



## Female Appointed Successors in the United States Senate

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### ABSTRACT

The evolving roles of women in Congress have received appreciable attention from legislative scholars. In this research note, we seek to couple research on departures from Congress and women in Congress by examining what happens in Senate seats vacated by electoral defeat, death, resignation, and retirement. Using data from 1919 through 2019, we analyze the circumstances under which women are appointed Senate successors and particularly on the ability of female senators to be replaced by other women once they leave office. This article builds on previous work on women's accession to high political office, particularly "political widowhood," but to the best of our knowledge is the first to focus on female successors in the US Senate.

### KEYWORDS

US Congress; women in office; Senate; widow's mandate

On January 3, 2019, former US House member Martha McSally was sworn in to replace resigning Senator Jon Kyl as the junior senator from Arizona, becoming the 56th woman to serve in the US Senate.<sup>1</sup> She also became the 17th woman to have been appointed to the upper chamber.<sup>2</sup> While such appointments were historically relatively common and constituted the route by which many of the first women arrived in the US Congress (Solowiej and Brunell 2003), in the 21st century it has become decidedly less common as female candidates have become more successful at winning initial election on their own merits.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in this century McSally is only the fourth woman appointed to the Senate.<sup>4</sup> In this research note, we take a look back at the historical practice of women being appointed to the Senate, from its roots in the so-called "widow's mandate" (by which a deceased senator's widow was chosen as a short-term, partisan placeholder for the office until an election could be held) to the more recent (and less common) practice of choosing women whose career ambitions include holding on to the Senate seat.<sup>5</sup> While the "widow effect" has been explored in the US House of Representatives (Solowiej and Brunell 2003), as so often is the case in legislative studies, the Senate has been largely overlooked. We address this void in the literature, providing both a descriptive summary of the female successors who have been appointed to the Senate and a preliminary empirical analysis of the factors that contributed to their appointment. In doing so, we more than

merely address a lacuna in the literature. Our analysis sheds additional light on the factors that have historically hindered the greater representation of women in the US Senate and on how appointments have allowed women initial access to the upper chamber.

Our article unfolds as follows. In the first section, we provide a brief historical overview of female senators. Then we review the limited previous literature on female successors in Congress and the even more limited literature on appointed female senators. After describing our historical data and modeling choices, we present the results of our empirical analysis and conclude by commenting on their significance for understanding the evolution of female representation in the Senate.

### **Female senators, 1922–2018<sup>6</sup>**

Jeannette Rankin (R-MT) was the first woman to serve in the US Congress. She was elected to represent Montana's at-large district from 1917 to 1919 and later served Montana's 1st district from 1941–1943. Famously, she opposed the United States' entry into both world wars. She was one of the 50 House members to vote against the 1917 war declaration and the only member of Congress to oppose the declaration of war against Japan in 1941.<sup>7</sup>

The first female senator is considerably more obscure to history, in part because of the different paths required to achieve selection to the two chambers.<sup>8</sup> While service in the House requires election, senators may find their way into the upper chamber via appointment.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the first four women to serve in the US Senate arrived there via appointment. Rebecca Latimer Felton (D-GA) was the first, serving for one—largely symbolic—day in 1922. The widow of Rep. William H. Felton (D-GA 7th; 1823–1909), Rebecca Felton was a prominent advocate for such progressive causes as women's suffrage, prison reform, prohibition, and educational modernization but, prominently, not racial matters.<sup>10</sup>

When Senator Thomas E. Watson (D-GA) died in office, Governor Thomas W. Hardwick, who would himself run for the open Senate seat and did not want to appoint someone who would be a real competitor in the coming special election, chose the 87-year-old Felton. In part this was to placate newly enfranchised women voters after his opposition to ratification of the 19th Amendment. Since Senator Watson died in September 1922, while Congress was on recess until November 21st, Felton's appointment might have been *entirely* symbolic had Governor Hardwick prevailed in the special election. But he was upset by Walter F. George, who—under pressure from women's groups in the state—agreed to delay his swearing in by a day to allow Felton the honor of a day's official service in the chamber.<sup>11</sup> In the single speech she gave in the Senate, Felton noted, "There may be but very few [female senators] in the next few years," but prophesied that, "when the

women of the country come in and sit with you ... you will get ability, you will get integrity of purpose, you will get exalted patriotism, and you will get unstinted usefulness.”<sup>12</sup>

Felton was followed in the Senate by three more appointed southern Democrats: Hattie Wyatt Caraway from Arkansas (who served from 1931 to 1945), Rose McConnell Long of Louisiana (1936–1937), and Dixie Bibb Graves of Alabama (1937–1938). Senators Caraway and Long were first appointed to answer true “widow’s mandates,” selected to temporarily replace husbands who had died in office.<sup>13</sup> Both women, however, also won election to the Senate in special elections held to fill the remainder of the terms. After winning the special election to fill the remaining months of her husband’s term, Caraway opted to stay in politics and ran successfully in the general elections of 1932, 1938, and 1944.<sup>14</sup> Senator Long’s career was more typical of the widow’s mandate; after winning a special election in May 1936 for the remainder of her husband’s original term, she opted not to run in that year’s general election.

In 1938, Gladys Pyle, a Republican from South Dakota, became the first woman to be elected to the Senate without previously having served in an appointed capacity and her path to the upper chamber involved a quirk in the state’s electoral laws. Senator Peter Norbeck (R-SD) died in office in 1936, and the governor appointed Democrat Herbert Hitchcock as his replacement until the November 1938 general election. However, Hitchcock lost to John Chandler Gurney and state law required that an appointed senator step down after the general election. Normally, this would not have mattered much, but rumors that President Franklin Roosevelt intended to call Congress back into special session to take advantage of Democratic super-majorities in both chambers caused South Dakota’s GOP leaders to desire to have a replacement available if necessary. Since state law stipulated that Gurney’s name could not appear twice on the ballot, they nominated Pyle—whose long record included service in the state legislature, as secretary of state, and as candidate for governor—for the short term from November 1938 to January 1939. As it transpired, since Roosevelt did not call a special session, the official duties of the first female GOP senator were quite limited (see [history.house.gov/People/Detail/20002](https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/20002); accessed March 5, 2020).<sup>15</sup>

Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME) was the first woman to serve in both the House of Representatives (1940–1949) and in the Senate (1949–1973) and the first woman to arrive first in the Senate via a general election (a distinction she would hold until the election of Nancy Kassebaum [R-KS] in 1978). In 1954, Eva Kelley Bowring (R-NE), who had been appointed in April the year following the death of Senator Dwight Griswold, became the first female senator to be replaced by a woman, when Hazel Hempel Abel (R-NE) won the special election for the seat.<sup>16</sup> In all, five female senators have been replaced by other women.<sup>17</sup>

Through the 1970s, women continued to arrive in the Senate mainly on the basis of family connections. Maurine Brown Neuberger (D-OR) who served from 1960–1967, won a special election to fill the unexpired term of her late husband, and both Muriel Humphrey (D-MN) and Maryon Pittman Allen (D-AL) were appointed in 1978 to temporarily replace deceased spouses. In 1972, Elaine Edwards (D-LA) was appointed by her husband Governor Edwin Edwards for a brief stint in the Senate following the death of Senator Allen J. Ellender (D-LA). In the 1980s and 1990s, women began winning election to the Senate on their own merits in higher numbers. Of the 42 women who have served in the Senate since 1980, only eight have arrived there initially via appointment and only two of those (Jocelyn Burdick [D-ND] in 1992 and Jean Carnahan [D-MO] in 2001) have been widows serving a “mandate.”<sup>18</sup>

Of the 56 women who have served in the US Senate, 36 have been Democrats and 20, Republicans. Fourteen female senators have come from the states of the old Confederacy and 18, from the broader South (including Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia)—eight of whom were appointed. Winning general elections has become the most common route by which female senators make it to the upper chamber, with 34 taking that route. Earlier in the time series, appointments were more common, however, with 17 (30.4%) in total (including six “widows’ mandates” and three appointments by a husband or a father in the governor’s office).<sup>19</sup> Five women first arrived in the Senate via special elections.

## Previous literature

While there is a large and growing literature on female representation, particularly with regard to representation in the US Congress (see, among many others, Burrell 1996; Dodson 2006; Fox and Lawless 2005, 2010; McGlen et al. 2010; O’Connor 2002; Osborn 2012; Rosenthal 1998, 2002; Thomas 1994; Thomas and Wilcox 2014), relatively fewer studies have focused on women in the Senate (but see, Swers 2013) or the routes that early female representatives took into congressional office (Solowiej and Brunell 2003). No study that we are aware of systematically examines the appointment of female senators.

A central theme of the literature on female representation is that the election of women matters. Female representatives tend to have both different agenda priorities, with more of a focus on family-friendly social welfare policies (Dolan and Ford 1995; Swers 2002, 2005; Wolbrecht 2002), and different governing styles, with more emphasis on cooperation and participation (for a meta-analysis of psychological work on this, see van Engen and Willemsen 2004). The literature also strongly suggests that a major impediment to women’s election to office has been their historical absence from the

“talent pool” from which competitive candidates are usually drawn (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1987; Welch 1977). As the advantages of previous electoral experience (Jacobson 1990) and incumbency in particular (see the literature summarized in Jacobson and Carson 2016, 39–47) are well known, election by a widow’s mandate in the House or appointment to the Senate could provide women with the ability to bypass at least some of the structural and career obstacles that have traditionally blocked their access to high elective office. Appointment also provides a path to the Senate that does not include having to put oneself up for elected candidacy, not a trivial concern given that research has shown women—even at high levels of accomplishment—are less likely than men to either seek or be recruited for political office (Fox and Lawless 2010).

Of the handful of empirical studies that address the careers of early female members of Congress, the focus has been (almost) entirely on the House of Representatives and mainly on the “widow’s mandate.” Many of these have focused on the differences between widows and regularly elected congresswomen (Bullock and Lee Findley Heys 1972), the factors that contributed to a party’s decision to nominate a widow (Gertzog 1980, 1995), or the factors influencing the duration of a widow’s career (Fogarty, Jalazai, and Hankinson 2013). In the study most relevant to our interests, Solowiej and Brunell (2003) examined the importance of the “widow effect.” While they have an aside about the Senate (more about this later), their empirical focus is on the House of Representatives between 1917 (when Jeannette Rankin entered the chamber) and 1997. They also focus entirely on widows, whom they define strictly (*contra* Gertzog 1980) as wives of deceased members who are elected as the direct, immediate successors of their husbands. Framing their analysis in ambition theory, they utilize a Heckman selection model to explore what factors influence whether or not a widow will run for her deceased husband’s House seat. Of the variables they test (i.e., South, husband’s seniority, husband’s margin of victory in his last election, and the first year of the husband’s service in the House), they found only seniority emerges as statistically significant, which the authors interpret as evidence “of [the] traditional incumbency advantage having a spillover effect for widows” (Solowiej and Brunell 2003, 290).<sup>20</sup>

### **Data, expectations, and analysis**

To more fully and systematically explore what factors influence the appointment of female senators, we employ a data set that includes all non-election-related departures from the Senate between 1919 (the first year of the fully elected Senate) and 2019, which covers all of the women appointed to the Senate (see Table 1 for a complete list). This data set accounts for every senator who left the chamber prior to the end of a term due to death,

**Table 1.** Appointed Female Senators, 1919–2019.

Name and Party	State	Term of Service
Rebecca Latimer Felton (D)†	Georgia	1922
Hattie Wyatt Caraway (D)*‡	Arkansas	1931–1945
Rose McConnell Long (D)*	Louisiana	1936–1937
Dixie Bibb Graves (D)	Alabama	1937–1938
Vera Calahan Bushfield (R)*	South Dakota	1948
Eva Kelley Bowring (R)*	Nebraska	1954
Elaine S. Edwards (D)*	Louisiana	1972
Muriel Humphrey (D)*	Minnesota	1978
Maryon Allen (D)*	Alabama	1978
Jocelyn Burdick (D)*	North Dakota	1992
Sheila Frahm (R)	Kansas	1996
Jean Carnahan (D)*	Missouri	2001–2002
Lisa Murkowski (R) ‡	Alaska	2002–
Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D) ‡	New York	2009–
Tina Smith (D)	Minnesota	2018–
Cindy Hyde-Smith (R)	Mississippi	2018–2019
Martha McSally (R)	Arizona	2019

\*Widow's mandate.

†Served one day.

‡Appointed senators who subsequently won election.

Source. [senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/women\\_senators.htm](https://senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/women_senators.htm), updated by authors.

resignation, retirement from public life, or for running for or accepting another public office (progressive ambition). By casting a relatively wide net, the data set allows us to examine cases over the past century in which there plausibly could have been a woman appointed to a vacant or vacating Senate seat.<sup>21</sup> While we will be guided in our empirical analysis by research done in the House about the widow's mandate, our analysis is of necessity different. First, since vacancies in the Senate are filled differently than in the House, we are interested in appointments rather than elections. Appointments involve a different set of actors than elections (most specifically the governor) and different expectations. Second, although a number of early female appointees to the Senate were, indeed, widows, not all have been. Thus, we are interested not in widows alone but in all female appointees.

Our principal theoretical expectation is that decisions to appoint a female senator are political in nature and will be guided by political considerations. Given that most, if not all, of our time series women face significant hurdles as candidates, even as incumbents, we suspect that politically astute governors would risk a female appointment only if they believed any possible electoral risk was small and/or outweighed by other considerations. Historically, for most governors in most situations, this means they would appoint a woman only if they thought the seat safe from being “flipped” by the other party. In the time series under investigation, 218 Republican and 235 Democratic governors had an opportunity to make an appointment. This

difference suggests that Democratic governors had a slight advantage, 17 more opportunities, to fill a vacant seat.

Our dependent variable is whether a woman was appointed to the vacant or vacating seat, coded 1 if so, 0 otherwise (including both instances in which men received the appointment or in which there was no appointment due to the seat being filled via either special or general election).<sup>22</sup> Since our dependent variable is binary, we use a logistic regression estimator with robust standard errors.<sup>23</sup> Our independent variables are driven by our theoretical intuitions about what factors influence the appointment of women, previous research, and some standard control variables. First, having noted earlier that there have been roughly twice as many Democratic as Republican women appointed to the upper chamber, we include the party of both the state's governor and of the previous senator (which in the case of all 17 female appointees is the same) coded as an indicator for Republican (1) or Democrat (0). We also include the departing senator's first dimension DW Nominate score (derived from Voteview, see Lewis et al. 2018) from his last Congress to see if more liberal senators are more likely to foster female replacements. Following previous research in the House (see Fogarty, Jalazai, and Hankinson 2013; Solowiej and Brunell 2003), we include the age (in years, as indicated by Voteview's data, see Lewis et al. 2018) and seniority (in days) of the departing senator.<sup>24</sup> We suspect that both age and seniority reflect the electoral safety of the seat and perhaps on the transferability of the incumbency advantage. Third, as a more direct measure of a Senate seat's safety, we include the departing senator's two-party vote margin from the preceding election.<sup>25</sup> We anticipate that, even more than age and seniority, this will permit us to see whether women were chosen in states in which the party was strong and a female appointment would do no harm to the "brand," in the case of designedly temporary placeholders, or would be able to capitalize on that strength, in the case of appointees who decided to seek the office in their own right. Fifth, we include a variable for the 11 states of the old Confederacy, both because previous, related works have shown it to influence appointments in these states (see Fogarty, Jalazai, and Hankinson 2013; Solowiej and Brunell 2003) and because—especially early in our time series—a disproportionate number of female appointments have come from the South. The first four female appointed senators were southerners, as were six of the first ten and four (five if you include Missouri) of the true widow's mandates. In our sample, 25% of appointments came from the South (115 of 454). Finally, we also include indicator variables to show instances in our data set in which a Senate seat became vacant due to the death of a sitting senator or a sitting senator leaving office to pursue/accept another public position.<sup>26</sup> Results from our logistic regression model are summarized in Table 2.



**Table 2.** Logistic Estimates of Female Appointments to the U. S. Senate, 1919–2019.

	$\beta$ (SE)
Republican Governor	–0.005 (0.006)
Republican Departing Senator	0.262 (0.593)
Ideology	0.100 (0.782)
Age of Departing Senator	0.048 (0.033)
Seniority of Departing Senator	–0.001 (0.001)
Departing Senator's Most Recent Vote Margin	0.046** (0.019)
South	–0.246 (1.062)
Appointment Due to Death	1.572** (0.744)
Appointment Due to Progressive Ambition	2.102*** (0.812)
Intercept	–9.636*** (2.194)
AIC	137.604
N	454

The dependent variable is whether a woman was appointed to the vacant or vacating seat (1) or not (0) (including both instances in which men received the appointment or there was no appointment due to either a special or a general election). Robust standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ .

In general, these results comport with our expectations, though there are intriguing differences from previous research. First, once other factors are taken into account, party appears to make little difference in terms of female appointments, a finding that roughly conforms to results reported by Masthay and Overby (2017) that party plays a smaller role in Senate career choices than it does in the House. Second, consistent with Solowiej and Brunell (2003), we find that the apparent southern effect disappears once we control for additional factors, suggesting that over the broad sweep of the 20th and early 21st centuries, the appointment of female senators is not a regional phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Third, while age and seniority have been shown to figure prominently in widow's mandates in the House (see Fogarty, Jalazai, and Hankinson 2013; Solowiej and Brunell 2003), they show no statistically significant effect here. Previous vote margin and appointments due to death and progressive ambition, however, are statistically significant.

To understand the substantive importance of the statistically significant variables in our model, we calculate first differences to show the change in the probability of appointing a female successor (King, Tomz, and



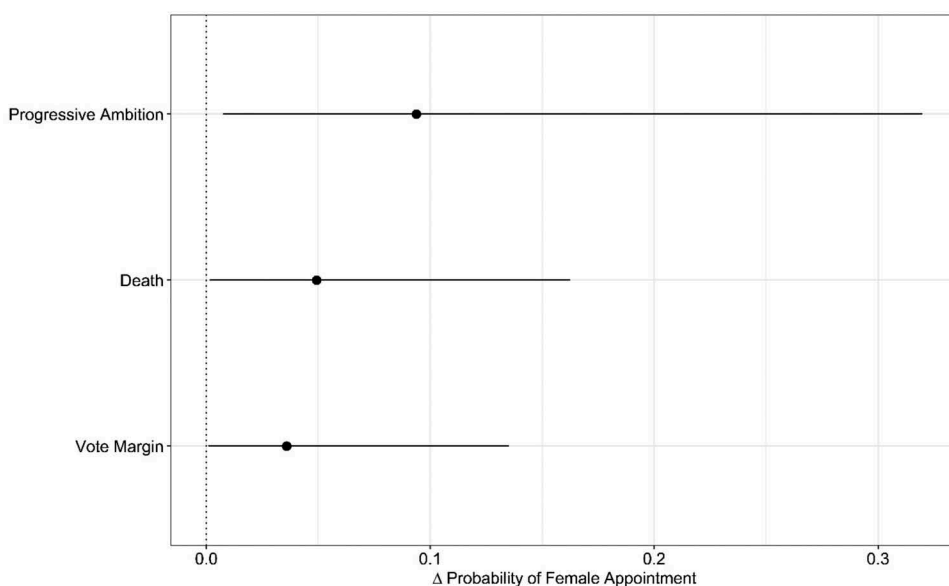
Wittenberg 2000). The first differences are calculated by changing binary variables from 0 to 1 and increasing continuous variables by two standard deviations above the mean. Control variables are held at their mean (continuous) and modal (binary) values.

Previous vote margin, which has not emerged as a significant predictor of either receiving a widow's mandate or translating such a mandate into an elected career in the House, does stand out here as statistically significant. Changing from the mean value of previous vote share (62.12%) to two standard deviations above the mean (89.22%) results in between a 1% and 13% greater likelihood of a female appointee. Taken as a whole, this suggests that when governors are considering whether to appoint a woman as an interim senator, they give significant thought to electoral considerations. From Jim Crow-era Georgia (where Rebecca Latimer Felton's predecessor Thomas Watson got 94.9% of the vote) to 21st century Alaska (where Lisa Murkowski's father Frank received 78.9%), women have tended to be appointed to electorally secure environments.

Finally, the variables for mortality in office and progressive ambition indicate that women are significantly more likely to be chosen in those cases than in—historically more common—instances of retirement. Consistent with the logic of the “widow's mandate,” departures due to death are between 1% and 16% more likely to result in a female appointee. In addition, departures due to progressive ambition are between 1% and 32% more likely to result in a female appointee. Indeed, of the 17 cases we have examined in this paper, 15 have involved vacancies caused either by death in office ( $n = 11$ ) or an incumbent departing for another position ( $n = 4$ ). It was not until 2018, when Tina Smith (D-MN) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) were appointed, that women filled vacancies due to retirement or resignation from public life.<sup>28</sup> Figure 1 depicts the substantive effects discussed above from the statistically significant variables presented in Table 2.

## Discussion

Appointments constitute a significant pathway for women into the US Senate, with female appointees accounting for nearly a third of all women who have ever served in the upper chamber. We take at least a preliminary look at the career paths of these female appointees, extending the limited previous research that has been done on the widow's mandate in the House of Representatives. While a number of these appointees, especially early in the time series, were short-term placeholders, some of them constituted important symbolic appointments, signaling changes in US political culture and presaging more important changes to come. The important symbolic nature of some of these female appointees has not entirely abated. Tina



**Figure 1.** Substantive Effects for Statistically Significant Variables. Results are estimated using the model in Table 2. First differences are calculated by changing binary variables from 0 to 1 and increasing continuous variables by two standard deviations above the mean. All other variables are held at their mean (continuous) or mode (binary).

Smith's appointment represents at least in part a "symbolic rebuke against Franken" and sexual harassment more generally (Severns 2017).

Our empirical analysis suggests the principal factor affecting the appointment of a female successor to the Senate is the general political climate in the state, with governors opting to name a woman in cases wherein the seat is deemed relatively safe for the party, either for another partisan to replace the female placeholder or for her to have a more than reasonable chance at turning the appointment into an elective mandate. Other factors—for example, age, region, ideology—fade to insignificance in the presence of controls.

As this is the first empirical examination of appointed female senators, our results should be considered suggestive rather than dispositive. We have cast a wide net in terms of our analysis, examining all cases of nonelectoral departure from the Senate in which there would have been at least the possibility of a female appointment. We have also not accounted for any selection effect that might be in operation as has been used in previous studies of the widow's mandate in the House (Solowiej and Brunell 2003).<sup>29</sup> Also, for lack of data, we have not taken into account several other factors that might influence a woman's appointment to the Senate, including the availability and political attractiveness of plausible female choices and state-by-state (and sometimes temporal) peculiarities in gubernatorial appointment powers (see note 8 and the case of Senator Gladys Pyle). Finally, our analysis speaks only to initial appointment, not subsequent

performance in the upper chamber. Future work should examine such factors as the length and productivity of appointees' careers in the Senate.

## Notes

1. McSally's route to the Senate was a convoluted one. After serving two terms as the representative from Arizona's 2nd District, in 2018 she ran as the Republican nominee to replace retiring Senator Jeff Flake and lost narrowly to Democratic nominee Kyrsten Sinema. Upon the death of Arizona's senior senator John McCain in August 2018, former Senator Jon Kyl had been appointed by Governor Doug Ducey to serve the remainder of McCain's term. In December 2018, however, Kyl announced that he would resign from the seat and Governor Ducey named McSally as his replacement until the 2020 special election. Of the 1,982 individuals who have served in the Senate, women constitute 2.82 percent.
2. Of the other female senators, five first came to the office via special elections and 31 via regular, general elections. We do not count as appointees senators (such as Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas and Paula Hawkins of Florida) who after winning election were technically appointed early to their seats to gain an advantage in terms of class seniority.
3. While our focus is on female appointed senators, it is worth taking a look at all appointed senators. In total, since 1913, 200 individuals have been appointed to the Senate ([www.senate.gov/senators/AppointedSenators.htm](http://www.senate.gov/senators/AppointedSenators.htm); accessed March 5, 2020), roughly 10% of all people who have served in the upper chamber. Among the most prominent are Carter Glass (D-VA), who is considered one of the founders of the federal reserve system; Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI), who led efforts to make the Republican Party more international in its outlook; James O. Eastland (D-MI), one of the chamber's arch segregationists; John Foster Dulles (R-NY), who is best known for his service as secretary of State; Sam Ervin (D-NC), who chaired the Senate Select Committee to Investigate Campaign Practices during Watergate; Pierre Salinger (D-CA), who is known for being President John F. Kennedy's press secretary; Walter Mondale (D-MN), who would go on to serve as vice president; Ted Stevens (R-AK), who would at the time of his retirement be the longest-serving GOP senator; George Mitchell (D-ME), who served as Senate Majority Leader; Dan Coats (R-IN), who currently serves as director of National Intelligence; and Tim Scott (R-SC), the first Black US senator from the southern United States since Reconstruction.
4. The other three are Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS). Gillibrand was first appointed in 2009 to fill the seat of Hillary Clinton upon her appointment to the position of Secretary of State; Gillibrand subsequently won a special election in 2010 and a regular general election in 2012. Smith was appointed in early 2018 to fill the seat that had been held by Senator Al Franken (D-MN), who resigned in the wake of sexual misconduct allegations. Smith subsequently won the November 2018 special election to serve the remainder of Franken's unexpired term. Hyde-Smith was appointed in April 2018 to fill the seat vacated by retiring Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS). In November 2018, she won a special election to serve the three-year remainder of the term.
5. The "widow's mandate" is rooted in practice not law, but was well suited to serve the needs of political parties in that they could replace a deceased incumbent with someone bearing the same well-known surname and ambitious copartisans in that the widow would presumably not be staying long in the office. It was also a practice not limited to

Congress; the widow's mandate was common in state legislatures and the first woman governor, Nellie Davis Tayloe Ross (D-WY), succeeded her late husband in that position after winning a special election following his death in office in 1924.

6. Except where specifically noted, the biographical information in this section was garnered from the on-line *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–Present* (<https://bioguideretro.congress.gov/>) (Accessed March 5, 2020).
7. Less well known is the fact that she abstained on the later declaration of war against Germany and Italy.
8. Article 1, Section 2, of the US Constitution, which deals with the House of Representatives, reads, in part, “When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.”
9. Both Article 1, Section 3, of the original Constitution and the 17th amendment, which was ratified in 1913 and established the popular election of senators, allow for the appointment of senators to fill unexpired terms. The 17th amendment reads, in part, “When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, that the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.” While the numbers have changed over time, currently 36 states fill a Senate vacancy during their next general election and 14 states require that a special election be held; 46 states permit a gubernatorial appointment until the relevant election (with an additional three allowing gubernatorial appointments with certain conditions; see [www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vacancies-in-the-united-states-senate.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vacancies-in-the-united-states-senate.aspx), accessed March 5, 2020).
10. She was also the last member of Congress to have been a slave owner (McKay 2011).
11. These efforts included requests for President Warren G. Harding to call a special session of Congress for the purpose of swearing in the first female senator. Harding demurred, but then did call Congress back for a special session for the purpose of considering merchant marine legislation, which presented Fenton with her opportunity (see [www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches\\_Felton.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches_Felton.htm)) (accessed March 5, 2020).
12. See [senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches\\_Felton.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches_Felton.htm) (accessed March 5, 2020).
13. Senator Graves was appointed by her husband, Governor Bibb Graves, to fill the vacancy caused by Hugo Black’s confirmation to the US Supreme Court.
14. During her 14 years in the Senate, she became the first woman to chair a Senate committee and the first woman to preside over the chamber.
15. The same is true for the second female Republican senator, Vera Cahalan Bushfield, also of South Dakota, who served from early October to late December 1948, after being appointed to the post by the governor following the death in office of her husband, Senator Harlan Bushfield. Since Congress was in recess, Senator Vera Bushfield did not even travel to Washington during her attenuated term.
16. Through a series of deaths in office, appointments, and special elections, six people held this Nebraska Senate seat between January 1949 and January 1955.
17. After Bowring, they are Hillary Clinton (D-NY) in 2009, Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) in 2009, Barbara Boxer (D-CA) in 2017, and Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) in 2017.
18. Senator Lisa Murkowski, who has represented Alaska since 2002, was appointed by her father, Frank Murkowski, to fill the unexpired portion of his term when he became governor.
19. This percentage is substantially higher than the 18% of female House member who arrived via a widow’s mandate (Solowiej and Brunell 2003, 287).

20. Following Bledsoe and Herring (1990), they also interpret these results as evidence of a greater risk aversion among female politicians than male politicians. For an explanation of selection corrections, see Solowiej and Brunell (2003, 288) and note 28.
21. There are 452 cases total, 184 of which resulted in an appointed senator. Of the 452 cases, 258 were due to retirement from public life; 135, from deaths in office; and 59 due to progressive ambition.
22. The US Senate publishes a list of all appointed Senators: [senate.gov/senators/AppointedSenators.htm](https://senate.gov/senators/AppointedSenators.htm) (accessed March 5, 2020).
23. Though we do not report the full results here, the findings are robust, with rare events models yielding substantively similar results (King and Zeng 2001).
24. To obtain our measure of seniority we accessed senators' biographies using the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–Present*, to determine the exact dates senators entered and left office. See <https://bioguideretro.congress.gov/> (accessed March 5, 2020).
25. For elections after 1982, we utilize the Federal Election Commission to derive vote shares. For elections before 1982 we utilize archival records made available by the Clerk of the House (<http://history.house.gov/Institution/Election-Statistics/Election-Statistics/>; accessed March 5, 2020).
26. The Senate makes available a list of all senators who have died in office: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/SenatorsDiedinOffice.htm> (accessed March 5, 2020). For the more recent era, we were able to use Ballotpedia ([https://ballotpedia.org/Main\\_Page](https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page); accessed March 5, 2020) to determine which senators left office due to retirement and progressive ambition. For later years we relied on the *Biographical Directory* mentioned above.
27. Whether or not we would see a regional effect in length of term in office for female appointees, such as that shown by Fogarty, Jalazai, and Hankinson (2013) for House widows, is beyond the scope of our data.
28. The four women appointed for an incumbent departing for another position are Dixie Bibb Graves (D-AL), who replaced Hugo Black when he was appointed to the Supreme Court; Sheila Frahm (R-KS), who replaced Bob Dole who resigned to run for the presidency; Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), who replaced her father Frank when he was elected governor; and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), who replaced Hillary Rodham Clinton when she became Secretary of State.
29. A selection model considers the conditional likelihood of one outcome (the appointment of a female replacement) given a prior outcome (a legislative seat coming open). Accounting for a selection effect in the term of a House widow's mandate is relatively simpler, given that all such cases involve death in office of a spouse. With multiple routes to appointment in the Senate (i.e., resignation, retirements, progressive ambition, in addition to death), it is conceptually more difficult in the Senate.

## Disclosure statement

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