# Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883

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## **The Pendleton Act**

#### Enacted January 16, 1883

- Stipulated that government jobs should be awarded on the basis of merit" (definition of merit: "a good quality or feature that deserves to be praised")
- Only applied to federal jobs not state or local civil positions.



https://www.princeton. edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Pe ndleton\_Civil\_Service\_Reform\_Act. html

#### What did the Pendleton Act Do?

The act required government officials to take an exam/interview prior to taking office.

 Made it illegal to fire employees over individual (personal) political views.

Made it illegal to demote (aka 'take away power) individuals based on political views

http://www.american-historama.org/1881-1913-maturation-era/pendleton-civil-service-reform-act.htm

### Patronage System (AKA 'Spoils System')

The Pendleton Civil Service Act (mostly) abolished the Patronage System

- The practice of awarding the supporters of the winning politicians/parties a government job or a position in office.
- Very often, friends and family of the running candidate would provide extra opportunity for success.
- This system acted as an incentive for the winners of elections to continue working for their respective party (the party that helped them obtain office.)

## **Machine Politician**

A political organization that controlled jobs and contracts by using corruption.

 An example where they used this was by tainting the ballots for extra votes, although they had enough votes to win without tainting them.

## **Purpose & Impact**

- Illegal to fire government workers based on personal views
- Initially, the act only covered 10% of federal positions. By 1896, the act covered around 90% of all federal positions.
- Opened up political positions to a wider range of applicable candidates.
- With future elections, citizens had a higher tendency to vote for individuals who had obtained their power legitimately - and not through the 'spoil system'



https://www.milestonedocuments. com/documents/view/pendleton-civil-service-act/impact