presence in the world would only hasten the nation’s path towards “the decay of representative government, and the substitution for it of a presidential autocracy.” Although his suggestions for reform centered upon greater congressional control over presidential actions, the book demonstrates the unease with which many southern

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69 Black, Politics and People, 20-22.
70 Black, Politics and People, 183.
politicians, who disapproved of expansions in federal power, viewed the growing power of the presidency in the early twentieth century. Such thoughts likely weighed on the minds of the anti-federalists faced with this bill.

During the month of March 1902, the senators revisited the presidential protection issue several times, leading to a contentious debate. The debate centered on whether it was appropriate to clothe the president with a level of protection not afforded to the general public that markedly increased his power in the federal government. As Bacon stated, “The killing of President McKinley naturally inclines us all to the adoption of most rigid and drastic methods.”  

McKinley’s death had been a shock, and many of the members of the Senate knew him both personally and professionally from his time as president and as a member of the House of Representatives. Naturally, the discussion sparked passionate arguments both for and against Hoar’s bill. At one time, the debate was so vociferous that Senator Pettus had to remind the chamber that the interruptions and back and forth between the members was “contrary to good order” and unacceptable in the chamber. As the debate continued, several practical and philosophical disagreements emerged. Together, these issues displayed a fundamental disagreement among the senators over the dangers of affording greater personal and legal protection to the president and other officers of the United States.

Throughout the debate, it became clear that the primary disagreement among the senators was over the role of the president in American politics and how to best provide for his protection while not elevating his rights above those of the average citizen. Even Senator Bacon acknowledged that the president “represent[ed] a part of the sovereignty of the country” along

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71 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2430.
72 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2486.
with Congress. As a representative of the nation’s sovereignty, the president deserved to have protection in performing the duties of his office. However, Bacon questioned whether the legislation would then place the president and the executive branch on a “different plane” than the average citizen. He projected that a logical continuation of this idea would assume that similar benefits should be afforded to the judiciary, and even to members of Congress, since they also represented the nation’s sovereignty and, if incapacitated, would inhibit functions of government. Bacon and other opponents of the legislation struggled to find an appropriate limit for this power. Utilizing what he felt was Hoar’s logic, Bacon concluded that an attack upon the president would be no different than one targeting any other member of the federal government. He reminded the senators, “the President of the United States is not the nation.” On the other hand, Hoar countered that there was a clear distinction. Due to the distinct nature of the executive branch’s linear power structure, he found the presidential line of succession to be a reasonable limit. Although supporters attempted to make a distinction about the unique nature of the presidency, Democratic Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama countered that it was ridiculous to give the executive branch privileges not held by the other branches of the government, especially the judiciary, since judges sometimes faced death threats.

A question also arose as to whether the president was always acting as the president, even when engaged in activities of a normal citizen. Hoar and other supporters of the protection bill believed that the duties of a president were always present—no matter what activity he was performing during his time in office. Hoar cited a statement from President Ulysses S. Grant to

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73 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2485.
74 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2490.
75 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2954.
76 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3049.
77 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3126.
the House of Representatives in 1876 in which the former president justified his absences from Washington by stating, “the performance of Executive acts by the President of the United States exists and is devolved upon him…by the Constitution of the United States.”78 While Grant’s statement referred more to his physical location rather than to his activity at each and every moment of his presidency, his words still underscored the varied nature of the presidency, which naturally includes duties not easily defined or tracked with a time clock. Senator John Spooner, a Republican from Wisconsin, noted that he had never known the president to take a trip where he “did not carry the burden of the Executive duty” and could be needed at any hour for his office.79 Senator Thomas Patterson, a Democrat from Colorado, quickly retorted that he wouldn’t consider a vice president’s trip “hunting mountain lions in Colorado” anything other than a pleasure trip.80 From this debate, a fundamental disagreement about the role of the presidency emerged: was the president simply a citizen performing a public duty at his job like other Americans, or did the position preclude that sort of relationship between the man and the office? Further, did this relationship necessitate greater physical protection of the president? Senate Democrats, wary of an increase in presidential power, were opposed to making that sort of distinction. Democratic Senator Hernando Money of Mississippi resolutely rejected the status and reverence given to the president. Money compared the executive branch to the “hand” of government, subject to the will of the congressional “brain.”81 In his mind, the executive’s

78 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3054.
81 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3058.
perceived attempt to encroach upon the territory of Congress was a dangerous threat to the republican values of American government.

Several senators expressed concerns about the possibility of inherent unfairness in the legislation, especially with its restrictions on speech. Senator Patterson expressed grave concern with the provisions laid out in the second half of the bill that provided harsh punishments for those whose words might inadvertently lead to the death of the president. Patterson proposed a scenario where a political opponent of the administration gave a speech that denounced the president ruthlessly, yet constitutionally. He advanced that if a person affected by those words killed the president, the political leader could be held liable in the original language of the bill. He suggested that an arrest could also take place for words said, “in the heat of passion, yet without any evil intent.” Democrats continued to express concern that the party in power could use the bill for nefarious purposes.

However, there were also practical concerns regarding these provisions. Senator Joseph Rawlins of Utah fretted that the stiff punishments spelled out in these provisions could even have an unintended effect. If a man was guilty of a minor crime, the harsh punishment might sway a jury away from assessing guilt. He believed that the punishments were so disproportionate to the crimes that jury nullification was a real possibility. The Democrats hoped that Bacon’s amendments would narrow the focus of the bill enough to ensure its constitutionality and protect individual liberties.

As the debate unfolded, many other senators expressed apprehension about the proposed legislation. Some senators, mainly from the South, took offense at the notion in the bill that state laws were inconsistent and possibly ineffective for providing a just punishment to a would-be

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82 *Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902* vol. 35, 2434.
83 *Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902* vol. 35, 3046.
assassin. Senator Bacon called it a “serious question” to take power away from the states.\textsuperscript{84} Although not every state conducted capital punishment, Senator Rawlins declared that any state in the union would have ensured that an assassin was suitably punished and doubted that a strict penalty would stop an anarchist or mentally unbalanced attacker, and Senator Edward Cormack, a Tennessee Democrat, resented the idea that the federal government would “belittle the states” and emasculate them by proposing that the president would not be safe under their criminal statutes.\textsuperscript{85} To them, the legislation appeared to be a firm step towards impinging upon states’ rights and unnecessarily strengthening the power of the federal government. In the Jeffersonian spirit, these senators were extremely distrustful of the executive branch and feared that moving legal protection of the president to federal jurisdiction would constitute a serious violation of United States democratic ideals.

Due to the broad nature of the bill, Bacon doubted that Hoar’s version would prove in line with the United States Constitution. His position hinged upon the definition of the word “treason” in the Constitution. Since treason was specifically defined in English common law to include attacks upon the chief executive but was not so described in the Constitution, Bacon concluded that the founding fathers had not intended for such a law to be possible under the Constitution.\textsuperscript{86} Bacon felt that his amendments, by limiting the law to times when the president was acting in an official manner, would make the bill constitutional and limit its ability to infringe upon individual liberties. However, others pointed out that his amendments brought the

\textsuperscript{84} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2432.
\textsuperscript{86} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2483.
bill into the messy area of needing to determine intent, which circled the debate back towards the jurisdictional issues with the states.

Throughout discussion on the bill, it was clear the opposition worried that the president would be able to use the bill to expand his power and stifle his political opposition. Early on, Bacon had decried the bill as “the most dangerous piece of legislation…since the days of the sedition law.” After all the debate, it was obvious that opponents found the bill too vague and strict, leaving it easily manipulated, just like the sedition bill that had passed Congress in 1798 and is now one of the glaring examples of overreach in American government. Bacon reiterated his fear that the bill could easily be applied to those who had done no more than express antagonistic views towards the administration. Opposition to presidential protection had grown out of these fears of a stronger presidency. Although the bill came about as a reaction to the McKinley assassination, the arguments that were expressed extended to a much deeper level about the balance of power between the executive branch and other parts of American government. This disagreement consumed most of the time and energy spent on the legislation, and demonstrated that providing special protections for an official in a democracy was not considered lightly. Together, these objections revealed a general philosophy of opposition to increased presidential and federal power. Such concerns would also manifest themselves in the debate over the clause providing for the physical protection of the president.

While most of the senators dedicated their speaking time to their opinions of the punishment sections of the bill, there was some discussion of the seventh section that allowed the Secretary of War to provide for a military guard of the president. On March 19, 1902 Senator Henry Teller, a liberal Democrat from Colorado, expressed his unease with the military guard,

\[87\] Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2488.
saying he preferred protection to be provided by a civilian entity such as the Secret Service that was already informally providing protection to Roosevelt. In response to those who criticized the Secret Service’s actions during the attack on President McKinley, Teller surmised that the Secret Service was disorganized while dealing with a new situation in Buffalo. He even conjectured, “the probability is that the slight change of a gentleman connected with that service from the usual position he had with reference to the President permitted the catastrophe” and predicted that an increase in the appropriation for the Secret Service would give the organization the resources to improve its protective services.  

Although he supported a presidential protective guard, Senator Teller evidently was suspicious of the power a military guard would afford the president.  

The next day, however, Senator Stephen R. Mallory, a Democrat from Florida, objected to the military guard with much more vigorous language.  

I would object on general principles that it is antagonistic to our tradition, to our habits of thought, and to our customs that the President should surround himself with a body of janizaries [also spelled janissaries, an elite group of soldiers loyal to the Ottoman sultans that existed from the 14th to the early 19th centuries] or a sort of Pretorian guard, and ever go anywhere unless he is accompanied by men in uniform and men with sabers as is done by the monarchs of the continent of Europe or as the King of Great Britain does with his household cavalry around him. I do not think it is in keeping with our system and with the ideas which prevail among the people of this country that the Chief Magistrate, who is a civil official, should be surrounded with all the pomp and ceremony of an autocrat.  

With his statement, Mallory painted a picture of the president’s guard as anathema to American democratic ideals. With one sentence, he evoked several images of the guards that had become

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88 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3003.  
91 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3049.
symbols of monarchical power. The mention of the Praetorian Guard was particularly striking, evoking the devolution of the Roman Republic and the power that the Guard itself wielded over emperors and other public officials. Coupling it with a reference to the British king further separated a personal guard for the president and American ideals. Together, they produced an uneasy metaphor that allowed Mallory to express just how easily protection and security could become repression and fear, a potent threat for officials who had to face their constituents for reelection. Such a fear of presidential power had led to one of the largest debates during the Constitutional convention.

Senator Spooner quickly responded that the bill did not require the guards to wear uniforms or put on any military displays. Yet Mallory was unconvinced, believing any military association with the civilian office to be unacceptable. Instead, he proposed an amendment that provided the same protection, but by the Secret Service rather than the military, a solution that Spooner found absurd given the Service’s “inefficacious” performance during the McKinley assassination.92 Spooner and other Republicans felt that an able and well-armed cohort of guards would be much more effective. However, not all Democrats were in favor of a Secret Service solution. Senator Pettus, the Alabama Democrat and a retired soldier of the Confederate Army, favored the military, calling soldiers “honorable men” whose experience gave them the skills and moral fortitude necessary to provide the best possible protection.93 It was his opinion that the Secret Service spent far too much time dealing with thieves and embezzlers, making it “beneath the dignity of the Presidential office” to guard the president.94 On the other hand, Mallory

92 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3049.
94 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3050.
favored the Secret Service’s ability to provide “competent” and “discreet” men who he felt would serve with same honor and patriotism as soldiers. However, Senator Charles Fairbanks of Indiana felt that the Democrats’ opposition to the bill and, more specifically, their charges of “imperialism” during the debates, was due to their “fear of the Army.” Fairbanks suggested that the Democrats were still suspicious of the Army in the aftermath of the Civil War, and were thus predisposed to be in opposition to both the Army and any measure that could be interpreted as giving more power to the federal government vis-à-vis the president. Their arguments were thus less about the virtues of the Secret Service and presidential protection than about avoiding further expansion of federal powers. Protection of the president was caught in a longstanding battle about the role of the federal government in the lives of the people.

Despite Democrats’ fears, debate on the legislation reached its last day on March 21, 1902. Although Senator Patterson termed the bill “evil legislation” that would lead to the “worst possible results to the peace and quietude and to the rights of American citizens,” the majority of the senators did not share his dire view. Throughout all the criticism, Hoar had maintained that the bill, by defending the man “clothed with the Presidential office,” was necessary to protect the “dignity and authority” of the government of the United States. Finally, the measure came to a vote. The amendments requested by Senators Bacon and Mallory were defeated, and Hoar’s original bill passed the Senate by a vote of 52 to 15, with 21 senators not voting. Most of the senators in opposition were southern Democrats. Only two Republicans voted against the bill. One of the two, Senator Porter McCumber of North Dakota, had worried that the bill would place the president and others in the line of succession on a legal level above all other citizens.

95 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3050.
96 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3122.
97 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3120.
98 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3123.
and lamented that a military guard would separate the president from the people whose affections he should be courting.\textsuperscript{99}

Now that the Hoar’s bill had passed the Senate, it was up to the House to pass its own version of the legislation. Representative Ray finally brought his bill to the House floor on June 3, 1902.\textsuperscript{100} Although the House was considering the text of the Senate bill, in reality they were about to debate the piece of legislation introduced by Ray over the winter. Ray took great pains to ensure that his bill would not suffer the constitutional objections that had been thrown at the Senate measure. His legislation included the phrase, “while he is engaged in the performance of his official duties, or because of his official character,” in order to prevent the circumstance where a man could be prosecuted in a federal court for killing the president over a personal dispute or while the president was on a vacation.\textsuperscript{101} However, in order to ensure that one could not easily claim such a dispute, the final section of the bill declared, “it shall be presumed” that the president or other official “was at the time of the commission of the alleged offense, engaged in the performance of his official duties.”\textsuperscript{102} Ray placed this provision in the bill in order to put the burden of proof upon the defendant, all but assuring that presidential attackers would be prosecuted under the legislation. In addition, Ray had added several sections to the bill preventing immigration and citizenship for anarchists. However, the key difference between the two bills was that the seventh section of the Senate bill, the one providing for a military guard,\textsuperscript{99} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 3053-54.\textsuperscript{100} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6235.\textsuperscript{101} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6238.\textsuperscript{102} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6238.
was completely absent from the legislation. Ray’s bill was purely punitive and would have no effect on the president’s current guard.103

Although the personal protection provision had not been included in the version of the bill that made it to the House floor, that section had been discussed in committee. In the committee report to the House, the majority had expressed its concern with the provision, declaring that under it the president could “detail every man and officer…under the pretense of protecting the President…and send them abroad among the people to act under secret orders. When such laws begin to operate in this Republic the liberties of the people will take wings and fly away.”104 Although Ray and others on the House committee favored the bill, they felt that the personal protection provision provided the possibility of a massive expansion of presidential power, even saying that such a law would “excite and encourage anarchy.”105 Instead, Ray’s committee was “not opposed” to protection by the Secret Service, and decided that a group based out of the Treasury Department would be much more effective in protecting the president.106 The committee did not want to commit to any sort of a protective force, yet the Secret Service appeared to be a better option. In the end, Ray’s bill made no mention of a physical guard for the president, instead relying on punitive measures. After all of the opposition in the Senate, the House committee likely did not want the protective force to be an impediment to the passage of the bill.

Debate over Ray’s bill followed many of the arguments already discussed during consideration of the proposed legislation in the Senate. Republicans such as Representative

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Edgar Crumpacker of Indiana attacked the bill for breaking too far from the Senate version. In his bill, Ray had required that the president be on duty in order to be covered by the legislation and had omitted the protective guard, which frustrated Crumpacker. He continued Hoar’s line of reasoning, arguing, “the President is the constitutional means of carrying on its [the Federal Government’s] operations” since an assassin “deprives the Federal Government of the constitutional agency of carrying on and executing its laws.” Since Crumpacker felt that the president was such a crucial link in the operation of the government, he agreed with Hoar that every means necessary should be available to prevent another presidential assassination. Ray responded that the theory was based on the idea that “the President is the king, and that the king can do no wrong.” Ray compared the Senate bill’s language to making the president a king in order to highlight the differences between the bills and elucidate his reasoning for the language in the bill. Since the president was not infallible, the bill needed to account for the possibility of presidential overreach, no matter how rare it may have appeared at the time. The dispute demonstrates that even among Republicans, there was concern over the expansion of presidential power.

However, most of the opposition again came from Democrats concerned that the bill went too far and encroached upon states’ rights and individual liberties. Although states’ rights had been discussed in the Senate, the Democratic representatives were much more emphatic in their opposition to a bill that intruded upon the traditional jurisdictional rights of the states. The most vocal opponent of the measure in the House of Representatives was Samuel Lanham of Texas. The representative lambasted the bill as “un-American” legislation that “wrongfully

\[107\] Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6240.
\[108\] Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6243.
encroach[ed]” upon the states. Lantham was primarily concerned with upholding the rights of the states. As a southerner, he was immensely suspicious of federal power and feared, like most other opponents, that the bill could be used to suppress political opposition. Instead, he favored greater measures to prevent the spread of anarchy in the United States.

While the creation of a presidential protection force received some attention as a result of its inclusion in the Senate bill, the representatives were much less concerned with providing any sort of guard to the president. Republican Representative Caleb Power of Kentucky noted in a speech that the bodyguard provision had been received with “some favor” after it passed the Senate. However, he felt that it was not necessary if the House bill passed, as it would “have its moral force upon the American people,” which would help in repressing anarchism and other anti-government forces.

As such, he found the idea of a presidential bodyguard a laughable and undesirable proposal that would restrict the president’s ability to interact with the people. He cited a joke by Representative Charles Littlefield of Maine that exemplified the ridiculousness of a protective force: “My friend…from Maine [Mr. Littlefield] suggested that we might go to the extent of having a little fortress or castle upon wheels, which could be moved throughout the country like a cage, for the protection of the President.” Obviously, Powers found the idea of a presidential bodyguard absurd, despite its public support. He likely found humor in the idea of the virile President Roosevelt having guards forced upon him during his travels. Such an image would not be in line with American values of freedom and liberty.

109 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6246, 6249.
110 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6286.
111 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2687.
112 Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 2687.
Although the Republicans laughed off bodyguards as unnecessary if the bill took hold and anarchists were repressed, Democrats took issue with the suggestion of their existence. Representative Dudley Wooten of Texas assailed the bill for even suggesting the idea of additional protection for the president, comparing it to changes in the regimes of Caesar and Cromwell that had led to repression. He declared that the bill would “destroy the essential simplicity and harmony of its [the government’s] constitutional organization by importing into its methods and practices the ideas and principles that have destroyed free governments.”\footnote{Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6344.} Wooten was undoubtedly concerned with the balance of power between the branches of the federal government and the government’s relationship with the states. He viewed the constitution as a perfectly balanced document that prevented the country from falling towards an autocratic government. And besides, Representative Lantham noted, military protection would not have prevented Czolgosz from assassinating McKinley.\footnote{Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6360.} In his mind, nothing could be done to stop a deranged man besides uncovering the plot in advance of the assassination. A man who did not fear the consequences of his actions would always be able to attempt an assault upon the president. The possibility of increased presidential security was not worth such a violation of American democratic ideals.

On June 9, Ray’s bill came up for a final vote in the House of Representatives. Five days of debate had done little to sway the opinions of the majority, and the bill passed by a vote of 170 to 33, with 16 members answering present and 118 not voting.\footnote{Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 1st sess., 1902 vol. 35, 6506-8.} The bill then went to the conference committee, where it awaited reconciliation between the House and Senate.
A report finally emerged from the conference committee on February 19, 1903. In conference, the Senate representatives had withdrawn some of their bill’s stricter language and agreed to most of the House provisions. Now, only the first section, which referred to the murder of the president or those in the presidential line of succession, eliminated Ray’s language restricting coverage to only official duties and acts of the president. The rest of the bill maintained the characteristics of the House bill. The Senate provision providing for a military guard was completely removed from the bill. Although one representative objected to the omission of the restrictive language in the first section, the full House agreed to the report.

After the conference report was announced to the Senate on February 26, Hoar allowed it to hold over for more debate because there were material differences from the version originally passed by the Senate, though the changes were favorable towards the opposition. On March 3, the last day of the 57th Congress, Hoar finally brought the bill back to the Senate for a vote. However, Bacon and other Democrats continued to emphasize that the bill was radically different than the one passed the year before and decried its general positions. As the day dragged on, the presiding officer, Senator George Perkins of California, finally requested that the Senate move on to other more pressing business before the session ended. In the face of Bacon’s opposition and need to attend to the Senate’s unfinished business, Hoar finally relented and the bill lapsed as the session ended.

Although there is no direct mention of it in the Congressional Record, one can surmise reasons for the failure to agree to the bill. Public outrage over the assassination and consequent interest in the bill had declined as the event faded from the public consciousness while

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116 *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., 1903 vol. 36, 2407.
117 *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., 1903 vol. 36, 2419-20.
118 *Congressional Record*, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., 1903 vol. 36, 2704.
legislation dragged through Congress. In addition, some of the more emotional and overeager senators may have reconsidered their previous support as thoughts of revenge faded and Roosevelt began to implement a more assertive presidency. Furthermore, Congress had passed an anti-anarchist bill earlier in the session, alleviating some of the perceived risk to the president and other federal officers. The presidential protection bill that Hoar and Ray had championed never made it to President Roosevelt’s desk.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{119} Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 2nd sess., 1903 vol. 36, 2953-2964.
Chapter 3

Executive Initiative and Political Roadblocks

“I hope you will make this change, as it will save me from committing perjury once a month.” – John Wilkie, Chief of the Secret Service, at a Congressional Committee hearing

Even before Congress began to debate possible legislative solutions for presidential protection, George B. Cortelyou had begun to utilize the Secret Service for the protection of President Roosevelt. Cortelyou first entered the White House as aide to President Cleveland, but he remained at the White House after McKinley took office due to his tireless work ethic and organizational skills. He quickly became one of McKinley’s most trusted aides and eventually achieved the title of Secretary to the President (a position equivalent to the job now known as the White House Chief of Staff). Although he still remains a little-known figure in American political history, his work has started to come to greater prominence, so much so that historian Lewis Gould has referred to the McKinley and Roosevelt presidencies as the “Age of Cortelyou.” As the secretary, Cortelyou helped McKinley manage the voluminous correspondence that arrived at the White House every day, and he developed new procedures for managing the press. After the assassination, Cortelyou stayed on at the White House to help ease the transition. Cortelyou did not wait for Congress to act in order to take precautionary measures for Roosevelt’s safety. Despite the restrictions, he helped formulate and organize presidential procedures that would be utilized in the years to come.

120 Congressional Record, 60th Cong., 2nd sess., 1909 vol. 43, 673.
On October 4, 1901, less than a month after the assassination, Secretary Cortelyou invited several important men to his house for a meeting to discuss protective arrangements for the newly sworn-in president. At the meeting were Major Richard Sylvester, Superintendent of Police of the District of Columbia; W.E. Cochran, the Chief Post Office Inspector; and W.H. Moran, Chief Clerk of the Secret Service. (The Chief of the Secret Service, John E. Wilkie, was traveling outside of Washington, D.C. and unable to attend.) Together, these five men ensured that President Roosevelt would be safe as he performed his presidential duties. At the meeting, the men discussed various precautionary measures they could implement. No matter what Congress would decide, McKinley’s assassination had proven that the president could no longer live as if he were just an average citizen, and these men were prepared to move ahead before the congressional session commenced.

First, Sylvester suggested that a guard dressed in civilian clothes accompany the president when he went horseback riding. Although Cortelyou had already convinced Roosevelt that an orderly should accompany him in case there was an injury or accident, the men agreed that this companion should also be a trained police officer. The men knew that Roosevelt would not take well to constant supervision by an armed guard. Therefore, the guard would not be in uniform, and his presence would be able yet subtle. Sylvester also discussed plans to increase his own police force in order to accommodate a greater role in the protection of government officials and foreign dignitaries.

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124 Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 3.
125 Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 7.
The secretary revealed that his primary concern was crowds, which brought a greater potential for commotion that could be used to implement a bomb throwing or shooting. He was particularly concerned with crowds that impeded the president’s carriage. Despite the precautions that Cortelyou had taken during McKinley’s presidency, the assassination demonstrated that security forces could not foresee every possibility, especially when the president made an unplanned detour from the prescribed route. In addition, presidents, especially the crowd-friendly McKinley, were known to appreciate the social and political benefits of mingling with crowds despite the obvious security risks. As such, it was critical that Cortelyou and the rest of the men work out proper protection procedures.

The group also discussed methods of utilizing the mail to provide security for the president prior to his trips. Already, the White House had received a threatening letter from a group of African Americans in Philadelphia. The men agreed that the most capable criminal inspectors in Cochran’s postal service would travel to cities ahead of the president in order to investigate potential threats in conjunction with the Secret Service and local police forces. At the time, letters sent through the mail provided most of the information about potential threats to the president. By following up on the writers of these letters, Cortelyou hoped to reduce the potential for one of them to assault the president. They also promised to provide proper coordination to keep track of anarchists. Between Secret Service and police records, the men aimed to assemble a database of all known anarchists and keep track of any possible threats.

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126 Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 7-9.
127 Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 5-6.
128 Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 10-12.
Immediately after McKinley’s death, Cortelyou and Wilkie still saw anarchists as the greatest threat to the life of the president. Their whereabouts would be tracked.

In addition, the four men decided that “as large a guard as was consistent with propriety” would accompany the president on trips outside of Washington.\(^{129}\) It appeared that they were concerned with finding a balance between providing proper security and being overly cautious with the new president or seeming undemocratic. They also discussed the need for these guards to be as “inconspicuous” as possible.\(^{130}\) In addition to appeasing Roosevelt and avoiding public scrutiny, there were also important political concerns. The Secret Service and post office inspectors were not authorized by law to assist in presidential protection. For many reasons, protection would be subtle. The debate in Congress the next year would prove that many legislators feared a large increase in the power of the executive branch. However, Cortelyou was determined to provide proper protection for Roosevelt on his travels.

Throughout Cortelyou’s time as President Roosevelt’s secretary, he coordinated security arrangements with Wilkie, Sylvester, and Moran. Less than two weeks after the first meeting of the protective force heads, Wilkie arranged for three Secret Service agents to accompany President Roosevelt on a short trip, with two more agents joining them at the destination. Even though the protection was not an official Secret Service task, Wilkie assigned one of his best men to guard the president.\(^{131}\) While Congress did not officially sanction the protection, Cortelyou and Wilkie still treated protective duties as one of the most important tasked to the

\(^{129}\) Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 9.
\(^{130}\) Memorandum by George B. Cortelyou and B.F. Barnes, October 4, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, 9.
\(^{131}\) Letter from John E. Wilkie to George B. Cortelyou, October 16, 1901, Precautionary file, reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Secret Service. These arrangements would continue throughout the Roosevelt administration and be renewed for successive presidents.

Despite popular opinions and congressional actions that still suggested that presidential security was not compliant with American democratic ideals, there was no way that a twentieth-century president would ever live or travel without proper security arrangements again. However, the organization as constructed at the time was not well equipped to handle the extra burden of presidential protection. The Secret Service had never been an agency with numerous agents and plentiful resources, and the annual reports from Wilkie to the Secretary of the Treasury each year had clearly demonstrated that the Service had its hands full fighting counterfeiters. For example, in 1904 the Service seized more than $44,000 in counterfeit notes and more than $15,000 in imitation gold and silver coins while making 419 arrests.\(^{132}\) Clearly the Secret Service was occupied with its appropriated objectives, yet the agency also took the time to accommodate the need for presidential protection. Throughout much of its early history, the Secret Service operated on an appropriation that appeared increasingly too small as the organization’s responsibilities increased. Since the appropriation rarely rose significantly, there was seldom room for new hires, a point the organization stressed to every congressman or senator inquiring about a job for a friend or acquaintance.\(^{133}\) However, Cortelyou deemed presidential protection a duty significant enough duty to allow additional strains on the Secret Service’s resources.


\(^{133}\) Letter from W. G. McAdoo to Representative Champ Clark, December 23, 1915, no. 66809-0, container 59, Letters Sent. 1899-1918, record group 87, U.S. Secret Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (Unsurprisingly, despite their rhetoric and objections to the Secret Service, many Congressmen wrote the agency regarding open positions.)
During the first years of Roosevelt’s presidency, Cortelyou took full responsibility for coordinating protective arrangements with Wilkie, Sylvester, and Cochran. As the president’s secretary, he helped to devise the president’s schedule, which he forwarded to the other men so that they could begin to coordinate the guard for his trips outside the capital as well as for public appearances within Washington, D.C.\footnote{Letter from George B. Cortelyou to W.E. Cochran, October 15, 1901, Precautionary file, reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; Letter from John E. Wilkie to George B. Cortelyou, May 23, 1902, no. 13350, box 14, Letters Sent. 1899-1914, vol. 14, Correspondence 1863-1950, record group 87, U.S. Secret Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.} As he was at the White House each day, Cortelyou also kept track of the D.C. police forces that had guard stations around the president’s residence. A few weeks after Roosevelt assumed office, Cortelyou requested to Sylvester that the guard on the White House grounds be increased.\footnote{Letter from George B. Cortelyou to Richard Sylvester, October 21, 1901, Precautionary file, reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.} Cortelyou and Wilkie even arranged to have horses stabled near the president’s house in Oyster Bay so that an agent would always be able to accompany the president when he went on his rides.\footnote{Letter from John E. Wilkie to George B. Cortelyou, July 8, 1902, box 14, Letters Sent. 1899-1914, vol. 14, Correspondence 1863-1950, record group 87, U.S. Secret Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.} In his letters, Cortelyou constantly reminded his colleagues to use discretion as they made these arrangements. He needed to ensure that the president would feel comfortable with his guards and that any protection would fit in the mold of the presidency that the American people had come to expect. Over time, Roosevelt came to view Secret Service protection as a necessary annoyance. In a letter written from his home in Oyster Bay to his friend Henry Cabot Lodge, the senator from Massachusetts, Roosevelt...
described his Secret Service protection as a “very small but very necessary thorn in the flesh.” He stated that he did not believe he was in any real danger from an assassin, and cited Lincoln’s phrase, “though it would be safer for a President to live in a cage, it would interfere with his business.” Clearly Roosevelt felt that an overbearing protective force would be an impediment to his office. However, he admitted the guards were useful at keeping curious onlookers and cranks at bay and allowing him to escape the constant pressures of the presidency. In an ironic twist that contradicted the fears of Democrats, Roosevelt, despite his bombastic and assertive presidency, appreciated protection not as an imperial trapping, but rather as a way to maintain a sense of normalcy in his life.

By the beginning of 1902, it was evident that despite any congressional action, organized procedures had already been implemented for any trips taken by Roosevelt. In a letter to J. Adger Smyth, the mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, Sylvester outlined the strict procedures the Charleston city government and police force would need to follow during the president’s upcoming visit. (While some Secret Service agents were present on all of the president’s trips, early protective services relied heavily upon the local police departments.) Sylvester began the letter with a plain statement clearly detailing his and Cortelyou’s expectations of privacy and confidentiality. Sylvester stated that during the years he had coordinated security for the president, he had but one rule: “the avoidance of any unnecessary display of authority.” In great detail, Sylvester laid out methods of controlling crowds and ensuring the personal space and safety of the president. He specified the number of mounted officers expected to accompany

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138 Letter of Theodore Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, August 6, 1906, 224.
the presidential carriage and suggested locations for them. He proposed that officers on foot near
the president’s carriage, “walk next to the curb in single file, four feet distance between them,
with a detective interspersed here and there.” Such specific directions were given throughout
the five-page letter. The letter suggested that Sylvester and the rest of the organizers took great
care to plan and implement presidential security procedures. Remembering that McKinley’s
assassination was made possible by a large and overwhelming crowd, the letter specified several
measures to make certain that the president was safe, including checking all people who hoped to
meet the president, properly spacing officers to keep the crowd at bay, and closely watching the
movements of everyone who approached the president. Furthermore, the White House
expected that plain-clothes officers would be stationed at key locations in addition to the
uniformed officers in order to reduce the overall security presence. The fact that Cortelyou and
the presidential security force made such detailed preparations but were determined to keep a
low profile demonstrates the careful balancing act of maintaining the president’s public image of
openness while ensuring his own security.

In addition to providing personal security to the president, the Secret Service was also
utilized in investigations of people who appeared likely to harm the president. The Secret Service
investigated the crank letters and threats that came into the White House on a daily basis. Most
of them were harmless, but some did represent a real security threat. In addition, ever since the
McKinley assassination, the Service was tasked with investigating known anarchists who might
pose a threat to the president. As Congress began to debate the presidential protection bill, one

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140 Letter from Richard Sylvester to J. Adger Smyth, January 30, 1902, Precautionary file, reel
141 Letter from Richard Sylvester to J. Adger Smyth, January 30, 1902, Precautionary file, reel
453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.,
2-3.
agent spent the early spring of 1902 investigating an anarchist with a possible connection to Leon Czolgosz.\textsuperscript{142} As time went on, the Secret Service kept up a list of known anarchists and monitored their movements and perceived threat level towards elected officials, taking care to separate those who were “dangerous” as activists and those who appeared likely to attempt to physically harm the president.\textsuperscript{143} The Secret Service’s information was so great that Wilkie speculated in an August 1903 letter to Cortelyou’s successor as Secretary to the President, William Loeb Jr., that had anti-anarchist legislation passed Congress, the Secret Service could have brought “successful prosecutions against a large number of the leading spirits in anarchistic circles.”\textsuperscript{144} As tips came in, Wilkie tasked agents with investigating anarchists and other potential threats to the president.\textsuperscript{145} Since its inception, the Secret Service had become an effective investigative service and certainly had the ability to track the leading anarchists of the day. Wilkie even assured Loeb that the Service was prepared to take precautionary action if a threat to the president was ever reported.\textsuperscript{146}

However, despite all of the precautions, there were some breaches in presidential security. One day in June 1902, in the midst of the House debate on Ray’s presidential protection bill, a young man was discovered inside the White House by Sylvester’s security forces. The man was

\textsuperscript{142} Letter from John E. Wilkie to George B. Cortelyou, March 31, 1902, Precautionary file, reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
\textsuperscript{143} Letter from John E. Wilkie to Loeb, August 31, 1903, Letters received, reel 36, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.,
\textsuperscript{144} Letter from Wilkie to Loeb, August 31, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.
\textsuperscript{145} Letter from John E. Wilkie to George B. Cortelyou, October 26, 1904 no. 22229, box 23, Letters Sent. 1899-1914, vol. 23, Correspondence 1863-1950, record group 87, U.S. Secret Service, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.
\textsuperscript{146} Letter from Wilkie to Loeb, August 31, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers.
clearly mentally disturbed, but he was also armed. The incident did receive coverage in the
*Washington Post*, but there was no mention made of a real security breach. The man, Cary
McAllister of Newark, had apparently come to Washington because he believed that the
authorities had prevented him from receiving a patent on an invention. That same month, the
*Post* carried two other articles describing insane men who had attempted to gain access to the
White House. Although none of the men encountered the president or caused any sort of major
disturbance, the incident demonstrated there were still plenty of room for improvement in the
president’s security arrangements. Coincidently, it was during this exact same month the House
of Representatives was debating Representative Ray’s presidential protection bill.

Despite the best efforts of the men in charge of the president’s security to keep their work
out of the public spotlight, newspapers began to regularly include information on presidential
protection. On November 22, 1902, an article appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* describing a “good
scare” for the president’s protectors. President Roosevelt and Secretary Cortelyou had
attended a dedication in Philadelphia, and as their carriage left, a man ran towards the carriage,
dashing right by the mounted guards. Luckily, he was only hoping to shake Roosevelt’s hand and
the carriage continued on its way. In the article, the paper took a neutral stance towards the
protective arrangements. While it named the Secret Service as presidential protectors, the paper

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made no judgment about their use, yet at the same time appeared unconcerned that a man had so easily been able to approach the president and likely could have harmed him had such intentions existed. There was no mention of whether or not the man was even detained temporarily after the incident. As the presidential protection bill was still awaiting its fate in Congress, the newspapers likely thought that any flaws in the procedures were temporary and would be rectified in the coming months.

Due to the ongoing debate over the proposed legislation in Congress, the White House staff and Secret Service made an effort to keep the presidential protective service out of the public eye. After Roosevelt won reelection in 1904, Wilkie began plans for the Secret Service to provide security during the inauguration proceedings. In a preemptive letter to the managing editors of *The Washington Post* and *The Washington Times*, Wilkie requested that the papers refrain from mentioning the Secret Service in its coverage of the inauguration proceedings and ball. He explained, “the duties which we have to perform are such as to necessarily bring into more or less prominence the members of the division who are detailed with the President, and it would not only facilitate their work, but I am sure would be much more satisfactory to my superiors, if the course I have suggested be pursued.”\(^{151}\) Wilkie was concerned that the agents would be unable to satisfactorily complete their duties if they had to take extra time to avoid media attention. Politically, it was also helpful to avoid public discussion of the president’s protection. The editors responded that the matter would be kept out of the papers, and a search of the articles the following day shows that the *Post* was true to its word.\(^{152}\)


\(^{152}\) Letter from E. Shaw, Managing Editor of the Washington Times, to John E. Wilkie, Feb 28, 1905, file 68355-68421, box 4, General Correspondence, 1894-1918, record group 87, U.S.
Although Cortelyou and Wilkie had made an effort to keep Secret Service protection out of the public eye, the issue was still alive in the halls of Congress. The previous March, the presidential protection bill advanced by Hoar and Ray had failed to have its committee changes approved by the Senate. However, this setback did not stop the protection of Roosevelt by the Secret Service, and it did not stop Wilkie and Cortelyou from attempting to advance legal remedies in Congress. A White House memo dated January 1903 from Cortelyou’s “precautionary file” discussed the men’s work to convince the House Appropriations Committee to change the wording of the Secret Service’s appropriation in order to allow the organization to perform unnamed duties beyond its usual mission. Although Wilkie makes no reference to the precise duties the men were seeking to have authorized, his emphasis on the “absolute necessity for this kind of work” hints at the protective duties currently undertaken by the service.\footnote{Memorandum from John E. Wilkie, January 7, 1903, Precautionary file, reel 453, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.} Despite these efforts, no change was made to the appropriation for the Secret Service.

The year 1903 would further underscore the need for greater protection of the president. A New York Tribune editorial in September lamented that the deranged man’s attempt to see the president at his Oyster Bay home “recall[ed] attention to the discreditable fact that the President of the United States [was] still feebly protected.”\footnote{“Protection of the President,” New York Tribune, September 8, 1903, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Tribune (1841-1922).} While the editorial acknowledged that the disturbance was unlikely to lead to a legislative solution, it expressed hope that the most recent incident would prompt an upgrade in the president’s security. In the end, the article declared:
The notion that every American citizen or curious stranger within our gates has an undeniable claim to enter the President’s presence when he please has been generally discredited already, and we believe the people are coming to realize that freedom from risk and annoyance is not merely a privilege which the President is entitled to claim, but a public right which they can justly demand.155

The statement indicated that McKinley’s assassination had caused a shift in public opinion about the role of the president in American democracy and the value placed on his life. The open White House idealized during the Jacksonian era had been displaced by a modern world with security concerns and a president whose role in international affairs had increased his importance to the nation. In this manner, personal protection was not a powerful privilege for the executive to assert, but rather a necessity in order to facilitate a functioning democratic government. Although the article demonstrated that a shift was starting to take place, there would be no immediate change to congressional authorization of presidential protection.

As fall approached, Roosevelt again had another close call when he shook the hand of a deranged man with a revolver in his pocket. According to a Boston Globe article describing the incident, the number of Secret Service guards protecting Roosevelt was visibly increased afterwards. The article continued to declare, “Every member of congress knows, of course, of this technical violation, but members of congress are so cowardly that they are willing to wink at a violation of the law rather than to make any appropriation for the specific purpose of protecting the President from the murderous frenzy of a lunatic.”156 For the first time, a news article plainly stated the illegality of the current protective arrangement, saying that the law was “stretched” in order to provide an essential duty. The article made plain that Congress deemed presidential protection important, yet there was no action towards a legislative solution. Although the Globe

did not provide an explanation for Congress’ inaction, a *New York Tribune* editorial printed the same day laid blame upon the House, explaining, “the more rampant democracy of the House balked at the Presidential guard as savoring too strongly of the traditions of monarchy.” The paper continued to say that anarchism was just as great a threat as monarchism, and as such should lead to a frank and honest discussion of protection, rather than the backroom protection provided by the Secret Service. After another incident in November when a man was able to approach Roosevelt at his uncle’s funeral despite the presence of more than 560 policemen, a *New York Times* editorial concluded that the episode, rather than showing that protection would always be ineffective, demonstrated that greater efficiency was needed in presidential security procedures.

Although no members of Congress stepped forward to accept or refute the *Globe’s* assertion, it was later corroborated in a memo written by Wilkie for newly appointed Secretary of the Treasury Franklin MacVeagh, After McKinley’s assassination, “members of the Cabinet insisted that there should be immediate arrangements for a Presidential guard.” Wilkie claimed that in order to expedite the establishment of the guard while Congress debated, money was allocated from the appropriation to detect and prevent counterfeiting. In the end, nothing ever came of the bills to provide for statutory presidential protection, and expenses continued to be paid out of the original appropriation. However, Wilkie claimed that Congressional leaders were at least aware of this arrangement, explaining, “Congress, which was familiar with the

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159 Wilkie, untitled memorandum on the protection of the president, Franklin MacVeagh Papers, 3.
situation, would make proper provisions for this work.” Wilkie suggested that Congress was willing to let presidential protection continue under the radar, despite its obvious illegality. No other evidence exists to prove exactly who in Congress was aware of this protection or the level of knowledge that members had of its existence. This statement indicates that despite the public rhetoric of Democratic congressmen opposed to personal protection, any who were aware of the protection had tacitly accepted the need for it to occur.

After all of these incidents, it is clear why Senator Hoar attempted to reintroduce a presidential protection bill to the legislature. In March 1904, with the incidents of late 1903 on the minds of congressmen and the public, Senator Hoar reintroduced his presidential protection bill, which quickly moved through the Judiciary Committee without any amendments. The committee majority declined to submit a written report with the bill, but Senator Bacon insisted on publishing the minority report despite the irregularity of the situation. Bacon’s minority report reiterated many of his and his Democratic colleagues’ concerns with the original Hoar bill, perhaps to remind the senators of the reasons why the original bill failed to make it through the 57th Congress. The report also pointed out that Congress had already passed legislation regulating the immigration of potential anarchists, a measure that the minority senators viewed sufficient to prevent future assassinations. However, Senator Hoar passed away the following September and the bill once again failed to make it through Congress.

160 Wilkie, untitled memorandum on the protection of the president, Franklin MacVeagh Papers, 5.
161 Congressional Record, 58th Cong., 2nd sess., 1904 vol. 38, 3338, 3737.
162 Congressional Record, 58th Cong., 2nd sess., 1904 vol. 38, 4283, 4371-2.
Although memories of McKinley’s assassination had faded, the need for a legislative solution had not. Secret Service continued to guard Roosevelt despite any appropriation for doing so. In addition, political factors at play at the beginning of the decade had dissipated, removing some of the incentive for the vehement opposition to the presidential protection legislation voiced by southern Democrats. At the time of McKinley’s assassination, sectional differences were still strong. Throughout the Reconstruction period, Republicans in the federal government had forced integration upon the unwilling southern states. After Reconstruction ended, the struggle between the two parties for political supremacy in the southern states continued, but the tide turned towards Jim Crow segregation. After he became president, Roosevelt, advised by Booker T. Washington, made a strategic decision to abandon the patronage system in southern states that had assisted African Americans as well as the system of forced integration that remained from Reconstruction. In doing this, he eliminated one of the primary concerns of southern Democrats—that the federal government would intrude upon their affairs and force racial integration. Without the worry that greater presidential power would interfere with state and local politics, southern Democratic politicians may have loosened their opposition to increases in federal executive power.

There were also important social changes that were beginning to take place by the turn of the twentieth century. The United States was no longer the slow-moving, agricultural, state-dominant society lauded by Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans of the early eighteenth century. After many waves of immigration, the United States was a bustling, ethnically diverse, industrial nation that no longer resembled this idyllic agrarian republic. After a decade of progressive thought and reforms, that vision had receded even further into the past as

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trust-busting and foreign policy increased the primacy of the federal government and, by association, the president. Although the United States had elected many charismatic executives, the role of the president in the nation’s affairs had never been greater. As these factors became more important and the charismatic and bombastic Roosevelt took office, media coverage of the president began to climb at a faster rate than that of Congress.\footnote{Elmer E. Cornwell Jr., “Presidential News: The Expanding Public Image,” \textit{Journalism Quarterly} 36, no. 3 (summer 1959), 279.} As the relative importance of the presidency and related media coverage increased, so did the national profile of the president, whose face was now splashed across newspapers all over the nation. Furthermore, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that photographs were widely included in papers.\footnote{Ellis, \textit{Presidential Travel}, 3.} As such, McKinley and Roosevelt were among the first presidents to be so greatly exposed to the public. It is only natural that this exposure led to greater danger, and an accompanying acceptance of the necessity of presidential protection.

Two other attempts were made in Congress to address the issue, but none of them were able to advance. Bills were introduced in both the House and Senate in December 1905 during the first session of the 59\textsuperscript{th} Congress, but neither of them advanced through their committees, which was the same fate met by another attempt to pass the same legislation in the House in 1907.\footnote{Congressional Record, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1905 vol. 40, 112, 139; \textit{Congressional Record}, 60th Cong., 1st sess., 1907 vol. 42, 193.} Despite the lack of legislative progress, the Secret Service continued to protect the president. A \textit{New York Times} article the previous August, titled “The Men Who Guard The President,” attempted to shed some light upon the mysterious men who ensured President Roosevelt’s safety on his trips. Despite the wishes of Cortelyou and Wilkie, discussion of presidential protection continued to find its way into the press. The article quoted a foreigner,
who, upon viewing the president’s carriage that was “much less pretentious than those of the prosperous tradesmen,” remarked upon the “simplicity” of the president, who appeared to move without any visible protection.\(^\text{169}\) The article then acknowledged the Secret Service men who guarded the president day and night and went on to explain more about their responsibilities. No mention was made of the illegality of the arrangement that had been an issue in the Globe and Tribune only two years prior. The tone of the article demonstrated that the subtle protection afforded by the Secret Service appeared to fulfill the requirements of American democracy, as the president’s travel arrangements were even less “pretentious” than that of a rich American merchant, much less that of a European head of state. All of the previous incidents had clearly demonstrated that some sort of protection of the president was necessary. As time went on, Americans became more accustomed to the Secret Service, and one can see the beginnings of appreciation for the dangerous jobs its agents held.

This unofficial arrangement continued until 1906. During the discussions before the Appropriations Committee for the Sundry Civil Services bill of 1907 during the spring of 1906, Wilkie was called upon to testify and provide justification for the coming year’s continued appropriation. Although at his request the testimony was kept out of the written record, it resurfaced during a congressional debate in 1909 over whether or not Roosevelt had insulted the legislative branch in his annual address that included derogatory statements about Congress’s reaction to land fraud investigations conducted by the Secret Service. (As no record of the testimony existed, statements from several of the present legislators were included in the Congressional Record.) During his testimony, Wilkie was asked if Secret Service agents were ever tasked with other duties besides counterfeiting. He responded that they were utilized for the

protection of the president and paid out of the standard appropriation, and he claimed to be embarrassed that this was the case and requested that the subcommittee amend the appropriation to include the protection of the president. According to Representative Walter Brownlow, Wilkie stated to the committee, “I hope you will make this change, as it will save me from committing perjury once a month.”\textsuperscript{170} Wilkie’s use of the word “perjury” left an impression on the legislators. Brownlow wrote that he was “startled” by the statement.\textsuperscript{171} According to the committee members’ recollections, none of them were previously aware that the Secret Service had been providing protection to Roosevelt without proper funding, a surprising claim given the attention paid to Roosevelt’s protectors and the fact that only five years had passed since presidential protection was debated at length. It also contradicted a memo from Wilkie to MacVeagh in which the chief stated that at least some members of Congress were “familiar with the situation.”\textsuperscript{172} Despite the confusion, Representative Tawney recalled that the committee found the request reasonable and quickly approved the change to the appropriation.

This incident demonstrated a disconnect between the executive and legislative branches. However, it also marked a distinct turning point for Congress. Although by 1909 Congress had become concerned about loans of Secret Service agents to other agencies and the investigations they had completed, none felt compelled to complain about this supposedly sudden change in the responsibilities of the Secret Service. The lack of complaints suggests that by the end of the decade, the dangers to the president were sufficient enough to warrant personal protection. Furthermore, although many congressmen had problems with the Secret Service investigations in the land fraud cases, it did not affect their feelings about the Service’s role in presidential

\textsuperscript{170} \textit{Congressional Record}, 60th Cong., 2nd sess., 1909 vol. 43, 673.  
\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Congressional Record}, 60th Cong., 2nd sess., 1909 vol. 43, 673.  
\textsuperscript{172} Wilkie, untitled memorandum on the protection of the president, Franklin MacVeagh Papers, 5.
protection. Secret Service protection appeared to be a proper solution that maintained the appearance of the idyllic vision of American democracy.

While the senators were willing to accept the necessity of presidential protection and grant the Secret Service authorization to perform those duties, they did not dramatically increase the agency’s appropriation. In order to provide the proper funding while keeping protection discreet, Representative James Tawney, a Republican from Minnesota and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, introduced a bill, H.R. 20321, to provide funding for the “traveling expenses” of the president. For fiscal year 1907, $25,000 would be provided, and the funds would be “expended in the discretion of the President and accounted for on his certificate solely,” meaning that the president would be free to utilize this fund without any congressional oversight and auditing. Although Tawney claimed that the bill was simply a way to defray the president’s expenses when he traveled in his official capacity as president, the funds were actually meant to serve a different purpose. In fact, the appropriation was for a confidential travel fund which would pay for some of the expenses that Secret Service agents entailed when they accompanied the president on trips, only the second such fund created by Congress. With this fund, Secret Service expenses could be paid without having to publicly increase the appropriation for the Secret Service and publicize the money spent in order to protect the president on his trips.

173 Congressional Record, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8809.
174 Congressional Record, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8809.
175 Louis Fisher, “Confidential Spending and Governmental Accountability,” George Washington Law Review 47 (January 1979), 348. The first fund was established in 1790 and allowed the president to spend money on foreign dealings that might not have been appropriate to specify. Also see the statements of Office of Management and Budget Director Roy Ash where he explained the use of the presidential travel fund in: Senate Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Authorization for the White House Personnel: Hearings on S. 3647, 93rd Cong., 2nd, sess., (1974), 14-15.
While it might appear absurd to hide such a reasonable amount of money allocated to protect the president, the rhetoric used in the debate over the provision demonstrated that even presidential protection could not escape American politics. Stephen Brundidge, a Democratic representative from Arkansas, derided the law as an unconstitutional attempt to raise President Roosevelt’s salary in the middle of his term, adding that it was inappropriate to pay for these expenses when the president’s official duties never took him out of the capital.\textsuperscript{176} In response, Representative William Cockran, a New York Democrat, stated:

In the operation of our constitutional system the President has become the chief leader of public thought and exponent of public opinion—quite as much a source of valuable suggestion for the enactment of laws as a mere executive charged with enforcing the laws…should not his expenses incurred in rendering such important public service be borne out of the public treasury?\textsuperscript{177}

Cockran’s statement aptly described the changing role of the presidency in American democracy. In his mind, any expectation that the president should simply implement the legislative actions taken by Congress was long gone. Once again, the debate pitted southern Democrats weary of federal power against more progressive politicians. In an article published during the debate, the \textit{New York Times} concurred, suggesting that opposing legislatures were needlessly pushing a partisan agenda by appealing to an idyllic era of “Jeffersonian simplicity.”\textsuperscript{178} Senator John McLaurin, a Democrat from South Carolina, resurrected the argument from the protection debate that the president should not be put on a higher plane than any other citizen. An earlier version of the bill that specifically provided for the expenses of the president’s “invited guests.”\textsuperscript{179}

Although the bill had been vague about the president’s companions, McLaurin speculated

\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Congressional Record}, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8007.
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{Congressional Record}, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8810.
\textsuperscript{179} \textit{Congressional Record}, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8008.
(correctly) that the guests were agents of the Secret Service, “who go along with the President for the purpose of protecting him against real or imaginary harm.”\(^{180}\) He went on to declare that the president was not really in any danger and surmised that the appropriation would be used for nothing more than political trips. In the end, the bill was passed and signed and the appropriation was put in place.\(^{181}\) The debate demonstrated that presidential protection could still be used as a political weapon in an attempt to check the power of the executive. Although protection was widely supported, it still had to be accomplished in a subtle manner to minimize charges that the president had tyrannical ambitions.

However, there were other important factors at play that also help to explain why no permanent legislative action was taken to grant the Secret Service presidential protection duties despite a shift in congressional and public opinion towards approval of greater presidential protection. As the only federal agency with investigative powers at the turn of the twentieth century, the Secret Service at times loaned its agents to other departments for this work. During the early 1900s, operatives working with the Interior and Justice departments uncovered public land frauds, and hundreds of businessmen and Republican Party leaders, including four congressmen, were indicted in a massive scandal that revealed a rift in the Republican Party between Roosevelt’s Progressive, conservationist faction and more traditional western Republicans. In response, Congress passed a law preventing the Secret Service from loaning out its agents, effectively ending their involvement in the land fraud investigations.\(^{182}\) Naturally, Roosevelt was infuriated, and in his annual message to Congress he stated, “The chief argument in favor of the provision was that the Congressmen did not themselves wish to be investigated by

\(^{180}\) *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 8848.
\(^{181}\) *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906 vol. 40, 9158.
secret-service men.” A rumor began that he had assigned Secret Service agents to follow senators and representatives and that the president himself even utilized his press service to disseminate rumors of salacious reports on various congressmen. After much debate and political grandstanding, the provision remained in place. However, the debate provided an opening for the Justice Department to finally win approval for a permanent investigative force of its own, leading to the creation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Although there were some attempts to move presidential protection duties to the FBI, in the end, the Secret Service retained its presidential protection duties. While presidential protection had gained greater approval in the minds of both the public and Congress, the organization that provided the protection remained under a cloud of doubt and suspicion. The protection of the president had become highly political, but it also demonstrated a continued unease with the power held by the Secret Service.

Although the passage of the protection bill had been hampered by concerns over the use of guards and the possibility of presidential overreach as well as the controversy over land fraud investigations, McKinley’s assassination and Roosevelt’s well-publicized close calls had demonstrated the need for presidential protection. Wide publicity of deranged strangers’ attempts to access Roosevelt had demonstrated a clear need for protection whether or not anarchism was a long-term problem. However, none of these events sparked a significant change in the law. After Wilkie demonstrated the legal problem his organization faced as it attempted to protect the president, Congress found a legislative solution that maintained the low profile of protection in order to meet the political realities of the day. Still, opposition persisted to any measure that would increase the power of the presidency. The debate over the land fraud cases and the attempt to reassign protection duties to the FBI demonstrated that presidential protection could be

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183 Congressional Record, 60th Cong., 2nd sess., 1908 vol. 43, 373.
influenced by political concerns in addition to safety concerns. Presidential protection by the
Secret Service was finally brought out into the open, but funding continued through an annual
appropriation in the Sundry bill. None of Roosevelt’s close calls were appalling enough to the
public to spur the sort of national outrage and reflection that was necessary to overcome the
politics and effect a more permanent change in presidential protection policy. Without a driving
force towards action, there was little incentive to move beyond the status quo.
Chapter 4
Towards a Permanent Protective Service

“Well now. I am glad I’ve got legal protection at last.” – President Harry S. Truman

Although the debate over Secret Service use in the beginning of 1909 brought the events that led to legal presidential protection into the *Congressional Record*, it did not lead to a more formal arrangement. It is likely that Congress remained wary of the power that was being afforded to the president, and the yearly appropriations put the onus on the president and the Secret Service to prove that protection was carried out in a manner that was both necessary and proper. However, there were some successful attempts to increase the Secret Service’s ability to protect the president.

In January 1913 the departing Treasury Secretary Franklin MacVeagh submitted a request to the Appropriations Committee requesting extra funding for the protection of the president-elect. After the election of William Howard Taft in 1908, Wilkie and Cortelyou, who at the time was serving as President Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Treasury, decided that it was necessary to protect the new president. After all, he was about to begin work at the highest office in the nation, and it seemed only natural that he would be afforded sufficient protection in order to ensure that he was actually able to begin his presidential duties. Once Woodrow Wilson won election in 1912, MacVeagh, who succeeded Cortelyou, decided along with Wilkie to continue the precedent that had been set after the previous election. In a letter to Congress, MacVeagh

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asked that an extra appropriation of $3,000 be made immediately for this protection.\textsuperscript{186} As an assassination of the president-elect would in essence be the same as an assassination of the president, the House committee readily agreed to this request.\textsuperscript{187}

Although Congress was unable to pass any legislation relating to presidential protection in the wake of the McKinley assassination, in 1916 the members finally approved a law that made it a felony to threaten the president through the mail. Unlike the presidential protection bills fifteen years earlier, the bill, titled “Punishment for Threats Against the President,” sailed through Congress with little debate and only minor objection to some of its provisions.\textsuperscript{188} Unlike the previous bills attempting to provide for the protection of the president, this bill had an extremely narrow scope clearly defined to an area under federal jurisdiction. As there was no provision for a protective guard, the bill’s effects were also less visible to a discerning public, which helps explain the lack of opposition. The bill provided that any “person who knowingly and willfully deposits or causes to be deposited for conveyance in the mail…any letter…containing any threat to take the life of or to inflict bodily harm upon the President…shall upon conviction be fined not exceeding $1,000 or imprisoned not exceeding five years, or both.”\textsuperscript{189} Since the bill was restricted to threats sent through the post office, a federal government entity, the states’ rights arguments of the debates at the beginning of the century no longer applied. There was no doubt that the bill was a constitutional power of the federal government, which prevented a solid opposition group from forming.

\textsuperscript{186} Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury Submitting an Estimate of Appropriation for the Protection of the Person of the President Elect of the United States, 62nd Cong., 3rd sess., 1913, H. Doc. 1279.


\textsuperscript{188} Congressional Record, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917 vol. 54, 2667.

\textsuperscript{189} Congressional Record, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917 vol. 54, 2667.
In the House of Representatives, there was some debate over whether or not the bill was an effective method of protecting the president. Representative James Robert Mann, a Republican from Illinois, reminded the chamber that bills providing for presidential protection after McKinley’s assassination were met with tremendous resistance and never passed through the legislature. He felt that this bill would not have the desired effect. Representative Edwin Webb, a Democrat from North Carolina, disagreed, saying in the absence of federal legislation punishing an actual assault on the president, the proposed statute would “decrease the possibility of actual assault by punishing threats to commit an assault.” In response, Mann shot down Webb’s assertion that outlawing threatening mail to the White House would help protect the president. Instead, Mann declared, “I think we have need of legislation to protect the body of the President. I do not think this does that…this is a case where you are asking for bread and you are getting sand.” After a few more minutes of debate and a small amendment to the language of the bill, the measure passed the House without any roll call required. Mann’s call for statutory personal protection of the president went unheeded, as no other member addressed his declaration. The Senate, moreover, spent even less time considering the bill than did the House. When the bill reached the Senate floor in 1917, Senator Jacob Gallinger, Republican of New Hampshire, asked if there was another law that covered similar threats. When told that there was not, he responded that it was “most extraordinary.” They then passed the bill, which represented the first successful piece of permanent legislation that attempted to provide better protection for the president, although personal protection remained under a yearly appropriation.

190 Congressional Record, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 1916 vol. 53, 9378.
191 Congressional Record, 64th Cong., 1st sess., 1916 vol. 53, 9377.
192 Congressional Record, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917 vol. 54, 2667.
While Secret Service protection continued without incident, one can perceive a subtle shift in the tone from news articles about the agents’ work and the dangers that came with a job that forced the agents to put the president’s life ahead of their own. After war began in Europe in 1914, the Secret Service began to take greater precautions to protect President Woodrow Wilson. After a dynamite attack by a deranged German-sympathizer in Washington in July 1915, a Los Angeles Times headline declared, “Chief of the Secret Service to be Constant Companion of Executive.”193 The headline demonstrated that presidential protection had become so important that it required the constant attention of the Service’s chief. While the Secret Service had protected McKinley, that duty was still secondary in nature to the organization’s anti-counterfeiting mandate, but the dangers that the war posed to the president shifted the organization’s emphasis towards presidential protection.

It was in this atmosphere that another expansion of presidential protection took place. In June 1917, Congress expanded the presidential protection appropriation to include protection of the president’s family in addition to the man himself.194 This change to the appropriation was implemented without any media attention. In the wake of the war, the change demonstrated a greater acknowledgement of the dangers that came to the president and his family. The bomb attack in Washington had provided plenty of evidence that the president and his family faced internal danger as long as he held the office. Although the lack of attention appeared to indicate a greater congressional and public acceptance of presidential protection, it did not lead to any major amendments of protection policy. There was never a close enough call with President Wilson to cause the public and press to demand greater presidential protection. After the addition

of protection for the president’s family, no more changes would be made for more than thirty years. It would take another highly public assassination attempt for presidential protection to finally make it into the permanent federal statutes. That moment came in dramatic fashion, demonstrating the continued vulnerability of the man holding the highest office in the United States.

On November 1, 1950, two men approached the Blair House, which was being used as the president’s residence while the White House was under renovation. The two men, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, were members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party under the leadership of Pedro Albizu Campus. They had come to Washington intending to assassinate Harry S. Truman, the president of the United States, in an attempt to gain recognition for Puerto Rican independence.

After his experience in the Army during World War I, Campos had become a bitter man, angry at the way with which the United States treated its protectorate. His Nationalist Party advocated for the violent overthrow of American rule on the small Caribbean island and the creation of an independent state. Although the party did not receive broad support in Puerto Rico due to its violent nature, its campaign of bombings and assassinations had won it a small group of devoted followers. Collazo and Torresola were both dedicated members, eager to fight for their homeland’s independence. On October 31, they had boarded a train from New York to Washington to carry out their plan.195

Normally, an assassination attempt on the president’s residence would have been an extremely daunting task. However, the Blair House was nothing like the White House, which President Truman had been forced to leave after structural deficiencies were discovered in the

decades-old building. Compared to the White House, with its imposing fence and expansive lawn, the Blair House was just a few feet from a busy sidewalk and only had a shoulder-high fence. The building had three entrances, each with its own guard, with three more men stationed inside the building. Although the building was a convenient solution while the repairs were made, it was a security nightmare compared to the White House.  

To make security matters worse, Truman’s office was still in the White House. He was well known for his desire to walk and meet the populace, which meant that his Secret Service protectors were forced to accompany him on this exposed walk on a regular basis. The repairs and the resulting publicity had even forced the Secret Service to increase its protective force in order to guard the new residence. Due to the increased force, a *Boston Globe* article referred to Truman as the “most closely guarded President in peacetime American history.”

During the middle of the afternoon on November 1, the two assassins made their way to the residence. At the time, Truman was inside resting and awaiting the next stop on his itinerary. Although they were completely ignorant of the president’s schedule, they were determined to attack whether or not he was home. The two men approached the building from different directions. Collazo walked up to the guard at the front door and began firing. A deadly shootout began between the would-be assassins and the house’s protectors. It was all over in less than three minutes. Approximately thirty shots were fired. Torresola was dead, shot in the head by

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196 Smith, “Shoot-out on Pennsylvania Avenue.”
Private Leslie Coffelt of the White House Police Force, who lost consciousness soon afterwards and also died several hours after the attack. Meanwhile, another agent shot Collazo, ending the battle. In addition to Coffelt, two of the other guards had been wounded. One of the would-be assassins had died; the other was wounded. President Truman was unharmed, and left soon afterwards for his speech, telling an aide, “A president has to expect such things.”

Although Truman was not injured, the boldness of the attack and the extent to which it almost succeeded shocked the public. However, in comparison to the McKinley assassination, most of the articles used the attack on Blair House as a demonstration of the clear necessity of presidential protection. A *New York Times* editorial the following day described the attack as “not only shocking” but “mystifying and senseless.” There was no counterpart to the crackdown on anarchism, as there was no sense that Puerto Rican nationalism was an urgent problem to be reckoned with. The same editorial declared, “no one with any sense of justice is going to blame Puerto Ricans as a whole.” As president, Truman had appointed the first native Puerto Rican governor and worked with Congress to pass legislation allowing Puerto Ricans to create their own constitution, and eventually achieve independence, if they so desired. As such, assassinating Truman the man was not a logical move, and the article explained that he would never have been attacked if not for the office which he held. Just like McKinley, Truman was attacked for what he represented, not who he was or what he believed.

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199 The White House Police Force was created in 1922 by President Warring G. Harding to provide uniform police services at the White House. The organization was placed under the direction of the Chief of the Secret Service in 1930.

200 Smith, “Shoot-out on Pennsylvania Avenue.”


Two other articles in the *Times* took the space to praise the actions of the Secret Service guards and the White House Police Force. One described the actions of the guards as a “tribute to the care with which our Chief Executive is, and must be, steadily protected.” Unlike the articles fifty years earlier, the *Times* did not attempt to portray the president as an average citizen. Instead, the attack served as a reminder that the president “lived dangerously,” with threats lurking even in times of relative peace. *Times* columnist Arthur Krock extolled the work of the Secret Service, yet acknowledged that “men determined on assassination in disregard of their own lives and armed with modern weapons always would have a chance to carry out their design.” The *Times* articles were very succinct in depicting the danger that the president faced as a result of his office.

Fifty years after McKinley’s assassination, no one could pretend that the president would be safe without guards. Events of the early twentieth century had only increased the power of the presidency, as world wars and national industrial needs further increased the relative importance of the federal government. In addition, new media such as radio and television had only heightened the exposure of the president and the attention given to him by the public. Between greater importance and exposure, concerns about the physical security of the president continued to grow during the first half of the twentieth century. There were simply too many dangerous and deranged people in the world, and the public had realized that only an efficient protective service could even come close to guaranteeing the president’s safety. There was no doubt that the
president deserved proper protection during his time in office, and this conclusion finally led Congress towards providing permanent statutory authority for Secret Service protection.

The day after the attempt the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article praising the Secret Service agents and White House policemen responsible for the protection of the president. The headline declared, “Men Who Saved Truman Lauded for Efficiency: Gamble Lives in Special Secret Service Duty.”207 While the article included quotes of commendation for the offices and the force from their commander and the Secretary of the Treasury, it also included a small description of the Secret Service’s history of presidential protection. The controversy that surrounded the Secret Service’s assumption of presidential protection duties was completely ignored, and the article even mentioned “federal statutes that give the secret service the primary responsibility for safeguarding the life of the President.”208 The article assumed that the Secret Service’s protective duties were the result of a specific federal statute, when in fact none existed. At the time, the Secret Service was still funded by a yearly appropriation, though such a legal distinction was probably lost on the reporter. The article demonstrated just how accepted Secret Service protection had become to the American public. Any hint of controversy had been erased, and even newspapers assumed that protection was the result of a permanent statute.

In the weeks following the attack, articles and columns appeared that demonstrated just how much the conversation on presidential security had shifted since Theodore Roosevelt took office in 1901. Josephine Ripley, a columnist for the *Christian Science Monitor*, wrote that before the Truman assassination attempt, very few Americans gave thought to presidential protection, except to “reflect on the comparative freedom and informality of the nation’s first


family, and to be grateful that this is a country where such things can be.”

However, Ripley asserted that the incident had proven that, despite such democratic ideals, housing the president so close to the general public was not in the best interests of his safety. She cited Korea and general world tensions from the Cold War as evidence of the dangers constantly facing the president, and she stated that there would be a “joint exhalation” in Washington after the repairs of the White House were completed. An article in the African American weekly newspaper *New Journal and Guide* hoped to discover Americans’ opinions about whether or not Truman’s daily walks should continue after the assassination attempt. The respondents cited in the piece expressed conflicted views. On one hand, they understood Truman’s desire for a semblance of normalcy in his daily routine. On the other, they weighed the obvious security weaknesses in allowing the most powerful man in America to walk exposed through the capital. Most of the people quoted felt that the walks should cease until an investigation could be completed and greater security procedures were implemented. The columns demonstrated that Americans still held on to the idea that the president came from the same stock as the rest of the American populace. However, in the years since McKinley’s assassination, there had been a growing recognition of the constant threats and dangers to the president. Ever since the assassination, reports of insane men attempting to access the president had been well reported in the press, and it was all too easy to see how much damage a single assassin with a gun could cause to the nation. No one would possibly begrudge personal protection for whoever held the office. Protection was

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viewed as a necessary safety measure, not a demonstration of political power that could easily be misused.

In addition to positive opinions on protection, additional changes to the presidency had taken place that made it more likely that Secret Service protection would be easily accepted by the public and Congress. Foremost, the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and World War II had demonstrated the positive value of a strong presidency. Noted political scientist Fred I. Greenstein stated that during this era, “the presidency itself had undergone a fundamental transformation, replacing Congress as the principle energy source of the political system.”

211 No longer was presidential power seen as a corruption of the true constitutional order, with the executive secondary to the legislature. Instead, many of the New Deal policy successes could be attributed directly to Roosevelt’s vision as president, increasing the stature of both the man and the office. As president, Roosevelt continued to transform the media presence of the office, utilizing his “fireside chats” to interact directly to the people.

212 In addition, Roosevelt’s disability (he suffered from polio) also served to place further physical distance between the president and the people. In order to prevent the new president from having to stand on crutches for several hours or sit in a wheelchair and minimize visibility of his disability, Roosevelt and his advisors decided to end the tradition of a New Year’s Day public reception. While this was not a strategic move to cut off public access to the president, after more than twelve years without similar events, Americans no longer expected to have an opportunity to meet the president in an informal setting. As war broke out in Europe and the Pacific, Roosevelt took a strong leadership role as necessitated by his position as commander in chief, further elevating the prestige and importance of the office.

By the time of the assassination attempt on Truman, the Cold War had also added to the stature of the president in world affairs. The Truman and Eisenhower presidencies have become known as the era of the imperial presidency. As historian Lewis L. Gould wrote, these presidents governed in an era of a “political culture that regarded the president as a leader of almost transcendent importance in the nation and the world.” The United States was beginning a long conflict with the Soviet Union, and the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides only heightened the danger. Truman was the man with his finger on the button, able to order a retaliatory strike in an instant. The obligations of Cold War politics necessitated a perpetual state of preparedness to deal with a crisis. No longer could southern Democrats claim, as they had after the McKinley assassination, that the president was not always on duty and constantly acting in his role as the nation’s leader. The demands of the Cold War dictated an emphasis on foreign policy, and a consolidation of power within the executive branch appeared the most effective method of presenting a strong and consistent front to the world. Never had it been so important for the nation to protect the life of its president, and fifty years of successful work had proven that the Secret Service was up to the task of protecting the president from harm.

The attack on the Blair House did lead to some immediate changes in protective procedures. Truman’s daily walks to and from the White House with only a small guard were eliminated. Now, the president traveled between the two buildings in a limousine, accompanied by around thirty guards, with more policemen stationed along the two hundred-yard route across Pennsylvania Avenue. The sidewalk in front of the Blair House was roped off and restricted from public access. Although there was no direct quote from the president, the New York Times article

describing these new security procedures declared, “Truman Displeased Over Heavy Guard.”

Truman was not the only one upset with the changes that resulted from the assassination attempt. A Los Angeles Times article on November 28, 1950 revealed that Vice President Alben W. Barkley had started to utilize Secret Service protection. Barkley had “once spurned the protection of the Secret Service” but the assassination attempt had caused the assignment, which a Secret Service spokesman called typical procedure after an attempt on the life of the president.

Whereas Roosevelt had famously spurned overt protection after McKinley’s assassination, by 1950 national security precluded any such resistance from Truman or Barkley. The government would no longer tolerate its leadership being easily exposed to assassination attempts.

For obvious reasons, the Secret Service preferred to have its activities codified in United States law rather than subjected to the yearly whims of the House Appropriations Committee. After the attempted assassination of President Truman at the Blair House, the time was ripe for the Secret Service to receive a permanent assignment of protective duties. On January 8, 1951, shortly after the opening of the 82nd Congress, Pat McCarran, the Democratic Senator from Nevada, introduced bill S. 26, entitled “‘Crimes and Criminal Procedure,’ to provide basic authority for certain activities of the United States Secret Service, and for other purposes.” On February 5, Representative Emanuel Celler, a New York Democrat, introduced a similar bill in the House of Representatives.

By March, both bills had moved onto their respective committees’ agendas and received hearings. Foremost, the bill placed Secret Service activities under a general statute, which

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217 Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 86.
218 Congressional Record, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 1015.
included the protection of the president, and of members of his immediate family, the president-elect, and the vice president at his request, and defined the investigative powers of the organization. There were no new powers included; the old ones were simply authorized under a permanent statute. The bill also made some minor changes to laws regarding the mutilation and reproduction of coins and authorized Secret Service agents to carry firearms.\textsuperscript{219}

The House Judiciary Subcommittee was the first to act on the bill. During the hearings, almost no mention was made of the clause dealing with presidential protection. The main point of contention was over the investigative powers of the Secret Service. The Department of Justice expressed concern to the committee that the bill’s language expanded the Secret Service’s investigative powers into areas that were currently under the purview of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which could create confusion and jurisdictional conflicts between the FBI and other agencies.\textsuperscript{220} After some discussion, the bill was amended so that the Secret Service would only deal with matters “under the direct control of the Treasury Department.”\textsuperscript{221} On May 15, the bill was reported back to the House, which passed the bill on May 21 without any debate.\textsuperscript{222} The House version of the bill then went to the Senate, which passed it on June 21 with another minor amendment.\textsuperscript{223} On July 5, 1951, the House approved the Senate’s change.\textsuperscript{224} Exactly eighty-six years earlier, on the same date in 1865, the Secret Service had been established to fight

\textsuperscript{221} Committee on the Judiciary, \textit{Amending Title 18 of the United States Code}, 1
\textsuperscript{222} \textit{Congressional Record}, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 5391, 5540
\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Congressional Record}, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 6877
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Congressional Record}, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 7658
counterfeiters as William P. Wood was sworn in as the agency’s first chief.\(^{225}\) As such, it was only fitting that it was on that date that a bill to provide for the protection of the president had finally made its way through both houses of Congress.

Unlike the bills proposed during the early twentieth century, no strong opposition group formed to oppose this permanent expansion of Secret Service duties. While presidential protection and the Secret Service were not viewed with the same suspicion that they had been at the beginning of the century, there may have been other factors at play. The opposition group that had traditionally opposed increasing federal and presidential power, southern Democrats, no longer had the same clout or concerns that it had possessed when Theodore Roosevelt took office. As the policies of Franklin Roosevelt took shape, a more liberal faction of the Democratic Party became prominent, and when Truman took office, he began to advance civil rights legislation, ignoring the Southerners in his own party.\(^{226}\) The southern Democrats were becoming marginalized in their own party, but they were hardly able to oppose changes that would help keep one of their own safe. In addition, the civil rights movement had just begun in earnest, and the focus of these politicians had shifted towards much more local segregation issues. One cannot imagine southern Democrats being concerned that providing permanent Secret Service protection to President Truman would somehow be considered a stepping-stone towards ending the Jim Crow era. No matter the reason, no opposition emerged to the Secret Service legislation, and the bill sailed through Congress.


On July 16, 1951, the Secret Service bill reached the desk of President Truman.\textsuperscript{227} The Chief of the Secret Service, U.E. Baughman, watched the signing along with several of the men in the president’s protective detail.\textsuperscript{228} The next day, the headline of the \textit{Los Angeles Times} proclaimed, “After 86 Years, U.S. Secret Service Becomes Permanent.”\textsuperscript{229} According to the article, Truman asked Secretary of the Treasury John Snyder, “How come this has never been done before?”\textsuperscript{230} Snyder responded that the agency had tried, “But this time we really rolled up our sleeves and went to work on it. We got excellent co-operation all the way around.”\textsuperscript{231} During early attempts to complete such legislation, the political climate had not been conducive for presidential protection. While those barriers had begun to come down in the following decades, there had been no public event to seize the attention of Congress and the public. After more than forty years, the objections to presidential protection as un-American, and to the Secret Service in particular, were finally overcome due to a concerted effort between the executive and legislative branches. Reportedly, Truman responded with a laugh, “Well now. I am glad I’ve got legal protection at last.”\textsuperscript{232}

By the time President Truman signed the Secret Service bill into law, a personal guard for the president was no longer a foreign concept. In fact, the protective protocols and arrangements had already been shaped by the peculiar demands of American democracy. Presidential protection had become normalized, and Congress accepted the Secret Service as a legitimate and necessary organization. Finally, it was time for the Secret Service to take its proper place as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{227} \textit{Congressional Record}, 82nd Cong., 1st sess., 1951 vol. 97, 8457.
\item \textsuperscript{229} “After 86 Years: US Secret Service Becomes Permanent,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, July 17, 1951.
\item \textsuperscript{230} “After 86 Years: US Secret Service Becomes Permanent,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, July 17, 1951.
\item \textsuperscript{231} “After 86 Years: US Secret Service Becomes Permanent,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, July 17, 1951.
\item \textsuperscript{232} “After 86 Years: US Secret Service Becomes Permanent,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, July 17, 1951.
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permanent government agency and not a yearly appropriation subject to whims of Congress. Although the occasion was marked in the national papers, it did not receive anywhere near the media attention that the bills providing for protection did after McKinley’s assassination. By this time, the public readily accepted the notion of presidential protection, and just like some members of Congress, many who read the articles were probably surprised that it took eighty-six years for the Secret Service to gain permanence in the United States government.

The next year, a column by Washington Post reporter Drew Pearson asserted that the November 1, 1950 assassination attempt had been one of the less publicized reasons for Truman deciding not to seek another term in office. Pearson described a conversation between Truman and Democratic Representative Morgan Mulder, in which the president had replied that the strain of constantly running for office throughout his career had worn him down, and he hoped to enjoy the rest of his life back in his home in Missouri. He half-jokingly stated, “Why, a fellow can’t even go out in the garden without a Secret Service escort.” He continued that the shooting had caused him and his wife untold anguish, and then said, “Did you ever stop to think how you would feel if another man laid down his life for you? Well, that’s the way I feel about Leslie Coffelt.” Over the years, presidents, even those as independent as Teddy Roosevelt or Harry Truman, had come to greatly admire and respect the work that the Secret Service agents did for them. For most of these presidents, the worry that others might be killed protecting them only added to the stress of the office. Their protectors were not a “praetorian guard,” but rather a brave group of men and women who put the president’s life before their own. Over time, the

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234 Pearson, “Shooting Scrape Upset Truman.”
public had come to accept this protection as necessary for the preservation of American democracy.

After the election, the United Press ran a story about the state of President Truman’s protection after he left office. At the time, presidents lost their Secret Service protection once their term ended (a practice that has since changed). As such, the Secret Service would only provide protection for, as the article described him, “The man who knows more top Government secrets than any other American,” until he boarded a train at Union Station bound for his hometown of Independence, Missouri. Although he would not have any guards, the home was still protected by a fence installed during his presidency. In an interview, United Press White House reporter Merriman Smith asked the president if he would need protection after he left office. With a snort, Truman replied, “If any nut tries to shoot me, I’ll take the pistol away from him, ram it down his throat and pull the trigger.”

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Conclusion

The assassination of President McKinley began a long debate over the appropriateness of presidential protection and revealed the constantly shifting debate over the role of the presidency in American democracy. After McKinley’s assassination, the idea of presidential guards slowly became normalized to the point where the American public would be extremely uncomfortable, and possibly outraged, to know that the president put himself at risk by traveling without them. Ever since the Truman assassination attempt, Secret Service protection of the president has increased, both in importance and duration. The next sixty years did nothing to diminish the need for professional protection. In fact, the continuation of the Cold War and the transition into the terrorist age only served to demonstrate further the need for proper protection of the United States’s chief executive. The White House reopened after its renovations were complete in 1952, but the days when the public and reporters could enter and attempt to see the president did not return. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 provided a spark towards even tighter security and detailed, secret itineraries. No longer does the president travel, like Kennedy did, in an open-air limousine. Today, presidents are now even more closed off from the general public. There has been a complete transformation towards greater protection ever since McKinley’s assassination. The modern world had become so dangerous, the president so powerful and important, and the needs of the office so varied and diverse, that it would be absurd to claim that presidential protection would be more of an affront to the Constitution than allowing the nation’s executive to serve in such dangerous conditions. The American people have accepted that certain privileges are needed in order for the president to successfully complete his term in office.
Although there have been many changes since 1901, Secret Service protection of the president continues to be a particularly American institution. There remains a delicate balance that requires the Secret Service to provide proper protection without appearing to give the president the trappings of a monarch. Overall, the president’s Secret Service guards maintain a low profile, and no one would mistake them for a modern praetorian guard. If not for the earpieces, fit builds, and stern attention paid to the area around them, they could very easily be taken for businessmen and women. This is not to say that they are ineffective, but rather that they are careful not to overtly advertise the impressive firepower that guards the president when he is both inside and outside the White House. In this way, protection can occur without violating American notions and ideals about the place of the president in society.

However, this does not mean that presidential security and access are no longer subject to the political winds of the day. Just as in the early twentieth century, worries about access to the president can be used for political ends. After the federal budget cuts that were part of the sequester began in March 2013, the White House announced that public tours of the White House would be canceled until further notice starting March 9, citing “staffing reductions resulting from sequestration.”\(^{237}\) The budget reductions had been mandated as part of the 2011 debt ceiling deal between President Barack Obama and Republican leaders in Congress. As such, the sequester forced a $1 million cut in the White House budget, leading to the cancelation of tours as a perk that the nation could not afford.\(^{238}\) While the cancelations were nothing more than


a political stunt, the response demonstrated that some sort of access to the president, even in the highly restrictive access atmosphere of today, is still an important part of American democracy.

A huge controversy erupted, with student groups and tourists lamenting the canceled tours. A sixth-grade class at St. Paul’s Lutheran School in Waverly, Iowa posted a video to Facebook, telling the president, “The White House is our house. Please let us visit.” 239 While the video may have appeared to be nothing more than a desperate attempt by these children to restore their field trip, it relayed a larger message—should there be any expectation that the public be able to at least see the inside of the building where its leader works? The White House determined that the tours were a luxury when compared to the needs of providing presidential protection services. Jay Carney, the White House press secretary, responded to questioning reporters by saying that the Secret Service, which helps run the tours, had presented the cuts as one of several options to deal with the budget cuts. In the end, Carney said, the tours were suspended, “to allow the Secret Service to best fulfill its core missions.” 240 In response, Representative Ted Poe, a Republican from Texas, countered, “It’s a bad decision as far as the American people are concerned. There’s no place on earth where the citizens can see where the person in charge lives like in America.” 241 While the entire debate easily falls along partisan lines, it is hard not to sympathize with American citizens hoping for a close-up look at their government and president. The controversy over the tours demonstrates that while protection of the president is firmly ingrained in American political culture, there is still debate over the

240 Zabarenko, “Budget Cuts End White House Tours, but not Finger-Pointing”
balance between providing protection and safety for the executive while maintaining the openness and availability of the president to the people.
Acknowledgments

A project of this size would have been impossible to complete without the help and dedication of many people who took extra time to assist me. Of course, my first thank you must go to my advisor, Professor David Greenberg. I first met Professor Greenberg as a student in his Cold War Culture honors seminar during my first year at Rutgers. The next year, I had the privilege of working with him on his History of Spin book project as an Aresty Undergraduate Research Assistant, which introduced me to archival research and gave me a taste of what it would be like to conduct my own research later in my college career. When it came time to choose an advisor for my senior thesis, Professor Greenberg was a natural choice, due to both his incredible knowledge of American political history and the thoughtful advice he had given me in class and as a research assistant. For the past year, he has given me advice on everything from research methods to proper formatting (I now know to use only one space after a period) in addition to spending countless hours reviewing my work and providing me with helpful criticism. For his time and dedication, I am incredibly grateful.

There are many other people in the History Department to whom I also owe my gratitude. Throughout my time at Rutgers, I have had the fortune to learn from many great professors, each of whom has helped me to improve my writing and analysis skills tremendously over the past four years and encouraged me to reach for even greater heights. For this project specifically, I owe a special thanks to Professor Mark Wasserman, who led the Honors Seminar and kept me on track (mostly) throughout the year. I also must thank Professor Louis Masur, who graciously served as my second reader and provided me with
some great insights that have helped me to improve the thesis. The seminar also introduced me to a great group of fellow thesis-writers, who provided me with a source of inspiration, as well as commiseration, throughout the year.

Finally, to my family and friends, who have heard me talk (and complain) about this thesis constantly over the past year, thank you so much for your support. Even when I was frustrated and overwhelmed with the enormity of this project, you encouraged me to continue on and produce something that I can truly be proud of. To my parents, Michael and Mary Beth, thank you so much for your support throughout my educational career. By guiding me to this point, you have put me in a place for great success in the future. An extra thank you to my mom for being my best editor, even when presented with time constraints that would have caused many paid editors to quit out of frustration. To my friends, thank you for occasionally dragging me away from my thesis and helping me to achieve a healthy balance between the academic and the social. To the rest of the Board of Directors and everyone else involved with Rutgers University Dance Marathon, which this year raised $503,641.77 for the Embrace Kids Foundation (a number I never get tired of saying), thank you so much for your understanding of the work involved with this project and for picking up the slack when there simply weren’t enough hours in the day for everything that I needed to get done. And to my girlfriend, Rachel, thank you not only for your revisions, but also for supporting me and encouraging me in everything that I have done these past four years.