



## ***Presidential Nominations for Federal Employment: Researching the Records of the U.S. Senate***

The nomination records of the United States Senate offer researchers a useful source of information regarding relatives or ancestors who served the Federal Government. The Constitution required the Senate to approve all Presidential appointments to Federal office. In addition to cabinet-level posts, civilian nominations covered a wide range of positions, from customs and revenue collectors, postmasters, foreign service personnel, and Territorial governorships, to U. S. attorneys, marshals, and judges. From 1789 to 1867, nominations were often approved on the Senate floor the day they arrived. In 1868 the Senate adopted a rule to refer all nominations to appropriate committees for consideration.

The content of the nomination files may vary considerably; most just have the nominating message from the President. Other files will contain more substantial records such as correspondence, including letters of recommendation or remonstrance from private persons or members of Congress, letters from executive departments, and financial disclosures.

Senate Resolution 474 (96th Congress) bars public access to nomination records for 50 years to protect the privacy of the nominee, as well as that of congressional committee members. If a nominee participated in public hearings, the transcripts of the testimony are open, published, and available in the files as well as in many Federal depository libraries. To identify a local depository library, go to the Government Printing Office web site at <http://catalog.gpo.gov/fdlpdir/FDLPdir.jsp> and select the link to "FDLP Public Page."

### **Arrangement of the Records**

From 1789 to 1946, Senate nomination records are arranged by Congress, then alphabetically by name of the nominee. After 1946, the files are arranged by Congress, then by committee. Published guides to the records of the Senate identify nomination files in the following committees: Agriculture and Forestry, Armed Services, Banking, Finance, Foreign Relations, Indian Affairs, Interior and Insular Affairs, Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Judiciary, Labor and Welfare, Post Office and Civil Service, Public Works, and Rules and Administration. Other papers concerning Presidential nominations may be found among the records of executive departments.

### **Finding Aids**

Several published resources are available for searching Senate nomination records.

1. NARA Special List No. 20, "Papers of the United States Senate Relating to Presidential Nominations, 1789–1901." This publication contains names of Presidential nominees presented to the Senate, regardless if they were actually confirmed, for whom nomination papers exist. Names are arranged alphabetically by Congress.
  - A supplement to Special List No. 20 covers the period 1901–1946. It is arranged by Congress, and then alphabetically by surname; it has a comprehensive name index.

2. *Senate Executive Journal*. In addition to its regular legislative journal, the Senate maintained a separate record of executive proceedings that related specifically to its functions of confirming Presidential nominees and consenting to the making of treaties. The journals are arranged by session of Congress, each with an alphabetical name index, and may be used to look up a person's name to identify what committee their appointment was referred to.
3. Other published Senate proceedings: *Annals of Congress*, *Register of Debates*, *Congressional Globe*, and *Congressional Record*. Published records of Senate floor debates may sometimes be used to supplement information found in the *Senate Executive Journal*. The *Annals of Congress*, 1789–1824, contains paraphrased versions of Senate speeches and records of debate culled from contemporary newspaper accounts. The *Register of Debates* covers 1824–1837, with some overlap, and also provides summaries of leading debates and incidents. The *Congressional Globe*, 1833–1873, contains abstracts of debates until 1851, then more verbatim transcriptions of proceedings. The *Congressional Record* covers 1873 to the present, and provides daily transcriptions of proceedings. The *Annals of Congress* and the *Register of Debates* contain indexes in each volume. Separate index volumes for each session of Congress are published for the *Congressional Record*.

**Note:** The published Senate journals and proceedings listed above are available to search online through the American Memory homepage on the Library of Congress website at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>. Select the link to the appropriate journal, then click “search” to open the search engine.

4. CIS committee hearing indexes. Congressional Information Service, Inc. has published two series of indexes to Senate committee hearings: *U.S. Congressional Committee Hearings Index, 1833–1969*, and *Index to Unpublished U.S. Senate Committee Hearings, 1823–1964*. Both publications contain personal name indexes and subject indexes. Under the subject index, see the subheading “nominations” to view alphabetical listings of names. Each listing contains the appointee's name, the position/department to which the individual is being nominated, and a reference accession number. The index also contains Superintendent of Document (SuDoc) classifications assigned by the GPO. All hearing transcripts have been reproduced on microfiche by CIS; the reference accession numbers refer to the appropriate fiche. The fiche may be available at Federal depository libraries.

Other volumes of the *Unpublished Senate Committee Hearings* indexes for the years 1965–68, 1969–72, 1973–76, and 1977–80 are available in the reference library at the National Archives at College Park.

For more information, see the following reference report: *Early Presidential Nominations in the U.S. Senate, 1797–1811*.

Rev. June 2013