

Congressional Nominations to the Military Academies:

A View from the Congressional Office

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INTRODUCTION

When the average citizen thinks about a Member of Congress and his or her duties they often picture the Capitol Building and all the acts of legislation that pass within its chambers. Yet, congressional responsibilities reach far beyond legislation to include a wide variety of services provided to the citizens whom they represent, also known as constituent services. While most constituent services involve correspondence between constituents and government offices, such as the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Immigration, there is one unique subset that allows for young members of the community to serve their nation while receiving an education at some of the nation's most well-regarded higher education institutions. This is the congressional responsibility to nominate individuals for service at the various military academies, including West Point, Air Force, Navy, and Merchant Marine Academies.

In 2011, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) published the *Congressional Nominations to the U.S. Service Academies: An Overview and Resources for Outreach and Management* in the attempt to clarify the process and help congressional offices organize these important nominations. The report clearly delineates that Members of Congress, both senators and representatives, are permitted to have five citizens of their constituency at West Point, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force Academy at a given time (Petersen, 3). For the Merchant Marine Academy the number of seats each state receives is proportional to their representation in Congress and determined by the Secretary of Transpiration (Petersen, "Congressional Nomination" 5). Regardless of the academy, each Member is allowed to nominate ten individuals per vacancy from which one student maybe granted admission (Petersen, "Congressional Nomination" 3, 5). This is more commonly known as the congressional nomination to a military or service academy. Apart from the minimal requirements set out by

congressional regulation (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 7), there are “no laws or regulations [that] govern congressional nomination processes” (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 1). This leads to strikingly different nomination systems throughout the country’s congressional offices.

After short overview of constituent services and an introduction to the historical background of the Military and Merchant Marine Academies the goal in this paper turns to providing a closer examination of the nomination process by analyzing the different approaches taken by a small, but telling sample of congressional offices. This in-depth view includes: application process and requirements; analysis of the decision making process; and implementation of outreach programs. Afterwards, trends relating to general volume and minority group and women participation will be discussed. And finally, results in terms of congressional chamber, political party and urbanization will be analyzed in the hopes of drawing some basic conclusions.

BACKGROUND

Before taking a look at the specific findings discovered in this case study it might be beneficial to understand how the military academies originated and how congressional offices came to undertake the responsibility of nominating students.

Definition of Constituent Services

As academy nominations fall into a broader category of constituent services it is important to define constituent services. According to the CRS report titled *Casework in a Congressional Office: Background, Rules, Laws, and Regulations*, constituent services, or case work, is “the response or services that Members of Congress provide to constituents who request assistance” (Petersen, 1). Another article lists constituent services as “non-legislative services”

that a legislative office can perform for its constituency. These are “advantages and benefits which the representative is able to obtain for a particular constituent” (Eulau and Karps 243). For a Member of Congress, helping citizens whom they represent is a vital part of their congressional duties (Eulau and Karps 244) and has withstood the testament of time. In a footnote, the CRS report states that records have been found indicating that during the 1800’s three Representatives aided their constituents in a variety of issues, including lost and misplaced mail (Petersen, “Casework” 1).¹

Today casework is an integral part of a congressional office’s duties. Both the Washington D.C. office and the district offices handle the mass amount of casework (Eulau and Karps 519). Casework can include, among others, locating benefit payments, assistance with government forms, applying to various federal benefits², obtaining United States citizenship, and nominating students to military service (Petersen, “Casework” 1). A study, published in 1980, found that on average 301 and 115 new cases and projects were added per week to offices serving an individual Representative or Senator, respectively³ (Johannes 519). It is no wonder that both the Senate and House have specific sections in their respective ethics manuals that proved guidance for handling this casework (Petersen, “Casework” 3). Yet, apart from specific regulations delineated in “chamber rules and relevant statute,” questions regarding staffing and casework procedure are left to the discretion of the Member (Petersen, “Casework” 5, 8).

Casework and constituent services have been a standing and vital tradition of Members of Congress. These services, and the rules that regulate them, allow Members to assist his or her

¹ It just so happens that these three individuals, John Quincy Adams, James A. Garfield, and James K. Polk, all went on to hold the office President of the United States.

² Included here are: Social Security, veterans and education benefits

³ This statistics does not include applications for nominations to the military academies. The author gives no explanation for the exclusion.

constituents in a wide range of areas. Each one of these services has its own intricacies and procedure and the nominations to the military academies are no exception.

A Brief History on the Origins of the Military Academies

The roots of the current military academies stretch far into the past. The concept of a military academy actually began in Europe in the 18th century where countries found it beneficial to not only train, but educate individuals in military tactics. Through the years the academies, especially in the United States, experienced a shift in their academic programs. Now, the military academies are no longer considered vocational schools for the military but offer a wider range of services and areas of study. Although, only a small portion of the commanders in today's military are graduates from the academies, graduates are prepared and trained in the skills needed for higher command (Piehler 3).

The idea and creation of an American military academy can be found in the early and precarious years of the United States. In 1777, there was an original proposal for a military academy but many thought a standing army, similar to the British forces, would threaten national stability and, thus, became unpopular (Ambrose 15; Kutler, "Volume 8" 447). This view was not shared by President George Washington, who was a strong advocate for a military academy to train officers. It was not until March 16, 1802, that President Thomas Jefferson (Ambrose 6) was finally able to sign an act establishing West Point, previously a Revolutionary War fortress and deposit off the Hudson River in New York State (Ambrose 24), as the nation's first military academy (Ambrose 22; Piehler 3-4).

With its motto of "Duty, Honor, Country," West Point has become a perfect example of an American military academy. While still training military officers, West Point prepared students for work in areas such as the railway system (Stover 57; Piehler 4), harbor management

(Ambrose 120; Piehler 4), mapping (Piehler 4) and the building of the Panama Canal (McCullough 511; Piehler 4). Citing the Jacksonian era Davis Commission, *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point* says “[n]early all great public works of the country, the river and harbor works, the lighthouses, and even the public buildings, have been directed by its [West Point] graduates” (Ambrose 146). Through time, the academy had to adapt to the changing global system and expand its curriculum to include questions in nuclear warfare (Holl and Convis 182; Piehler 4) and the humanities (Ambrose 247; Piehler 4).

For many years West Point remained the United States’ only military academy until the Navy created the Naval Academy in 1845. The Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland came as a direct result of the growing realization that training new midshipmen, or naval cadets, on-board active military ships was not efficient (Soley 8-9). Therefore on October 10, 1845 the Secretary of the Navy established the United States Naval Academy (Soley 63; Kutler, “Volume 6” 19) in order to train incoming cadets of both the United States Navy and the Marine Corps (Piehler 4). Today most of those who find themselves at the United States Naval Academy and hold the motto “A Midshipman may not lie, cheat, or steal” (Piehler 5) attend the academy through congressional nominations (Kutler, “Volume 6” 19).

Due to the needed progression of technology, more than 100 years separated the installation of the Naval Academy and the creation of the Air Force Academy. During World War II it became clear that the air force division of the army was a strong factor in the win in the Pacific Arena and the distinctions between aeronautical and terrestrial military tactics were different enough to warrant two separate branches of the military (Piehler 5; Weigley 372). Therefore in 1947, Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947 officially establishing an Air Force independent of the Army (Weigley 373). Following almost immediately after the

separation, and running through 1948, there were suggestions that a separate school be made to tailor the skills needed to train successful airman. Yet, it was not until the conclusion of the Korean War that President Dwight Eisenhower (Piehler 5) was presented with the congressional act to create the Air Force Academy, originally located on Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado, on April 1, 1954 (Boyne 340; Kutler, “Volume 1” 78). It was subsequently moved to its actual location in Colorado Springs in 1958 where infrastructure was laid to fit the Academy and its needs (Boyne 340).

While the United States Coast Guard has its own military academy in New London, Connecticut it “does not require a congressional nomination for appointment” (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 1). The appointment of cadets into the Coast Guard Academy is regulated by the Secretary of Homeland Security and can be found in 14 United States Code 182 (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination”). The Code states “[a]ppointments to cadetships shall be made under regulations prescribed by the Secretary [of Homeland Security, who shall determine [...] methods of selection of applicants, [...] and all other matters affecting such appointments.” At this point, a congressional nomination is not required (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 6) and admission is “based solely on personal merit” (“Admissions: Frequently Asked Questions”).

While often overlooked, the Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York also requires a congressional nomination for admission. Historically, the concept of merchant marines traces back to Colonial America where all merchant ships were armed because of the uncertainty and perils of the seas (Marvin 4). As history progressed, the Merchant Marines began to widen their responsibilities. During the First and Second World Wars it became clear that armed and well-trained merchant ships were vital to the war efforts (Bunker xi-xii) and, in fact, many claim

that both wars would not have been successful if not for the efforts of the Merchant Marines (Kutler, "Volume 5" 322). Particularly, in World War II trained mariners and the merchant ships they protected provided a wide range of help to the armed forces (Kutler, "Volume 5" 320) especially as, without direct overview from the military, they had more liberty to move around (Bunker xi).

This uncertain relationship between the United States Government, the Armed Forces and the Merchant Marine made the establishment of an academy difficult. The idea of a separate academy began to take steam in the 1930's with the idea of creating a separate Merchant Marine training and academic facility (Cruikshank and Kline 27). However, many important figures had already been clamoring for its creation. Most notably were President Theodore Roosevelt who was a strong advocate in the early 1900's (Cruikshank and Kline 35) and President Woodrow Wilson who saw a weak Merchant Marine as a serious security threat to the continuation of the United States' independence (Cruikshank and Kline 40). Furthermore, in the early 1930's it became clear that a "shipschool," which historically trained the merchant marine cadets (Cruikshank and Kline 42), was not fulfilling its duties. In fact, the Navy was so preoccupied by this lack of security that it began considering asking its Naval Academy graduates to resign after graduation and join the Merchant Marines (Cruikshank and Kline 40).

Therefore, it is not surprising that in 1936 then Senator Joe P. Kennedy, father of President John F. Kennedy, sponsored and passed The Merchant Marine Act of 1936 which established the Merchant Marine Commission to engineer a solution and established a basic training program called the United States Merchant Marine Cadet Corps (Cruikshank and Kline 52). In 1939, the Merchant Marine Commission published the *Report to Congress on the Training of Merchant Marine Personnel* which delineated clear points as to the necessity and

benefits of a separate academy (Cruikshank and Kline 64). In the early 1940's the Kings Point campus opened its doors to the first cadets. On September 20, 1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt cemented the United States Merchant Marine Academy by presenting the full dedication and remarking that “the Academy serves the Merchant Marines as West Point serves the Army and Annapolis the Navy” (Cruikshank and Kline 112-113).

The Practice of Congressional Nominations

Now it is clear why it was necessary for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Merchant Marines to create special academies to train their cadets and the process each took to reach that point. But what is still left unanswered is why have a nomination system and why go through Congress. Why do these academies require their prospective students to receive nominations as opposed to a typical application process?

From the very beginning there were doubts and criticisms about the make-up of the cadet classes at each academy. The first criticism came in the early years of West Point when many argued attending the Military Academy was too expensive and, partially for this reason, too aristocratic. Additionally, because the academies were located on only one campus there was a fear that the schools would become regional. With that came a strong conviction that the academies should have a good geographical representation so that all American citizens could have the opportunity to attend (Piehler 3-4). Still, it was not until 1964 that Congress passed a bill delineating the requirements of congressional nominations to these esteemed academies (Kutler, “Volume 1” 78). The bill, known today as 10 United States Code 4342, gives specific guidelines for cadet nomination. As stated above, each Senator and Representative is allowed five cadets at a military academy at a given time. When a vacancy occurs the Congressman can give ten names, or nominations, to fulfill the cadetship position to the military academy.

Additionally, the code gives the Congressman the option of submitting their list with a ranking, no ranking, or a number one applicant with the following nine names being unranked. Finally, the code speaks to other forms of nomination which include the Vice President's office among others (10 USC. Sec. 4342 1).

The fact is that the military academies at West Point, Annapolis, Colorado Springs and Kings Point were created for a specific purpose, to train and educate America's finest in the specific skill sets needed for each military branch and the Merchant Marines. It is also clear that the nomination process was established to assure that every citizen has the opportunity to attend these fine institutions. Yet, the law regulating these nominations gives congressional offices a lot of leeway on who to nominate. In the next section, we will see how this freedom allows congressional offices to tailor their nominations process to better fit their constituency and select the best candidates.

CASE STUDY

To assure that each academy receives ten well-qualified nominees every time there is a vacancy, congressional offices go through a wide variety of processes which differ considerably from each other. Each congressional office has slightly different ways of receiving applications, evaluating the applicants and compiling the final list to present to their congressman.

This study used information collected from interviews conducted over several months with thirteen congressional staff members and one Member of Congress. These congressional offices represented the states of New Jersey, Alabama, and New Mexico.⁴ The sample included, four Senators and ten Representatives subdivided into eight Republicans and six Democrats.

Differences in Application and Nomination Processes

Applications

⁴ Eight Members from New Jersey, four from Alabama, and two from New Mexico

In general, there are three ways through which congressional offices provide and receive student applications. Some congressional offices post the applications online, send out applications to high schools, or prefer requests be sent directly to the congressional office.

With the creation and wide-spread use of the internet many congressional office use their congressional website to disseminate information and provide applications. Yet, not all the websites are the same and the information and instructions vary. The most basic websites offer information on each academy, what admission to a military academy means and requires and then instruction on how a student can contact their congressman's office for more information and an application packet.⁵ At the next level, there are websites which, again, offer a general information overview but include a downloadable application for students. The students are generally asked to fill-out the application, collect all other supporting documentation and mail it to the congressional office where it will be compiled and reviewed.⁶ The most sophisticated websites provide an active application in which students fill out the information on the website and then print out the website-generated form and send it to the congressional office.⁷⁸

Additionally, each congressional office may ask for slightly different information from each applicant. The CRS report titled *Congressional Nominations to U.S. Service Academies: An Overview and Resources for Outreach and Management* provided information on the guidelines through which the academies process the nominees and some basic requirements. It states, that

⁵ (Smith, "Service Academy Nomination"; Bachus, "Service Academy Nominations"; Heinrich, "Constituent Services")

⁶ (Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Frelinghuysen, "Service Academy Nominations"; Menendez, "U.S. Service Academy Nominations"; Lautenberg, "Service Academy Nominations"; Aderholt, "Service Academy Nominations"; Brooks, "Service Academy Nominations"; Bonner, "Academy Nominations")

⁷ (LoBindo, "Military Academy Nominations"; Pallone, "Military Academy Nominations"; Runyan, "Military Academy Nominations"; Udall, "Academy Nominations")

⁸ Author's Note: All of the active applications forms found on these websites were identical, including layout and information requested.

the student must be an American citizen, between the ages of 17 and 23⁹, unmarried, not pregnant and “without legal obligation to support children or other dependents.” It continues to say that academies look at a student’s “academic preparation”, leadership, athletic and extracurricular activities, SAT or ACT scores, “mental and physical health”, medical examination, and physical aptitude (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 6-7).

Some of these requirements and expectations are taken into account by congressional offices in the creation of their applications. For example, the majority, if not all, ask for basic information including, name, residency, and age.¹⁰ Besides providing contact information, these forms allow for congressional staff members to determine if the student meets the basic requirements of the nomination process. Following general information, most require the submission of SAT or ACT scores¹¹ and transcripts,¹² grade point average (GPA) or rank.¹³ A relatively large number, but not all, ask students to list their extracurricular activities, including athletics.¹⁴ Yet, only one congressional office interviewed listed medical evaluation as part of their application process.¹⁵

⁹ The Merchant Marine Academy extends this cut-off to 25 years of age.

¹⁰ (Udall, “Academy Nominations”; Bonner, “Application”; Brooks, “Nomination Packet”; Aderholt, “Nomination Form”; Lautenberg, “Academy Nomination Packet”; Menendez, “U.S. Service Academy Nominations”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”; Runyan, “Military Academy Nominations”; Holt, “Academy Nominations”; Smith, “Service Academy Nomination”; Pallone, “Military Academy Nominations”; LoBindo, “Military Academy Nominations”)

¹¹ (Udall, “Academy Nominations”; Brooks, “Nomination Packet”; Menendez, “U.S. Service Academy Nominations”; Lautenberg, “Academy Nomination Packet”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”; Runyan, “Military Academy Nominations”; Holt, “Academy Nominations”; Smith, “Service Academy Nomination”; Pallone, “Military Academy Nominations”; LoBindo, “Military Academy Nominations”; Williams, Donna; Maestes)

¹² (Udall, “Academy Nominations”; Brooks, “Nomination Packet”; Aderholt, “Nomination Form”; Lautenberg, “Academy Nomination Packet”; Menendez, “U.S. Service Academy Nominations”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”; Holt, “Academy Nominations”; Smith, “Service Academy Nomination”)

¹³ (Brooks, “Nomination Packet”; Aderholt, “Nomination Form”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”; Runyan, “Military Academy Nominations”; Pallone, “Military Academy Nominations”; LoBindo, “Military Academy Nominations”)

¹⁴ (Aderholt, “Nomination Form”; Lautenberg, “Academy Nomination Packet”; Menendez, “U.S. Service Academy Nominations”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”; Runyan, “Military Academy Nominations”; Smith, “Service Academy Nomination”; Pallone, “Military Academy Nominations”; LoBindo, “Military Academy Nominations”)

¹⁵ (Holt, “Academy Nominations”)

The purpose of the nomination process is to find individuals that will have the greatest chance of entering and succeeding at the military academies. Therefore, it is not surprising that congressional offices ask for additional information when assessing the applicant pool. Most offices will ask for an essay describing the reasons behind the applicant's interest in the military academy or a series of personal questions which aim to gather similar information. In these questions, applicants are asked whether they are interested in a military career¹⁶, an issue that will be considered later. In addition, a majority of the congressional offices ask for letters of recommendation or references.¹⁷ Some offices will ask, more specifically, for high school counselor evaluations, but they make up only a small portion of the sample set.¹⁸ Another common trend is to ask students to include a small, current photograph into their application packet.¹⁹ One staff member said that these photos helped the committee responsible for the nomination make a better connection to the applicant.²⁰ Lastly, a good quantity of offices asked for a résumé or a description of work experience.²¹

From the information requested of individuals applying for a nomination, it is clear that congressional offices try to find the best and most well-rounded candidate. They look for academic strength through GPA, rank, transcripts, and SAT or ACT scores; service to the community when they ask for extracurricular activities; fitness when asked for athletic activities;

¹⁶ (Udall, "Academy Nominations"; Brooks, "Nomination Packet"; Lautenberg, "Academy Nomination Packet"; Menendez, "U.S. Service Academy Nominations"; Frelinghuysen, "Service Academy Packet"; Runyan, "Military Academy Nominations"; Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Smith, "Service Academy Nomination"; LoBindo, "Military Academy Nominations"; Pallone, "Military Academy Nominations"; Maestes)

¹⁷ (Udall, "Academy Nominations"; Brooks, "Nomination Packet"; Aderholt, "Nomination Form"; Lautenberg, "Academy Nomination Packet"; Menendez, "U.S. Service Academy Nominations"; Frelinghuysen, "Service Academy Packet"; Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Smith, "Service Academy Nomination"; LoBindo, "Military Academy Nominations")

¹⁸ (Udall, "Academy Nominations"; Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Monday)

¹⁹ (Brooks, "Nomination Packet"; Lautenberg, "Academy Nomination Packet"; Aderholt, "Nomination Form"; Menendez, "U.S. Service Academy Nominations"; Frelinghuysen, "Service Academy Packet"; Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Smith, "Service Academy Nomination"; Williams, Donna)

²⁰ (Williams, Donna)

²¹ (Brooks, "Nomination Packet"; Lautenberg, "Academy Nomination Packet"; Frelinghuysen, "Service Academy Packet"; Stevens; MacRae)

and good character when they ask for recommendations and references. Together congressional offices can assure themselves that they are nominating the best candidates to attend these prestigious academies and serve the country.

Location of the Nomination Process

Each Member of Congress has at least two offices, one in Washington D.C. and one or more in their home state, known as field or district offices. Generally, the Washington D.C. office handles direct legislative work and liaisons with other governmental bodies. On the other hand, the district offices are more geared towards constituent services. In all the congressional office interviewed, the processing and evaluation of military academy nominations happened in the district office under the supervision of a staff member.²²²³

Participants

After a student fills out an application and sends it to the district office there has to be someone who collects, analyzes and recommends the final nominees. These individuals may include a congressional staff member, volunteer committees, or even the Members themselves.

For simplicity purposes, all congressional offices have a paid staff member who works on the military academy nominations.²⁴ Every staff member interviewed had the responsibility of collecting and organizing student applications.²⁵ Additional responsibilities were to set up interview committees²⁶, which will be discussed later, and review applicants with the Member of

²² (Chew; Garvey; Stevens; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Maestes; Williams, David; Monday; Pallone; Smith, "Service Academy Nomination"; Holt, "Academy Nominations"; Bonner, "Academy Nominations")

²³ Author's Note: There was one newly elected Senator whose district staff was setting up the nomination process but all applications were requested to be sent to Washington DC for the time being (Maestes; Heinrich, "Constituent Services")

²⁴ Author's Note: This staff member is the contact person for all inquiries on military academy nominations.

²⁵ (MacRae; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Maestes; Pallone; Williams, David; Carroll; Chew; Garvey; Stevens; Williams, Donna; Monday)

²⁶ (Monday; MacRae; Pock)

Congress.²⁷ In one occasion, there was a volunteer retired admiral who worked closely with the congressional staff member to organize the applications and set up interview committees.²⁸

For those offices who decide to use outside committees they do so to better evaluate the applicant. These committees are organized by the congressional office and their responsibilities and make-up varies. For the most part, these individuals are responsible for interviewing applicants²⁹ and reviewing the applications.³⁰ The make-up of these committees can include both military affiliated individuals and regular citizens. Many offices have military academy graduates form part of the committees.³¹ Also common are military members both in active uniform³² and retired.³³ On some special occasions, a congressional office has the honor to have a Medal of Honor recipient³⁴ or military officers and generals³⁵ hold a seat on their committees.

Other members of these interview committees can be regular citizens with no, or little, tie to the military. Typically, these citizens will be prominent figures and businessmen of the community who have shown great leadership.³⁶ Some offices also choose to place parents of current military academy students or military academy graduates on the review committee.³⁷ Together, these individuals will have to evaluate each individual applicant and determine whether they are worthy of a nomination to the military academies.

Another great variant of the nomination process is the participation of the Member of Congress. There are some, although not many, congressional offices which have the pleasure of

²⁷ (Pallone)

²⁸ (Monday)

²⁹ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Williams, David)

³⁰ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer)

³¹ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Maestes)

³² (Pock; Hamilton; Vonleer; Williams, David)

³³ (Garvey; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Maestes; Williams, David)

³⁴ (Garvey)

³⁵ (Williams, Donna)

³⁶ (Garvey; Pock; Hamilton; Maestes; Williams, David)

³⁷ (Hillmann; Maestes)

having the Member of Congress participate fully in the nomination process. In this process, each application is read over and analyzed by the congressman and he forms the final nomination list off of his personal analysis.³⁸ One staff member said that her congressman enjoyed the “hands-on” aspect of the nomination process because he valued the service and dedication the applicants were willing to make.³⁹

Others will have only partial participation in the process and give very specific reasons for this decision. Out of the partial participation category the most common route is to have Members participate in out-reach programs, more specifically “academy nights” which will be discussed further on.⁴⁰ The staff members’ interview stated that while the Member of Congress wanted to participate in the process, he felt that this partial participation would not be a “political thing”⁴¹ and that this way it was “fairer” and “not biased.”⁴² The office viewed attendance at these events as a compromise between the two trains of thought. Additionally, one congressional office interview stated that their Member of Congress has a little bit more participation but not enough to be categorized as full participation. This Member of Congress sits in on the interviews but will follow the recommendations of the interview committee.⁴³

Yet, the majority of the congressional offices see very little Member participation. A majority of the Members of Congress only review the nomination list presented to them by the committee or staff member and signs off on the nominations.⁴⁴⁴⁵ Some Members of Congress see the result of a scoring system through which the committee or staff member evaluated the

³⁸ (Chew; Stevens; Pallone)

³⁹ (Chew)

⁴⁰ (Garvey; Williams, Donna; Hillmann)

⁴¹ (Williams, Donna)

⁴² (Garvey)

⁴³ (Hamilton)

⁴⁴ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Vonleer; MacRae; Williams, David)

⁴⁵ Author’s Note: This majority also includes the previous three members of Congress who had minimal participation because they too, simply review the nomination list and sign off on it.

applicants.⁴⁶ Once again, the rationale behind this minimal participation is to make sure “the process is competitive and removed of ‘politics’”⁴⁷ and make it a level playing field.⁴⁸

It is clear that many individuals are involved with determining which applicants are deserving of a nomination. Typically, the staff member in the district office will gather and organize the applications. Then a committee of diverse members may look over the application and interview students. If not, there is a chance that the Member of Congress might be reading the applications himself.

Interviews and Other Qualifications

As mentioned above, one of the tools congressional offices implement to select applicants for nomination is an interview process. Yet, not all offices desire to have interviews.⁴⁹ The majority of the interviews that are scheduled are held in front of the review board, mentioned above.⁵⁰ Most offices hold interviews all throughout the nomination process but there are some which attempt to complete all the interviews in one day so as not to consume too much of their volunteer committees’ time.⁵¹ One staff member described the interview portion as a way of combining a student’s academic record with their presentation and speaking skills in order to form a complete and accurate assessment of the individual.⁵² And once again, we have the Member of Congress in one district sit in on the interviews.⁵³ Those who did not have interviews had direct Member involvement. One of the explanations give for the absence of an interview process was that the congressional office preferred to keep the nominations “in-house.”⁵⁴

⁴⁶ (Monday; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Hillmann; Williams, David)

⁴⁷ (Williams, David)

⁴⁸ (MacRae)

⁴⁹ (Chew; Stevens; Pallone)

⁵⁰ (Monday; Garvey; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Maestes; Williams, David; Williams, Donna)

⁵¹ (MacRae; Pock; Hillmann)

⁵² (Monday)

⁵³ (Hamilton)

⁵⁴ (Stevens)

Another congressional office said that, while they did not require interviews, they would grant an interview with the congressman if the applicant requested one.⁵⁵

But what do these interviewers look for in a nominee apart from what the application says? There is a wider variety of characteristics and qualities interviewers and staff members look for. One of the first distinctions made is whether the student is interested in attending the military academies with the hopes of entering a military career and leadership position as opposed to a general interest in basic military service. For a majority of the congressional offices, an interest in military career was characterized as “very important” to the decision process.⁵⁶ In one interview, it was clearly stated that the military academies were created for individuals who aimed for a military career and, therefore, the nominees should fit that description.⁵⁷ Another congressional staffer commented that the academy is to develop students into leaders and military officers and not a free education. Additionally, they said that it is hard to tell whether the individual is truly dedicated to a career, especially because of their age and naiveté.⁵⁸ Others said they gear specific questions in their interviews to determine a student’s desires for a military career.⁵⁹

On the other side of the spectrum were congressional offices who listed interest in a military career as “not important.”⁶⁰ For the most part, the candidate simply had to show an interest in attending and fulfilling the service requirements.⁶¹ One reason why a congressional

⁵⁵ (Chew)

⁵⁶ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Pock; Hillmann; Vonleer; Pallone; Williams, David)

⁵⁷ (Pallone)

⁵⁸ (MacRae)

⁵⁹ (Hillmann)

⁶⁰ (Chew; Stevens; Hamilton; Maestes)

⁶¹ (Chew; Maestes)

office did not take interest in a military career into account was because students can, and often do, change their minds, again citing age as a factor.⁶²

Additionally, to find a balance for academic merits many offices asked students about their extracurricular activities.⁶³ Out of these, it is no surprise that athletic participation was listed as the most common.⁶⁴ Both the Naval Academy and West Point place emphasis on athletics. The Naval Academy requires that all midshipmen play a sport year-round, while West Point insists that each cadet be an athlete (Piehler 4-5). Following athletics, the next extracurricular activity weighed heavily in the decision making process was participation and success as an Eagle Scout or Girl Scout.⁶⁵ Another activity that was mentioned by a congressional office was church involvement.⁶⁶

Additionally, there were some reoccurring answers when asked about other qualities.⁶⁷ The most common word used was “leadership” for which applicants had to demonstrate a history of being a leader in various contexts.⁶⁸ Other words used were “motivation” and “determination”⁶⁹, “character”⁷⁰, and “perseverance”.⁷¹ Additional factors for congressional offices were an instance on good academics⁷² and an interest in technology and science.⁷³ One congressional office, even said they measured interest and determination to enter the military

⁶² Hamilton

⁶³ (Garvey; Stevens; Pock; Hamilton; Williams, David; Williams, Donna)

⁶⁴ (Williams, Donna; Pock; Hamilton; Williams, David)

⁶⁵ (Williams, Donna; Pock; Hamilton)

⁶⁶ (Hamilton)

⁶⁷ Author’s Note: The question asked to all interviewees was “What other qualities does your office look for in an applicant?”

⁶⁸ (Garvey; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Pock; Hillmann)

⁶⁹ (Garvey; Maestes)

⁷⁰ (Garvey; Maestes)

⁷¹ (Maestes)

⁷² (Vonleer; Williams, David)

⁷³ (MacRae)

academies by asking specific questions, such as asking the individual to recite the honor code of the academy they were applying for.⁷⁴

Many things can be said about the nomination process in congressional offices but no one can deny that the process is extensive and made to pinpoint a well-rounded and well-qualified student. It is abundantly apparent that every available tool is used make sure that the best and most prepared individuals receive nominations and continue their education at the military academies.

Final List and Collaborations

For the nomination process to be complete a Member of Congress must sign the official nomination list. But what does this list look like? And who gets to see it? It is important to remember that the CRS report states that “[n]ominees may be submitted in three categories: without ranking, with a principal candidate and nine ranked alternatives, or with a principal candidate and nine unranked alternatives.” A footnote is attached to this sentence stating that there is “[n]o publically available data regarding the number of offices that choose ranked or unranked options” (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 3). With that said, some congressional offices do disclose what system they use. All the offices who did disclose this information stated they use a competitive system.⁷⁵ This means that the list provided to the congressman and subsequently to the military academies is not ranked and all names listed have an equal opportunity of gaining admission.

In addition to the congressman and the particular individuals involved in choosing the nominees there are others who may see the list as well. Most importantly, there is a practice within some states and congressional offices to collaborate with each other in making the

⁷⁴ (Hillmann)

⁷⁵ (Chew; Hillmann; Williams, David; Garvey; Holt, “Academy Nominations”; Frelinghuysen, “Service Academy Packet”)

nominations. This collaboration can come in different forms. First, there may not be any collaboration at all.⁷⁶ One staff member claimed that an applicant's chances of obtaining admission to the military academies are heightened if his or her name appears on more than one nomination list. Therefore, they do not want to deny a well deserving applicant this benefit.⁷⁷ Another agreed, saying that there is a big difference between one and three nominations.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, a third office recommends students apply to all sources of nomination, including their Senators and the Vice President's office although they do not collaborate with these other nomination sources.⁷⁹

Meanwhile for those who do collaborate there are different levels of sharing involved. Some who collaborate with other offices do so in a limited capacity. These offices share the nomination lists with each other to make sure that no name appears on more than one list.⁸⁰ Using this method more individuals from a particular state have the opportunity to receive a nomination and be accepted.⁸¹ In addition to partial collaboration, there is one case where two senators collaborate completely to nominate candidates for the military academies. Some of the reasons given were that the same individuals sat on both committees. Therefore if forces were combined only one day would be needed for interviews, saving time for the committee members and the applicants.⁸² Additionally, this collaboration would prevent any duplication of names on the different nomination lists.⁸³

When deciding whether to collaborate with other congressional offices, congressional leaders and their staff members have to evaluate what they believe to be most important. It might

⁷⁶ (Garvey; Stevens; MacRae; Maestes; Williams, Donna)

⁷⁷ (Garvey)

⁷⁸ (Maestes)

⁷⁹ (MacRae)

⁸⁰ (Chew; Hamilton)

⁸¹ (Hamilton)

⁸² (Pock)

⁸³ (Hillmann)

be beneficial for students to receive more than one nomination because it increases their chance of gaining admission to the academy of their choosing. On the other hand some see name duplication as a wasted nomination when other non-nominated but still qualified individuals should receive a chance.

Conclusion

The nomination process is a long and difficult one; every step seems to have its own complexities. The application itself has a wide variety of requirements and questions which take time to fulfill and later organize. On the receiving end, there may be dozens of people who handle each application and come to a consensus on each one. Not only that but each applicant has many characteristics and qualities that must be flushed out and applied to the decision process. Even when the process of evaluating the applicant is done and recommendations are ready to be sent there are still decisions to be made on whether a nomination list should be shared or ranked.

Outreach Programs and Academy Pressures

During the interviews with staff members in the various congressional offices there were two interesting points and trends seen which, technically, fall outside the scope of the direct application process for nominations to the military academies. The first are congressional offices' outreach programs to promote awareness of the military academies as a potential higher education path. The other is approaches from the military academies to consider different students for nominations after they have received the signed congressional list.

Outreach Programs

An overall picture shows that congressional offices do put out a solid effort in making students within their constituency aware of the military academies and the processes to apply and

receive a nomination. Out of all the congressional offices all⁸⁴ but one had some sort of outreach program. The congressional office which did not have any outreach efforts claimed that there had been in the past but that currently their office did not have anything set up.⁸⁵ On the other hand, those who did have outreach programs approached students in three ways: through Academy Nights, their school counselor or high school, or their parents. The most common approach, by far, is hosting an annual Academy Night.⁸⁶ These Academy Nights are set up to invite representatives from the different military academies to interact and inform students, councilors, and parents about the options and process of applying to their military academy.⁸⁷ These Academy Nights are so popular that both congressional staff⁸⁸ and Members of Congress⁸⁹ will attend.

Another way of spreading the word about academy nominations is by contacting and approaching councilors and high school in the congressman's constituency.⁹⁰ Most of the correspondence with guidance counselors and high school entails letting them know of the opportunities and deadlines for the nomination process.⁹¹ One congressional office is even starting to plan outreach programs to their middle schools in order to give the future high school students the opportunity to begin extracurricular activities that might help them secure a nomination.⁹²

The final outreach program discovered was a program by one lone congressional office called a "parent forum." In this event, parents of prospective nominees are provided with the

⁸⁴ (Chew; Garvey; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Pallone; Williams, David; Carroll; Stevens; MacRae; Maestes)

⁸⁵ (Monday)

⁸⁶ (Chew; Garvey; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer; Pallone; Williams, David; Carroll)

⁸⁷ (Carroll; Pock; Hillmann)

⁸⁸ (Maestes)

⁸⁹ (Hillmann; Garvey; Williams, Donna)

⁹⁰ (Stevens; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Vonleer; Maestes; Williams, David; Carroll)

⁹¹ (MacRae; Williams, David; Carroll)

⁹² (MacRae)

information about the academies, the requirements, and the terms of service attendance entails. This is also an opportunity for parents to ask questions.⁹³ With the variety of outreach programs most congressional offices ensure that they receive a wide applicant pool each year to be able to select the most deserving candidates.

Academy Pressures on Final Nomination List

During one of the early interviews it was disclosed that congressional offices receive requests from military academies to modify the nomination list after it has been submitted to them.⁹⁴ With a little bit of digging it was found out that about half of the congressional offices had been approached with similar requests⁹⁵ while the other half has not.^{96,97} Those who have been approached are quick to qualify their answer. One office claimed that they have only ever been approached once but did not disclose if they fulfilled the request.⁹⁸ Another said that when the academies did approach their office it was because one of the nominees had proven not to be qualified for other reasons and, therefore, there was “vacancy” on the nomination list. This means that no individual who was originally nominated and deemed qualified by the academy lost his or her nomination.⁹⁹ Another congressional office said they were never asked to retract a nomination but were given the opportunity to add an additional name.¹⁰⁰ And a third staff member admitted that they were asked by the military academies but claimed that they never heeded these types of requests.¹⁰¹

⁹³ (Maestes)

⁹⁴ (Pallone)

⁹⁵ (Chew; Stevens; Pock; Hillmann; Pallone; Carroll)

⁹⁶ (Monday; Garvey; Williams, Donna; MacRae; Hamilton; Vonleer; Williams, David)

⁹⁷ Author’s Note: It is unclear how many of the “No” responses are accurate. It may be the case that congressional staff members were unwilling to disclose that they had been approached by military academies to change the nomination list.

⁹⁸ (Stevens)

⁹⁹ (Hillmann)

¹⁰⁰ (Carroll)

¹⁰¹ (Pock)

The application and nomination processes are complicated but in addition to all the work that happens behind office doors there are these added complexities. For the academies to have well-qualified students there has to be well-qualified individuals applying and receiving nominations from these congressional offices. But to get well-rounded and qualified individual to apply congressional offices have to make sure that the community knows about the academies as higher education options and the steps necessary to get there. Even once the nominations are complete and the final list is sent, the work for congressional office might not yet be over. Apparently, there is still a chance that a military academy might request a new student be considered or another applicant given a second chance. In the end, it seems that the congressmen, congressional staff, and committee members have their hands full every year to make sure the best and the brightest of America's youth enter the military academies.

ANALYSIS OF DATA: TRENDS

Through the passage of time it is possible to observe certain trends in the data released by the military academies on its students. While similar data is not recorded in many congressional offices, the staff members have varying degrees of awareness of these changes. This section will look at over-all volume of applications, the rates of acceptance, and the inclusion of minorities and women in the military academies.

Volume

To analyze volume correctly it is important to understand there are some numbers that do not change. The first number is the total number of seats, or cadetships, subject to congressional nomination. For West Point, the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy there are 2,245 seats at each academy at a given time (Petersen, "Congressional Nomination" 3). As of July 2011, there were 224 seats subject to congressional nomination at the Merchant Marine Academy as

determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 5) (See Table 1).¹⁰² The second number is the ten names each congressional office can supply to each military academy per vacancy (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 3, 5). Yet, while these numbers are fixed there is no limit to the number of application each congressional office receives on a given year.

Table 1: Distribution of Seats Available for Congressional Nomination to the United States Merchant Marine Academy, by State

State	Seats	State	Seats	State	Seats
Alabama	4	Kentucky	2	Ohio	8
Alaska	1	Louisiana	4	Oklahoma	2
American Samoa	1	Maine	2	Oregon	3
Arizona	3	Maryland	5	Pennsylvania	10
Arkansas	2	Massachusetts	5	Puerto Rico	1
California	19	Michigan	7	Rhode Island	2
Colorado	4	Minnesota	3	South Carolina	4
Connecticut	4	Mississippi	3	South Dakota	1
Delaware	1	Missouri	3	Tennessee	4
District of Columbia	4	Montana	2	Texas	13
Florida	10	Nebraska	2	Utah	2
Georgia	5	Nevada	2	Vermont	1
Guam	1	New Hampshire	2	U.S. Virgin Islands	1
Hawaii	2	New Jersey	6	Virginia	5
Idaho	2	New Mexico	2	Washington	5
Illinois	9	New York	15	West Virginia	2
Indiana	3	North Carolina	6	Wisconsin	4
Iowa	4	North Dakota	1	Wyoming	1
Kansas	3	Northern Mariana Islands	1		

While Congressional nominations remain the highest source of nomination for West Point, the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy and there are no non-congressional sources for Merchant Marine Academy nominations (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 3-6)

¹⁰² Table 1 shows the number of seats to the Merchant Marine Academy available to each state (Petersen, “Congressional Nomination” 6)

there is no published record of number of applicants each individual office receives. There are however, statistics published on the number of applications and nominations to each academy each year. These numbers will at least indicate the level of interest each academy receives on a given year. The following tables combine data provided by each academy for their entering class.

Table 2¹⁰³

School	Year of	Number of Total		
	Admission	Applicants	Nominations ¹⁰⁴	Admitted
West Point	2009	11,107	3,729	1,299
West Point	2010	12,264	4,151	1,375
West Point	2011	13,954	4,344	1,261
West Point	2012	15,171	4,285	1,193

Table 3¹⁰⁵

School	Year of	Number of Total		Congressional
	Admission	Applicants	Nominations	Admitted
Navy	2009	15,342	N/A ¹⁰⁶	1,251
Navy	2010	17,417	4,658	1,245
Navy	2011	19,145	4,905	1,229
Navy	2012	20,601	5,146	1,211

Table 4¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ (West Point, “2013 Profile”; West Point, “2014 Profile”; West Point, “2015 Profile”; West Point, “2016 Profile”)

¹⁰⁴ Author’s Note: “Nominations” include sources of nomination other than congressional

¹⁰⁵ (Navy, “2013 Portrait”; Navy, “2014 Portrait”; Navy, “2015 Portrait”; Navy, “2016 Portrait”)

¹⁰⁶ Author’s Note: No data was given for the number of nominations received for the Naval Academy in the year 2009

School	Year of	Number of Total		
	Admission	Applicants	Candidate Pool ¹⁰⁸	Admitted
Air Force	2009	9897	6940	1,368
Air Force	2010	11,627	7,543	1,294
Air Force	2011	12,732	8,085	1,137
Air Force	2012	12,274	8,043	1,035

Table 5¹⁰⁹

School	Year of	Number of Total		
	Admission	Applicants	Nominations ¹¹⁰	Admitted
Merchant				
Marines	2009	1,823	1,345	291
Merchant				
Marines	2010	2,006	1,479	342
Merchant				
Marines	2011	2,076	1,631	285
Merchant				
Marines	2012	2,211	1,681	273

¹⁰⁷ (Air Force, “2013 Profile”; Air Force, “2014 Profile”; Air Force, “2015 Profile”; Air Force, “2016 Profile”)

¹⁰⁸ Author’s Note: “Candidate Pool” was not defined but can be taken to include those who received congressional nominations

¹⁰⁹ (Merchant Marine, “2016 Profile”)

¹¹⁰ Author’s Note: “Nominations” include sources of nomination other than congressional

The figures clearly indicate that, apart from admission year 2012 at the Air Force Academy, both the volume of applicants and the nominations received have increased with time regardless of academy. They also show that each academy receives a different level of interest which is demonstrated by the disparity in number of applicants between academies. Also, although the applicant pool might be increasing, the number of students admitted may not reflect the growth. The question is whether congressional offices have observed similar trends.

When staff members were asked, on average, how many applications they received for each vacancy per year there were varying answers. Most staff members were able to provide a rough estimate¹¹¹, one was able to give exact numbers¹¹²¹¹³, and only one said they did not keep records of the number of applications received.¹¹⁴ Yet, the numbers reported varied significantly. The lowest number reported was 25 applications¹¹⁵ while the highest was 70¹¹⁶¹¹⁷. Looking more closely, two offices reported between 25 and 30¹¹⁸, three between 31 and 50¹¹⁹ and three reported between 51 and 70.¹²⁰¹²¹

¹¹¹ (Monday; Carroll; MacRae; Chew; Garvey; Williams, Donna; Pock; Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer)

¹¹² (Williams, David)

¹¹³ Author's Note: This was the only interview conducted via email which may have permitted the staff member to retrieve the data while those interviewed over the phone were unable to do so

¹¹⁴ (Stevens)

¹¹⁵ (Garvey)

¹¹⁶ (Hamilton)

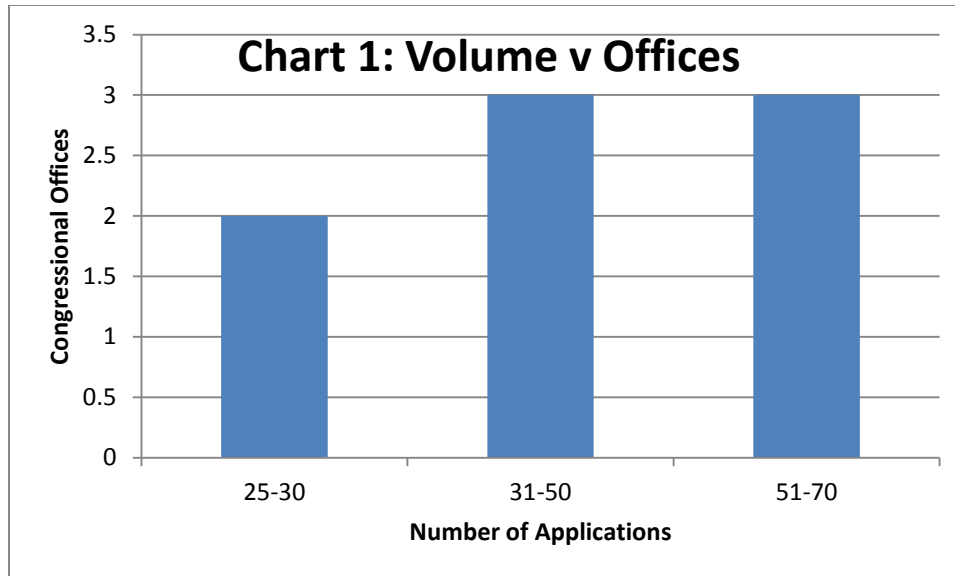
¹¹⁷ Author's Note: There were two data points collected that were much higher than the rest. One office reported 400 applicants while another reported 300-400. The best explanation is they must have given over-all volume size instead of per vacancy. Additionally, these were the two offices that were working in compendium which might affect the numbers (Pock; Hillmann)

¹¹⁸ (Garvey; Williams, Donna)

¹¹⁹ (Monday; Carroll; Vonleer)

¹²⁰ (MacRae; Williams, David; Hamilton)

¹²¹ Chart 1 gives a graphical representation of the data.



The staff members were then asked if they had noticed any differences in the volume of applications they received each year and, again, the answers varied. Some staff members said they noticed an increase but some called it “significant”¹²² while others said it was a small increase.¹²³ Those that noticed a decrease in applications also qualified it as either significant¹²⁴ or small.¹²⁵ Then there were staff members who said that the number of applications stayed about the same.¹²⁶ One staff member made a particular note that while application volume was constant the popularity of the academies shifted from year to year. No one academy had the most applications consistently.^{127 128}

¹²² (Hillmann; Hamilton; Vonleer)

¹²³ (Chew; Williams, Donna)

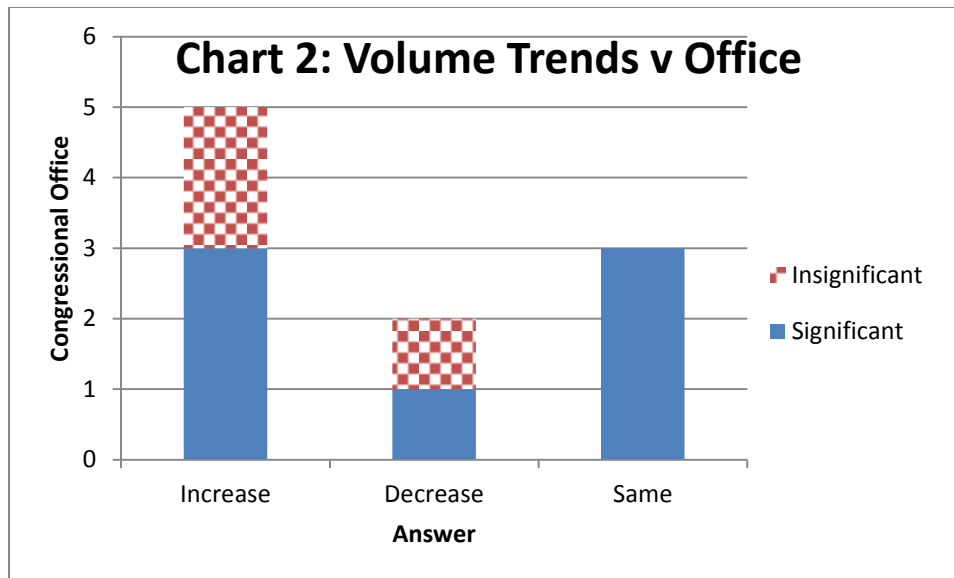
¹²⁴ (Williams, David)

¹²⁵ (Garvey)

¹²⁶ (Stevens; Monday; MacRae)

¹²⁷ (MacRae)

¹²⁸ Chart 2 gives a graphical representation of the data



It is evident that each academy keeps close records of the number of applicants, nominations, and admissions. It is also clear that they have been experiencing an increase in both applicants and nominations. Yet, the same trends are not necessarily being felt in the congressional offices. Only a handful of congressional offices report an increase and an even smaller number report a significant increase.

Tracking Success

Looking back at the data provided by the military academies it is interesting to note that the number of admitted students varies by year and does not follow a progression like the volume of applicants and nominations. With successful admission varying so much it is surprising that many congressional offices do not keep active reports on admission and graduation rates.

Only one congressional office was able to provide a definite number of nominees successfully achieving admission.¹²⁹ The majority said that they had the means to track admission and graduation but that it was not readily available and would have to be compiled.¹³⁰ One of these staff members said that they receive the information about successful completion or

¹²⁹ (Hamilton)

¹³⁰ (Chew; Garvey; Stevens; Williams, Donna; Pock; Vonleer)

drop-out because either would create a new vacancy for the next year.¹³¹ Yet, while keeping track of vacancies seems like it would be important, there were congressional offices that claimed not to be tracking acceptance and graduation rate.¹³²

Women and Minorities

History has shown that many institutions have not been very kind to the acceptance of minorities and women. Both the military and academic fields have had a long, but perhaps turbulent, relationship with minorities and women. Therefore, it is not surprising that historically the military academies struggled to include these groups and that the effects are still felt today.

In regards to the military academies, there is a disconnection between policy and reality. For example, although African American cadets were allowed to attend military academies in the 1870's and the first black cadet graduated West Point in 1877 there were still many problems. First, only three black cadets graduated before the end of World War II (Piehler 4) and were generally treated poorly by other cadets. This did not change until the integration of the armed forces after World War II and social movements of the 1960's (Ambrose 237; Piehler 4). A similar trend occurred at the Naval Academy where, although permitted admission in the 1870's, no black cadet graduated before 1949 (Piehler 5). By the mid-1990's and 2000's there was still a significant difference in the makeup of the student body. Between 1992 and 1994 both the Air Force and Naval Academies had a non-white population of 18% while West Point sat at 16%. The numbers did increase between the years of 2007 and 2009 but the figures for non-white cadets still remained below 25% at all three academies (Kirby et al. xx, xxii, xxvi).

In the case of women admittance, "Congress mandated the entry of women into the Corps of Cadets in 1976" (Ambrose 339) but the academies still struggled to find a place for women in

¹³¹ (Pock)

¹³² (Monday; Hillmann; Williams, David)

their institutions. Although many school officials at West Point worked hard to integrate women into the program there was always an “antipathy toward having women in the Corps” (Ambrose 346). The same data describing the mid-1990’s and 2000’s cohorts used above shows that women were still significantly underrepresented than their male counterparts. Between the years of 1992 and 1994 women in West Point, Air Force Academy, or Naval Academy did not surpass 15% of the student body. Even more, between 2007 and 2009, the percentage only increased a small amount capping off at 21% for the Naval and Air Force Academy and at 16% for West Point (Kirby et al. xx, xxiii, xxvi).

In recent year, all the academies have shown improvement in including members of both groups and these changes have been noted by congressional offices. The following tables are a collection of data provided by each academy for their entering class.

Table 6¹³³

School	Year of		Minorities ¹³⁴
	Admission	Women Representation	
West Point	2009	14.6%	N/A ¹³⁵
West Point	2010	18.1%	N/A
West Point	2011	16.8%	N/A
West Point	2012	16.5%	28.0%

Table 7¹³⁶

¹³³ (West Point, “2013 Profile”; West Point, “2014 Profile”; West Point, “2015 Profile”; West Point, “2016 Profile”; West Point, “Public Affairs”)

¹³⁴ Author’s Note: Data for 2012 is listed under “Minorities” but no definition is given

¹³⁵ Author’s Note: No data could be found for minorities in the admission years of 2009, 2010, and 2011

¹³⁶ (Navy, “2013 Portrait”; Navy, “2014 Portrait”; Navy, “2015 Portrait”; Navy, “2016 Portrait”)

School	Year of		
	Admission	Women Representation	Non-White ¹³⁷
Navy	2009	20.2%	34.7%
Navy	2010	21.1%	35.2%
Navy	2011	19.2%	34.5%
Navy	2012	24.2%	35.8%

Table 8¹³⁸

School	Year of		
	Admission	Women Representation	Minorities/Ethnic or Racial ¹³⁹
Air Force	2009	20.3%	23.0%
Air Force	2010	22.6%	27.0%
Air Force	2011	22.6%	29.0%
Air Force	2012	22.8%	25.6%

Table 9

School	Year of		
	Admission	Women Representation	Diversity Representation ¹⁴⁰
Merchant			
Marines	2009	10.3%	14.4%

¹³⁷ Author's Note: Calculated by adding all cadets except for those listed as "white" and dividing by the total number of cadets

¹³⁸ (West Point, "2016 Profile"; Air Force, "2013 Profile"; 109; 110)

¹³⁹ Author's Note: Data for the years 2009, 2010, and 2012 listed as "Minorities"; data for 2015 listed as "Ethnic/Racial"; neither is defined

¹⁴⁰ Author's Note: No definition of "Diversity" was provided

Merchant			
Marines	2010	12.9%	15.2%
Merchant			
Marines	2011	14.7%	16.8%
Merchant			
Marines	2012	15.0%	20.1%

As the data demonstrates, all three school in the 1990's and 2000's study are progressing in both terms of minorities and women but do not have a steady, even representation year to year. The Merchant Marine Academy seems to have been able to steadily include more women and minorities into its program but is still below the rates seen at the other academies.

These changes have not gone unnoticed in the congressional offices. When asked about trends in ethnic or gender groups applying many were quick to share their observations. Some simply responded saying there was still a smaller amount of women and minorities applying for nomination.¹⁴¹ Others acknowledged this disparity but claimed that there were increasing levels of both groups applying¹⁴² or that they had noticed the military academies making an effort to include students from these two subsets.¹⁴³ Only one staff member said that the levels had remained the same.¹⁴⁴ Yet, it was strange to hear that even with the academies showing an increase in minorities and women some congressional offices claimed they had not noticed any trends or made any observations in that regard.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ (Monday; Williams, Donna; MacRae)

¹⁴² (Hillmann; Williams, David)

¹⁴³ (MacRae; Pock; Hamilton)

¹⁴⁴ (Chew)

¹⁴⁵ (Garvey; Stevens; Vonleer)

History has shown that the inclusion of women and minorities in the military academies has been hard and continues to be a challenge. Yet, through the efforts of the military academies the situation is improving and the number of women and minority cadets is rising, a fact that is not lost on the congressional offices and their staff as they go about selecting these new cadets.

Conclusion

The military academies are experiencing some interesting trends. They are receiving more applicants than ever before but maintain a firm grip on admission levels. They are also stepping up to include more minorities and women and their efforts are paying off. With all the changes occurring, it is curious how some of these trends are reflected at the nomination level, in terms of either statistical data or observations, while others are not. Even more peculiar, those changes that are noticed may not be noticed by all offices equally.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: COMPARISONS

This final section will attempt to draw comparisons between the information found and factors such as congressional chamber, political party and urbanization. Generally speaking, the sample set in this investigation is small but the results found in this section can serve as a platform on which questions can be raised for further investigation.

Congressional Chamber: House of Representatives versus Senators

As stated above this sample only contains four Senators, with two of them working in compendium to their nominations, and the rest are Representatives. Therefore, it becomes extremely hard to draw any distinct conclusions in regards to chamber. With that said, there is one interesting result to note. In the *Application* section above, it was discussed that there were a handful of Members of Congress who participated fully in the nomination process. As it turns

out, all of these Members are legislators in the House of Representatives. For some reason, a House membership lends itself more easily to full participation than Senate membership.

Political Party: Democrats versus Republicans

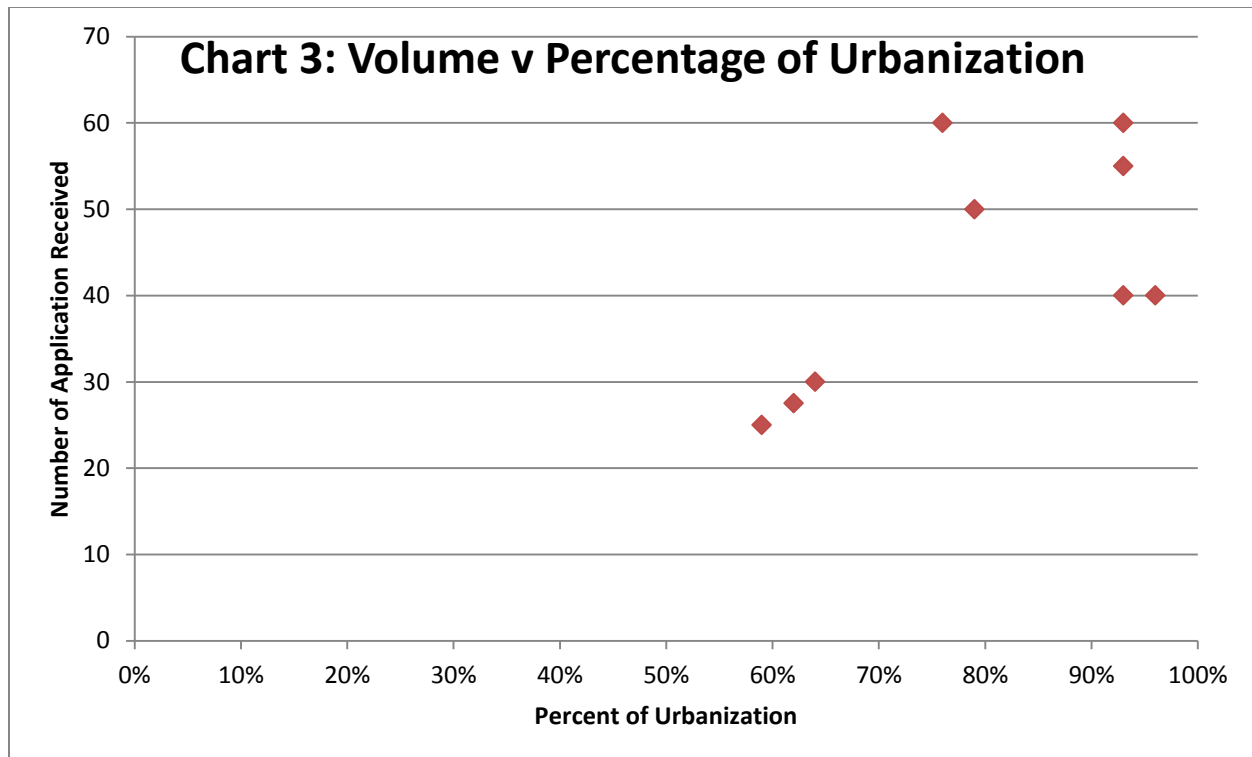
With regards to political party the sampling was more even¹⁴⁶ and, therefore, slightly better conclusions can be drawn. When comparing Republican and Democratic offices results were calculated by summing the number of offices in each category and dividing by the total offices of the same political party. When analyzing application processing procedure in this way it appears that Democrats are slightly more likely than Republicans to hold interviews at 83% to 75%, respectively. They were also more likely to insist students show interest in a military career at 83% to 62.5%, respectively.

Rural versus Urban Setting

Finally, the most promising find in this study was a connection between urbanization and number of applications received by a congressional office. The 2012 *Almanac of American Politics* provides a general overview of each state and district including the percent of urbanization. Using statewide percentages for Senators and district percentages for Representatives the following graph (Chart 3) shows the relationship between urbanization and volume of applications.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶Eight (8) Republicans and six (6) Democrats

¹⁴⁷ Author's note: The data collected from the Senator's working in compendium were not included in this chart.



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While many more data points are needed to make this result statistically relevant, there still appears to be a positive correlation. One possible explanation is that because urbanization can correlate directly with higher population there will be more applicants because there are more people.

Although, there was not enough data to come to any solid conclusions some interesting points do arise. For example, what allows for Representatives to be more prone than Senators to have full involvement in the nomination process? Why are Democrats more likely to have an interview process and place more value on an interest in a military career? Is population size the reason urbanization and application volume seemed to correlate? And finally, will these results stand if further research is done to collect more data points?

¹⁴⁸ Author's Note: For those offices giving a range of application (ie 30-50) the average was calculated and used as a data point

¹⁴⁹ (Barone and McCutcheon 22, 29, 32, 34, 1046, 1049, 1052, 1070, 1073)

CONCLUSION

During the interview process there were one staff member's remarks which were particularly memorable. She said that while military academy nominations required a lot of work but nominating students to the academies was an "absolute joy" and "a lot of fun." Describing the nomination of these "outstanding people" as a "family changing event," she concluded saying that nomination to an academy broadened "everyone's horizons."¹⁵⁰ Her comments are good descriptions of the findings found by this investigation.

There is no doubt that the all five military academies, including West Point, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Academies were created to train and educate the nation's best and brightest for leadership. They prepare students for positions in a wide variety of fields, even those extending beyond military careers. West Point, Navy, Air Force and Merchant Marine Academies all rely on the long and highly valued tradition of congressional constituent services to assist in the selection of qualified individuals.

The process of nominating ten individuals is long, arduous, and "a lot of work." There are many steps students must complete including filling out an application, submitting standardized test scores and transcripts, proving references and recommendations and participating in interviews. Each application may be seen and evaluated by dozens of people from all walks of life including parents of current students, former academy graduates, former military generals, and even the Members of Congress themselves. Even after scores are tallied and names are provided there are still decisions to be made as to whether the list should be ranked, whether or not academy requests should be considered, and how to program outreach to best promote awareness of the academies for the following year. Together almost every aspect of an

¹⁵⁰ (Carroll)

applicant's character and accomplishments are weighed in order to provide ten qualified candidates for admissions to these outstanding institutions.

From the data provided by the academies and the observations from congressional offices it is clear that interest in the military academies is growing and diversifying. The academies receive more applicants and nominations every year but maintain a firm grip on admissions levels. Meanwhile, the academies are aware of the need to improve historical standards and include more minorities and women. This concern is not lost on congressional offices that take note of the academies efforts and report some increase in applications from these two groups.

While much more research and investigation is needed the beginning of various interesting correlations can be drawn from the comparisons between Member involvement and congressional chamber, nominations process and political party, and volume of applicants and level of urbanization. Hopefully, with more time and resources these areas can be properly studied and concrete conclusions can be drawn. But for now, this simple overview of how each congressional office tackles the task of nominating well-qualified and well-rounded individuals to attend these prestigious institutions and, later, serve the nation will have to suffice.

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