

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

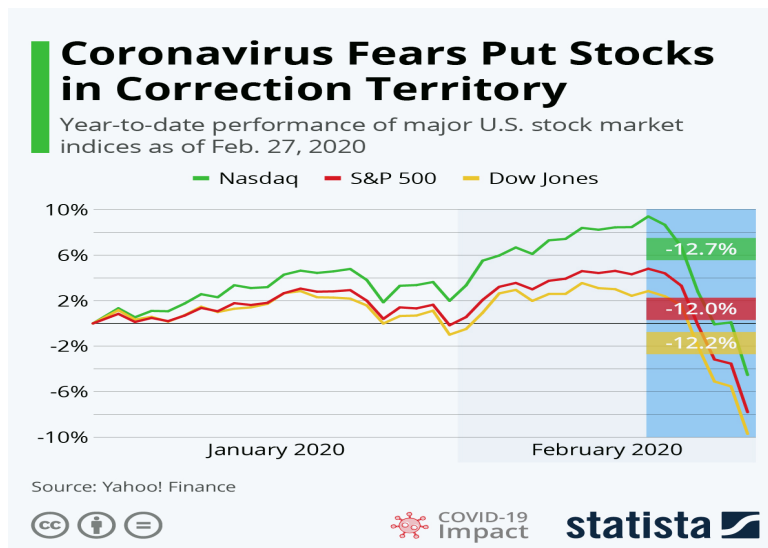
The Dow Jones industrial average plunged nearly 1,200 points on Thursday, capping its worst four days since the 2008 financial crisis, amid investors' fears that global efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus were failing. The Dow closed at 25,766.64 on Thursday, down 4.4 percent. The Standard & Poor's 500 and the tech-rich NASDAQ also dove. The Dow is now nearly 13 percent off its recent high. Its 10-day plunge is the blue chips' swiftest since 2011. "Every day we think we could be near a bottom, and every day we are not," Helene Becker, an analyst at the financial services firm Cowen, wrote in a note Thursday.



In a blink, Wall Street's free-fall this week erased one-third of stocks' gains since President Trump's November 2016 election. Amid mounting criticism of the administration's handling of the epidemic, the president suddenly finds himself battling a medical, economic and political emergency. The health challenge was underscored by confirmation in California of the first U.S. case that could not be linked to travel to China or to contact with a known coronavirus patient. On the economic front, Facebook canceled its largest annual developer conference, while manufacturers worried about Chinese suppliers that have not yet resumed normal production. Tesla's stock price fell 13 percent Thursday alone. But even as the life-or-death stakes and the financial toll loomed, political considerations were inescapable. In crowded rallies and White House events, the soaring stock market has been a staple of Trump's reelection pitch to voters. "Highest Stock Market in history, By Far!" the president tweeted just eight days ago.

On Monday, after a 1,032-point drop in the Dow Jones industrial average, Trump — a billionaire real estate executive who prides himself on his financial acumen — doubled down, tweeting: "Stock Market starting to look very good to me!" It has continued falling ever since, and now after a brutal four-day stretch, the market looks anything but good. Some Wall Street veterans said the virus was an external shock that had awakened investors to a sobering outlook. "We were

operating in never-never land for some time,” said Dan Alpert, managing partner of Westwood Capital, a New York-based investment bank. The market reaction came one day after the president sought to reassure the nation at a White House news conference with members of his coronavirus task force, but was assailed for what critics said was a contradictory message. “He staked his presidency on containing the virus,” said David Kotok, chairman of Cumberland Advisors. “The markets have repudiated him with a 1,000-point drop on the heels of a 1,000-point drop.”



The epidemic, which has spread from its origins in China to Japan, South Korea, Italy, Iran, the United States, and numerous other countries, seems sure to put a sizable dent in global growth. Earlier this week, Capital Economics in London warned that the economic consequences of the spread of the coronavirus to multiple continents “could be as bad as those of the global financial crisis.” The U.S. economy will average just 1.25 percent growth over

the first half of the year, as the virus disrupts supply chains and keeps workers and shoppers on the sidelines, economist Michael Feroli of JPMorgan Chase wrote in a note to clients on Thursday. That would be roughly half the pace of last year. Whatever the danger to the U.S. economy, Europe seems to be in even worse shape. The continent’s major economies were expected to grow by little more than 1 percent before the virus forced Italy to lock down northern territories that are responsible for almost one-third of the country’s production. Now, recession looms as a genuine risk for Germany and Italy. After a decade of continued weak growth and financial crises, European Central Bank officials have all but emptied their tool kit, leaving them with little ability to reverse the decline. And in the United States on Thursday, the three major indexes fell into correction territory, a 10 percent reversal from a recent high that signals something is amiss to numbers-obsessed Wall Street. The speed of the declines was startling, with the Dow Jones industrial average tumbling from its all-time peak in only ten sessions. The blue-chip index lost more than 3,200 points this week and had its worst point drop in history on Thursday.

“The Dow’s four-day decline this week is 11.13 percent, the worst since October 2008, when the blue chips fell 15 percent in four days,” said Howard Silverblatt of S&P Dow Jones Indices. The S&P has lost 12.04 percent in the last six sessions, which is also the fastest decline to correction since 2011. It’s unclear when the uncertainty over the global public health crisis will end, which is a significant reason Wall Street investors remain on edge. “A 10 percent correction doesn’t mean anything to Joe Q. Public,” said Kenny Polcari of SlateStone Wealth. “But to Wall Street, which marks everything by numbers, it suggests a turning point in the market psyche,” Polcari said the good news about the panic-driven correction is that it suggests an emotional response and maybe only temporary. “A slower decline based on crumbling market fundamentals, which is not the case so far, would be more worrisome,” Polcari said.

Analysts expected the market to rebound strongly after a worldwide plunge Monday. But coronavirus cases have continued to pop up around the world, squashing rallies. The extreme volatility could persist until there are signs that the outbreak is under control, analysts say, despite warnings from health officials that community spread in the United States appears inevitable.

From an economic standpoint, much of the focus had been on coronavirus's repercussions for global supply chains, which rely heavily on manufacturing and production from Chinese factories. But now that public health officials are bracing for the outbreak to spread in the United States, experts worry about an additional threat to the economy. Daily routines and consumer spending could grind to a halt if schools are closed, large gatherings are canceled, and businesses close their doors. "This is a surprise," said Michael Farr, president of Farr, Miller & Washington, an investment firm. "This is something that the 30-year-old cohort of money managers and analysts haven't seen before. This supply chain disruption is going to affect all economies, and markets are still trying to figure it out."

Even so, Trump struck an optimistic tone Wednesday evening during a White House news conference. Trump said the risk to America was "very low" and that the outbreak would swiftly be contained. Trump announced Vice President Pence would lead the administration's response to the outbreak. And on Thursday, his comments remained upbeat, even after the steep stock market drop. "I think it's an incredible achievement what our country's done," Trump told reporters at the White House, predicting eventually the virus would disappear.

HOUSEHOLD				DATA		
Table A-5. Employment status of the civilian population 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and sex, not seasonally adjusted						
[Numbers in thousands]						
Employment status, veteran status, and period of service	Total		Men		Women	
	JAN 2019	JAN 2020	JAN 2019	JAN 2020	JAN 2019	JAN 2020
Unemployed	147	149	141	134	6	15
Unemployment rate	4.2	4.4	4.7	4.7	1.2	2.6

The national unemployment rate is 3.6 percent (January 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 4.4 percent.ⁱ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 2.6 percent (down from 3.1 percent in December).

TOPIC 2: MEETINGS

On Monday, February 24, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division gave a briefing at the National Association of Veterans Program Administrators conference to discuss the Legion's education advocacy. NAVPA is an association of certifying officials and education directors from colleges and universities.

On Monday, February 24, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the Executive Transition Assistance Program at Henderson Hall. I dropped off Flyer and list of employers for Career Fair during the 60th Annual Washington Conference.

On Tuesday, February 25, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with Disabled American Veterans regarding their support for federal contracting issues that may disadvantage veteran-owned small businesses.

On Tuesday, February 25, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a Blue Star Family ceremony presenting their annual military families climate survey results.

On Wednesday, February 26, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in a conference call with Kathy Poynton, Director of Events, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation - Hiring Our Heroes. Discussed the results of our collaborative efforts in promoting the Career Fair and workshops during the Washington Conference.

On Thursday, February 27, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the Center for Business Acceleration, who just entered into an MOU with the AbilityOne Commission to create an apprenticeship program and stand up their Veteran Central Nonprofit.

On Friday, February 28, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended held a phone meeting with Bronagh Friel, Program Manager, Grow with Google - Veteran and Military Families. We discussed future collaborative efforts to help veterans and their families.

TOPIC 3: EMPLOYMENT

The American Legion strives to ensure that our servicemembers transitioning out of the military are well-equipped with the necessary skills and tools needed for a successful transition into the private sector. This is accomplished by continuing to hold those accountable for providing those tools and skills.

For those who have already separated from the military, we are actively providing oversight for the following programs and services; therefore, we must remain current and savvy on them.

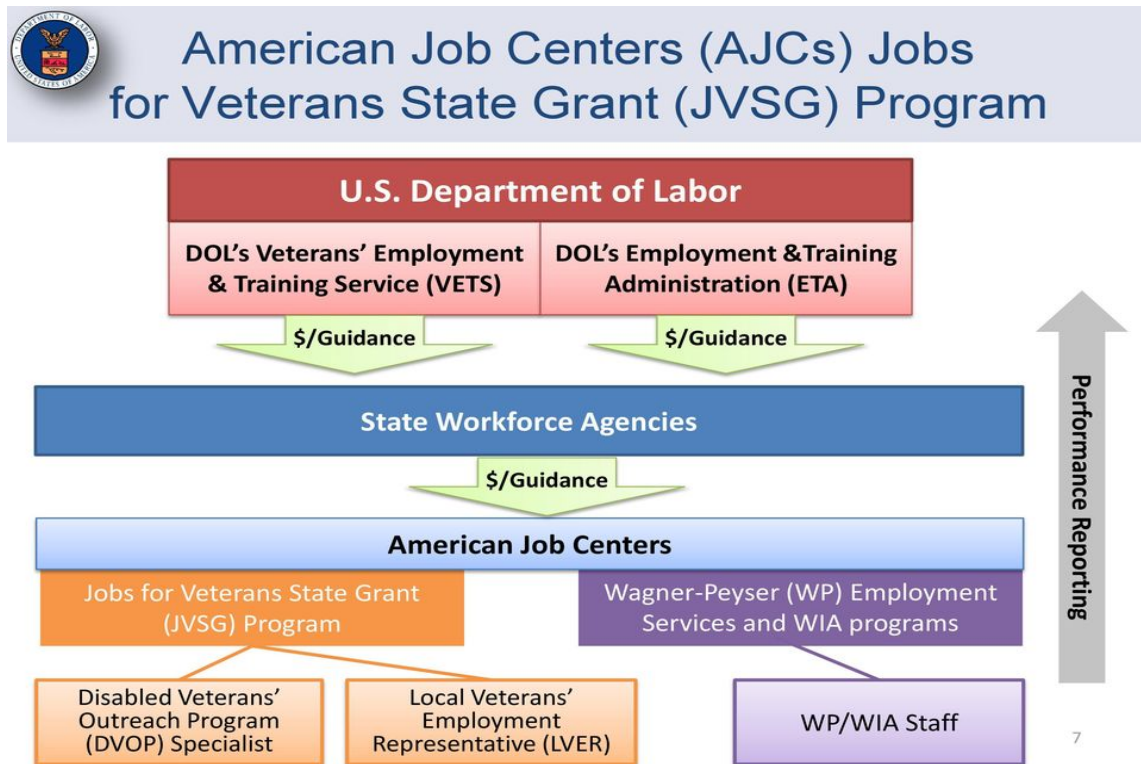
Veteran Labor Laws & Employment Rights

Under federal law, U.S. military veterans have exclusive rights regarding employment. Specifically, they are given preference for hiring within the federal government during layoff periods for jobs. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training was created in 1981 to oversee relevant laws.

The eligibility of veterans varies widely per state, job, service, and other factors. To discover if you qualify, contact your local Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) office.

The Veteran's Employment and Training Service

The Veterans' Employment and Training Service monitors and investigates veterans' rights. This Department of Labor agency was created to help veterans transition from military service to civilian life with good jobs and reliable employment opportunities. The program provides employment and training services through grants and cooperative agreements at a national level.



Disabled Veterans' Outreach

The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) is a part of VETS that aims to place disabled veterans in jobs they can perform despite any injuries and disabilities they suffered during military service. These types of disability-specific programs are typically stationed at state employment offices, medical centers, military installations, and veterans' affairs outreach centers. Working with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and other veteran organizations, DVOP specialists help train veterans and find the appropriate jobs. The DVOP provides grant funds for these state's employment services, which currently allow for 1,400 DVOP specialists nationwide.

Local Veterans Employment

Another labor program called the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) program introduces veterans to employment and community services available to them. The LVER program helps former military professionals search for jobs, write resumes, and practice interviewing skills. They also monitor job listings to give priority referrals for eligible veterans, identify training opportunities, and provide counseling.

Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Acts (USERRA)

USERRA addresses veterans' questions of eligibility, job entitlements, employer obligations, and benefits. It does not establish federal regulations but provides "elaws" to serve as guidance for employees and employers. The rights of each veteran change with many different circumstances and any veteran wondering about his or her rights and eligibility should contact a USERRA Advisor. General rights include:

- If the veteran left a job for service, he or she has a right to reemployment to a job with matching benefits as long as:
 - The employer receives a verbal or written advanced notice of your service
 - Veteran returns to work in a timely manner after service
 - The veteran received no dishonorable discharge from service
 - While working for that employer, the veteran has five or fewer years of cumulative service
- Employers may not deny promotions, benefits, initial employment, reemployment or retention in employment to current or future members of uniformed service because of their involvement in the service
- Employees who leave their job for military services may maintain their employer-based health plan, including coverage for their dependents, for up to 24 months. If the employee opts out of this option, he or she has the right to be re-instated into the health plan upon reemployment
- Veterans can file a discrimination report if they are refused a job because of their veteran status. If you have experienced an incident where you felt discriminated against because you are a veteran, consider filing a report.

Employers

Employers may hire a replacement for a position vacated by someone performing military service; however, upon the service member's return, he or she is entitled to reemployment even if the replacement must be terminated. Employers cannot require an employee to produce a military order granting leave of absence, though the employee should provide a verbal or written notice.

Employers are not obligated to pay an employee during his or her military service, though many do so. However, employers may be entitled to continue the employee's health insurance for up to 18 months.

Federal Contractors

Federal contractors must give veterans priority in hiring. All contractors and subcontractors must annually file a VETS-4212 form if the contract exceeds \$100,000. Details about submitting the form can be found on the VETS-4212 Federal Contractor Reporting page.

TOPIC 4: CAREER FAIRS

On March 5, 2020, The National Veterans Employment and Education Commission, in collaboration with Hiring Our Heroes, will be conducting the Washington Conference Hiring Fair. The following are the career fair flyer, schedule and list of employers:

AMERICAN LEGION WASHINGTON CONFERENCE HIRING FAIR

MARCH 5, 2020

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

8:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

THE WASHINGTON HILTON
1919 CONNECTICUT AVENUE NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20009



Hiring Our Heroes Hiring events are hands-on career planning events designed to connect members of the local military community with military-ready employers. Attendees will have the opportunity to:

- attend an interactive workshop
- hear insider tips from hiring managers and recruiters
- learn about online tools designed to translate military or volunteer experience on a resume
- build a professional network
- find out about certifications required to segue into high-demand careers

This free professional development event is open to active duty service members, National Guard members, military reservists, veterans, military spouses, and military caregivers. Come ready with your resume to learn about resources that help connect military families with meaningful employment at local and national employers.

HIRING OUR HEROES
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

NEED A RESUME?

Visit

ResumeEngine.org

or

MyCareerSpark.org

Resume Engine and Career Spark are the quickest and easiest way to send your resume to employers at the Career Fair. Build a powerful resume at ResumeEngine.org for service members and MyCareerSpark.org for military spouses. Powered by Toyota.

REGISTER NOW

Visit

HiringOurHeroes.org/events
to find upcoming events
and register now.

AGENDA/TIMELINE:

8:00 am	JOB SEEKER CHECK-IN
8:20 am – 8:30 am	OPENING REMARKS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Lou Celli – Executive Director The American Legion, Washington DC Office
8:30 am – 10:00 am	CIVILIAN RESUME WORKSHOP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Kashi Russell – The American Legion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location: Holmead, Lobby Level
10:00 am – 11:00 am	FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Judy Viccellio – V-STAR, LLC<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location: Holmead, Lobby Level
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	LINKEDIN – SELF BRANDING WORKSHOP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Ariel De Jesus – The American Legion<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location: Holmead, Lobby Level
12:00 pm	EMPLOYER CHECK IN
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	NETWORKING LUNCHEON <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunch between Job Seekers and Employers to get insight about what employers are looking for in during the hiring process.
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm	CAREER FAIR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The American Legion and Hiring Our Heroes<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location: International Grand Ballroom, Terrace Level
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	FEDERAL RESUME WORKSHOP <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Renetta Bradford – National Veterans Employment (VA)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Location: Holmead, Lobby Level



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
FOUNDATION

Washington, DC HIRING FAIR

March 5, 2020

PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

AS OF: 7Feb20

Airstreams Renewables, Inc.
Amazon
ARServices
AvalonBay Communities
CACI International Inc.
Capital One
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Chenega Corporation- Security Business Unit
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Fors Marsh Group
Frontier
General Dynamics Mission Systems
George Mason University
Geostabilization International
Herc Rentals
Hilton
International Gourmet Foods, Inc.
Jim Koons Automotive
Leidos
Lincoln Property/Lincoln Military Housing
Lowe's
M Powered Strategies
MassMutual of Greater Richmond
Montgomery County 9-1-1 Emergency
Communications Center
Montgomery County Police
Nakupuna Companies
National Industry for the Blind
Newport News Shipbuilding, A Division
of Huntington Ingalls Industries
NEXCOM
Office of the Chief Financial Officer of the
District of Columbia
Oracle Corporation
Orbis Inc.
PAE
Parsons Corporation
PenFed Credit Union

Peoplescout in Partnership with McKesson Corp
Perspecta
Prince George's County Department of Corrections
PRISM Inc.
Rainier Cyber
Raytheon IIS
Ridgeline International
Sabre Systems, Inc.
SBG Technology Solutions
SOS International LLC
Succession Planning for Railroads (SPRING)
The Excalibur Group
Transportation Security Administration
Trescal
Triple Canopy (A Constellis Company)
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Department of Commerce
United Rentals, INC.
United States Capitol Police
VSE

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Citizen Soldier For Life
Department of Employment Services
Dog Tag Inc.
Military OneSource
Psych Armor Institute
State of Maryland
U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

The mission of The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is to take actions that affect the economic wellbeing of veterans, including issues relating to veterans' education, employment, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, homelessness, and small business

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

New Subsidy Helps Formerly Homeless Veterans Afford Housing in High Rent Areas



District of Columbia housed the homeless in upscale Sedgwick Gardens apartments

A new V.A. subsidy will help low-income and formerly homeless Veterans afford housing in high-rent communities.

The Shallow Subsidy initiative provides low-income Veterans with a fixed rental subsidy for up to two years. The subsidy is available to Veterans who are enrolled in the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program and live in communities characterized by high rates of homelessness and low availability of affordable housing. To encourage long-term self-sufficiency through employment, renters receive the subsidy for up to two years, regardless of any increases in their household income.

Through a competitive application process, V.A. awards SSVF grants to private, non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives to provide eligible Veteran families with outreach, case management, and assistance in obtaining V.A. and other mainstream benefits that promote housing stability and community integration. SSVF has recently partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program to co-enroll Shallow Subsidy participants in employment and training programs to help them become economically self-sufficient by the end of their two-year subsidy.

The Shallow Subsidy initiative represents the benefits of V.A.'s ongoing use of data to adjust programs based on evidence to promote the best possible outcomes for Veterans. V.A. created the Shallow Subsidy Initiative after several analyses of SSVF data revealed that intermediate-term rental subsidies would remove a critical barrier to long term housing stability among homeless Veterans. For the life of the Shallow Subsidy Initiative, VA will collect and evaluate data on outcomes to ensure the initiative is producing the intended results.



“With the Shallow Subsidy initiative, we’re able to increase the likelihood of long-term housing stability among Veterans who were previously homeless or at risk of homelessness in communities with challenging rental markets,” said SSVF National Director John Kuhn. “The resources made available to eligible Veterans under this initiative enable them to afford rent and other household expenses while they secure job training, employment, or other income and benefits resources before the shallow subsidy ends.”

Since 2011, SSVF has served over 800,000 people, including over 170,000 dependent children. Of those who exited the SSVF program to date, 84% found permanent housing; another 10% found safe, temporary housing.

SSVF was established in 2011 as the first VA-administered homeless prevention and rapid rehousing program to serve Veterans and their family members. In addition to the recurring SSVF grants already awarded, V.A. has also committed \$50 million in nonrecurring awards to support shallow subsidies in the following communities:

- **California:** Alameda (including Oakland), Contra Costa, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Clara
- **District of Columbia:** Washington
- **Hawaii:** Honolulu
- **Illinois:** Cook County
- **New York:** New York City and Bronx, Queens, Kings and Richmond counties
- **Washington:** Seattle

If you are in any of those locations as a member of The American Legion, feel free to connect veterans the Homeless Programs Office at their local V.A. medical center or contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at **877-4AID-VET** (877-424-3838).

TOPIC 6: SMALL BUSINESS



A former Veterans Affairs worker who pleaded guilty to accepting bribes so that his accomplices would gain an unfair advantage in the V.A. contracting process was sentenced Wednesday to 18 months in federal prison.

A former Veterans Affairs employee in Colorado who pleaded guilty to accepting bribes in exchange for rigging federal contracts has been sentenced to a year and a half in prison. During his sentencing, U.S. District Court Judge R. Brooke Jackson said 55-year-old Dwane Nevins would also have to serve three years of supervised release for corruption offenses, according to a news release from U.S. attorney's office in Denver.

Court records showed Nevins agreed to take bribes offered by co-defendants Robert Revis, Anthony Bueno, and an undercover FBI agent, to help them manipulate a contract bidding process while working as a small business specialist at the V.A.'s Network Contracting Office in Colorado. The records showed Revis and Bueno, working alongside Nevins, agreed to submit fraudulent bids from service-disabled-veteran-owned small businesses under contract with their consulting company so that federal contracts would be set aside for only those companies, the release stated.



The U.S. attorney's office said the trio worked in unison to hide the nature of the bribes by either kicking back to Nevins a portion of the payments made to their consulting company or by asking their consulting company's clients to pay Nevins for sham training classes related to federal contracting.

During one of those sham training classes, Nevis reportedly accepted \$4,500 in cash bribes from an undercover FBI agent. The news release states that after complaining about not receiving payment by Revis and Bueno for participating in the scheme, Nevis used his position at the V.A. to extort money from an undercover FBI agent, telling him that, "the train don't go without me. Do you know what I mean? I'm the engine. I'm the caboose. I'm the engine room." Nevins also told the undercover agent that "this is a business and businessmen need to get paid... so I can have my Christmas, you know what I'm saying?" according to the U.S. attorney's office.

Bueno was previously sentenced to 30 months in federal prison for the same crimes, plus an additional 63 for his role in another wire fraud scheme case for which he was indicted. Revis pleaded guilty in April 2019 to a single count of supplementing the salary of a federal official. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for March 2, 2020.

TOPIC 7: EDUCATION

After facing I.T. challenges with the implementation of the Forever GI Bill, Secretary of Veterans Affairs (V.A.) Robert Wilkie said during a Budget Request hearing for Fiscal Year 2021 that the department needed to look at its entire I.T. infrastructure's readiness.



"V.A. has been underfunded on the I.T. front throughout the last several decades," said Wilkie, speaking to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs today. "Raising the I.T. infrastructure profile is absolutely the key," he said.

Rep. Mike Levin, D-Calif., said that he became aware of an I.T. system used to support the implementation of the Forever GI Bill that is over 50 years old and still in operation at the Veterans Affairs center in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Calling the I.T. systems used by the V.A. "very,

very old,” Rep. Mike Bost said the systems make it challenging to provide veterans world-class service. The implementation of the Forever GI Bill raises questions about the state of I.T. preparedness of the V.A., he said.

The Inspector-General of the V.A. released a statement last March showing that the I.T. systems were delayed and needed a significant overhaul to implement provisions of the Forever GI Bill.

Wilkie said the department’s I.T. needs were beyond just implementing the GI Bill and that the readiness of the entire I.T. infrastructure needed to be examined.

“There is a real sense that the time is near not just to continue to upgrade this old technology, but to rethink the acquisition of new, commercial, off-the-shelf software and implement it in such a way that, going forward, we will not face the same problems,” said Paul Lawrence, undersecretary for benefits at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Lawrence listed three I.T. priorities he would focus on if the department was given additional funding.

Lawrence first expressed interest in customer relationship management, a technology like what banks and insurance companies currently use. Lawrence said the technology would allow the department to have access to information about veterans when they called.

High-tech computing power to enable quick calculations was also on Lawrence’s wish list. Lawrence gave the example of the computing power allowing a rapid change for when a dependent is taken off insurance.

Lawrence said the last priority is increased data capacity to incorporate the data that the V.A. has.

These priorities could be met by commercial companies, said Lawrence, and implementation would take between 18-24 months.

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
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Week Ending: 2/28/20
