

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

Republican leaders labored on Tuesday to avert a party revolt over the next round of coronavirus aid, announcing that they planned to provide \$105 billion for schools, direct payments to American families and more aid for struggling small businesses as rank-and-file lawmakers balked at the proposal's cost.



Congressional Republicans Are Close To Revolt Over Stimulus Aid

Even as Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, divulged details of his emerging plan, expected to total roughly \$1 trillion, President Trump had yet to sign on and Republicans remained deeply divided over several key elements.

Ahead of what are expected to be fraught negotiations with Democrats, Senate Republicans and White House officials were still

fighting among themselves over how much money to devote to testing and the federal health agencies on the front lines of the virus response, whether to include a payroll tax cut that Mr. Trump has demanded, and how to address the expiration of enhanced unemployment benefits at the end of the month.

It was an inauspicious start to talks on the measure, and top Republican officials privately cautioned on Tuesday that the coming negotiation, a wide-ranging election-year brawl, was likely to stretch into August, leaving tens of millions of unemployed Americans without extra help as Congress hammers out the latest recovery plan and the virus surges.

“We’re going try to get something done by the end of next week,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said after meeting with Mr. McConnell, telling reporters that he planned to update Mr. Trump on the day’s discussion. “That’s an important time frame because we want to get something done before the unemployment insurance expires. This is a process.”

But during a private lunch that Mr. Mnuchin attended with Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, some Republican senators balked at the prospect of doling out another trillion dollars in taxpayer funds and bickered over what policy provisions should be included in their opening bid, according to five people familiar with elements of the discussion, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose details of a private meeting.

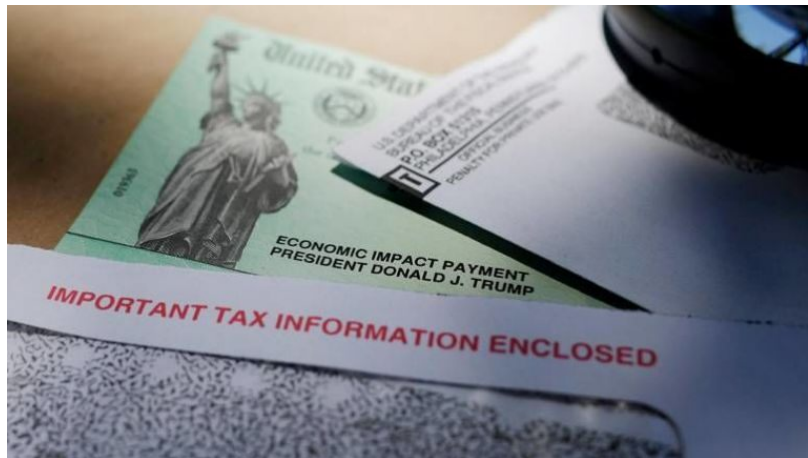
“What in the hell are we doing?” Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, asked at one point during the lunch, arguing that Republicans should prioritize reopening the economy instead of spending more money. Mr. Cruz warned his colleagues that if the economy failed to recover, former Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., the presumptive Democratic nominee, would win the White House and “we’ll be meeting in a much smaller lunchroom” traditionally reserved for the minority party in the Senate.

“I just walked out of a meeting that could be sort of a Bernie bros, progressive caucus,” Senator Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, told reporters after the lunch. “I’m alarmed that we’re talking about spending another trillion dollars we don’t have.”

Democrats, who are pressing for a much more expansive, \$3 trillion measure along the lines of what the House approved in May, said the Republicans’ disputes were standing in the way of the bipartisan negotiation needed to get the measure to the president’s desk.

“We have been united in our priorities; their delay is their disarray,” said Speaker Nancy Pelosi after meeting with Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows in her Capitol office suite along with Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the minority leader. “We want to see what they’re putting forth.”

Several elements of the Republicans’ plan remained in flux, and Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House late Tuesday afternoon that he had yet to be briefed on it. Still undecided was how the bill would address the expiration of a \$600-a-week unemployment benefit supplement put in place by the stimulus law enacted in March. Republicans have made clear that they intend to scale back the payment, which they say disincentives work because it is larger than what workers in some parts of the country earn in regular wages.



Also unresolved was the matter of a payroll tax cut, a priority for the administration but one that most lawmakers oppose. Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, pushed back against the idea, arguing that direct payments to families, which would probably be sent out in October, would prove more meaningful to individual voters.

Officials involved in the talks said some progress had been made, particularly as Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows appeared to warm to the idea of allocating billions of dollars for states to conduct testing and contact tracing and top health agencies. Administration officials had angered Republicans over the weekend by rejecting those proposals. Senator Bill Cassidy, Republican of Louisiana, pressed Mr. Mnuchin in the lunch about the need for testing and later said he received assurances that there would be enough funding.

But it was unclear whether the White House would accept the school funding proposal Republicans were assembling or insist that any money be tied to full-time reopening of schools, in line with Mr. Trump’s strident calls.

Senator Roy Blunt, Republican of Missouri, said on Tuesday that the \$105 billion for education would include about \$70 billion for elementary, middle and high schools, with more money available to school districts that reopen in the fall. Senate Democrats have put forward legislation that would provide \$430 billion to schools.

“They’re going to have more expenses,” Mr. Blunt said, adding that \$30 billion would be set aside for colleges and universities and \$5 billion for governors to use at their discretion.

Mr. McConnell, who said he hoped to release a final version of his measure in the coming days, doubled down on his insistence that the package include liability protections for businesses, medical workers and schools — a proposal that Democrats fiercely oppose.

“I’m going to introduce a bill in the next few days that is a starting place that enjoys fairly significant support among Republican senators, probably not everyone,” he said at his weekly news conference.

“There’s always room for negotiation,” he added, “because the Democrats are not irrelevant.”

Mr. Schumer, however, said Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Meadows only put forward vague ideas about what they wanted in a deal when they met with him and Ms. Pelosi on Tuesday afternoon.

“Before we can negotiate, we need to see what their specific plan is,” Mr. Schumer said. “They’re all in disarray, and you hear different Republicans say different things. We can’t negotiate on a vague concept.”

The Veterans Employment & Education Division is responsible for ensuring that America’s veterans have the opportunity to provide with honor and dignity, the economic necessities of life for themselves and their families.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

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	
	June 2019	June 2020	June 2019	June 2020	June 2019	June 2020
Unemployed	298	776	250	675	48	101
Unemployment rate	3.2	8.6	3.0	8.5	4.6	9.6

The national unemployment rate is 11.1 percent (June 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 10.3 percent.ⁱ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 13.7 percent (Up from 10.1 percent in May).

In June 2020, the veteran unemployment rate is 8.6%, down from 9.1% last month and 11.3% two months ago. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 13.3% in May and 11.1% in June

TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

On Monday, July 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with Janet Giles, CEO Job Zone. Ms. Giles would like The American Legion to participate in her upcoming career fair through Premier Virtual.

On Monday, July 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconferenced with National Judge Advocate Kevin Bartlett on reviewing our AL VE&E resolutions. Mark Seavey shared PP on the same and reminded all of us of the importance of resolutions being practical, specific and correct. We will review ours and we also are drafting new ones for approval. One will relate to our work in the area of Risk Based Surveys. Along with Director Joe Sharpe, Joseph Wescott attended the Second RBS National Advisory Council meeting. Council members further refined the meaning of a risk-based survey, the metric used to determine degree of risk, the screening mechanism and the discussed further efforts ahead to include remote visits, legislative needs and potential consequences for failing a RBS.

On Monday, July 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a webinar hosted by International Stability Operations Association (ISOA) as Professor John Manners-Bell - CEO of Global Market Research of Transport Intelligence reviews some of the critical mistakes which were made during the early weeks of the Coronavirus pandemic. Professor Bell highlights how procurement chaos combined with a logistics meltdown to exacerbate global shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

On Monday, July 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with staff from National Industries for the Blind regarding the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020. This bill would protect the jobs of the severely blind and disabled at the VA. NIB discussed the impact and how the provisions of the bill will likely be implemented at the agency level when it becomes law.

On Tuesday, July 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division listened to the hearing on "Getting Veterans to Work After COVID-19" held by the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The hearing focused on ensuring transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses had all the necessary resources and tools to get back to work on this day of the Coronavirus.

On Tuesday, July 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended (virtually) HVAC Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Hearing on Economic Opportunity for Veterans in COVID 19 Environment. DOL and VA testified as did Boots to Hard Hats and others. Main matter of interest for us is HR 7111. This was last hearing before August recess for HVAC. Conversation with Project Coordinator for the RBS on Council meeting and plans for SAA pilot states. Also, discussion of meeting with VA to brief and update them. Attended VSO Four Corners Call with HVAC and SVAC staffers. They are still working on an Ed Fix bill which they hope to roll into a COVID Package. Also working a For Profit Conversion Bill. Announced Chairman Tokano's NDA Amendment on 90-10. Will only involve TA and Committee staff are not actively working it, his personal office is. Senate continues to work NDA amendments and 4625 House will stay in session through first week of office. Conversations with House and Senate staffers on 4625 and further enhancements to the GI Bill to include outreach by SAAs on App/OJT.

On Tuesday, July 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with staff from National Veteran Small Business Coalition regarding the passage of the Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020. The parties discussed the impact the potential law will have on the veteran small business community, how the provisions of the bill will likely be implemented and next steps in engagement with the Department of Veteran Affairs.

On Wednesday, July 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with Bob Gear, Director, Texas Veterans Commission. Mr. Gear would like to collaborate with The American Legion in hosting virtual careers at various military installation within Texas.

On Wednesday, July 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with NASAA Leadership and Congressional staffers on GI Bill and needed enhancements. Reviewing data available on HE institutions. Research on oversight for GI Bill approved institutions.

On Thursday, July 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconferenced with two Department of Veterans Affairs employees. Their concerns revolve around hiring practices within the VA concerning Schedule "A" hiring.

On Thursday, July 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division continued conversations with Senate on 4 items needed in 4625: 1) Listing of important RBS measures/matrices, 2) Priority of RBS over CS for SAAs, 3) Outreach Language and 4) National Database. Also Call with AL VE&E Team with Dept of Education Officials on AL innovations with quality education, RBS, oversight of approved schools and licensing and certification. Education Dept reps were SGM Steve Townsend, Jermaine Sullivan and Gary Jones. Conversation to continue.

On Friday, July 24, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division along with Education Counsel, Lumina and NASAA weekly meeting discussed the Council meeting VA update. Conversations with SVAC staffers on 4625, Protect the GI Bill Act, and conversation with Senate staffers on 90/10.

On Friday, July 24, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a webinar hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce regarding the role testing for COVID 19 will play in the reopening of the economy. Pharmaceutical companies are working at record speeds to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. Before it arrives, we know swift, accurate, and widespread testing is key to a successful reopening strategy. Dr. Lloyd B. Minor, Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine, provided update on current testing and vaccines and also answered questions on timetables, strategies and priorities with regards to the vaccine.

TOPIC 3: TRACKING LEGISLATION

HR 6800, the Heroes Act: Allows VA to provide transport and purchase food, shelter, phones, clothing, blankets and toiletry items for homeless veterans; Authorizes VA to set up temporary encampments on the grounds of VA Medical Centers to allow homeless veterans to shelter on VA parking lots temporarily; Allows VA to provide reimbursements to social service providers receiving grants for the costs of services for minor children. (Davy)
[Resolution No. 324: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

HR 2224: To direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize services to homeless veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless veterans' reintegration programs and for other purposes. (Ariel/John)

[Resolution No. 326: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families](#)

S. 2594: To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify specific requirements concerning service and retirement for veterans' preference for federal hiring. (Ariel)

[Resolution No. 317: Enforcing Veterans' Preference Hiring Practices in Federal Civil Service](#)

HR 1196, Jobs for Veterans Act of 2019: This bill allows an increased work opportunity tax credit for employers who hire veterans who have been certified as discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and who begin working for the employer after December 31, 2019, and before January 1, 2024. This increased credit is in addition to any work opportunity tax credit allowed to a veteran with a service-connected disability. (Ariel/John)

[Resolution No. 354: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program](#)

HR 7010, Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020: This bill significantly changes the terms of the PPP loans to be more advantageous to small businesses. Including more flexibility in applying the loan to other expenses besides payroll and benefits and extending the time frame for expending the loan. (Davy)

HR 4625: To require education programs to be approved by the VA to abide by the Principles of Excellence to include a ban on deceptive or misleading recruiting, clear information about total costs and program requirements, accommodation for deployments, ensuring a point of contact for veterans, and not being under a punitive action by an accreditor. (John)

[Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education](#)

HR 6957: To direct the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs to treat a period of full-time National Guard duty, performed in response to the national emergency declared on March 13, 2020, by the President concerning COVID-19, as not shorter than 90 days. (John)

[Currently Studying for appropriate resolution.](#)

HR 4941 Veteran Employment Transition Act” or the “VET Act” was sponsored by Representative Andy Kim. The last action on the bill was in the House on 12/02/2019; it was referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The bill's goal is to improve the Transition Assistance Program. The bill would allow certain veterans' service organizations to contact veterans regarding benefits and to better inform veterans of employment opportunities. The Service groups would inform veterans of the benefits and employment opportunities with the Federal, State, and local governments. The groups inform veterans of events for in the area. (Raymond/Ariel)

[Resolution No. 70: Improve Transition Assistance Program](#)

H.R.7003 is a bill sponsored by Rep. Takano, Mark D-CA-41 and was introduced 05/22/2020. The bill would authorize a pilot program in the Department of Defense to enhance efforts to provide job placement assistance and related employment services directly to members of the National Guard, Reserves, and veterans of the Armed Forces. The last action on the bill was 05/22/2020 and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. (Raymond/Ariel)

[Resolution No. 81: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members](#)

Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act: to require the Department of Education to grant full student loan discharges to three specific emergency categories of defrauded borrowers—specifically borrowers covered by:

- (1) Department of Education findings against Corinthian.
- (2) Department of Education findings against ITT Tech; and
- (3) State attorneys general group discharge applications made before the date of enactment. (John)

[Resolution No. 82: Preserve Veteran and Servicemember Rights to Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense Protections](#)

HR 7111: Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020: Require the Secretary of VA to carry out a rapid retraining program that provides eligible veterans up to 12 months of retraining assistance for in-demand occupations. These 12 months of benefits would be equivalent to payments made to students and schools through the Post 9/11 GI Bill. (John)

This bill was submitted for the July 23, 2020 testimony.

[Resolution No. 316: Support Employment of Veterans in the Public and Private Workforce](#)

Homeless Veteran Coronavirus Response Act: The bill allows VA to use existing funds for a broader range of services; authorizes the Department to collaborate with outside organizations to facilitate shelters on its properties; loosens restrictions on Grant and Per Diem (GPD) payments, and requires VA to ensure veterans participating in VA homeless programs have access to VA telehealth services. (Teresa)

[Resolution No. 326: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families](#)

H.R. 4920, Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020: is a bill that would allow AbilityOne companies to keep their preferential treatment at the Department of Veteran Affairs after 2016 with some compromises. The Senate initially sent it back to the House after it was passed for changes. Those changes have been reconciled and the bill cleared its last hurdle before it is sent to the White House.

Draft Bill: Home loan benefits for national guard To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for home loans from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces. (John)

This draft bill was submitted for the July 23, 2020 testimony.

[Resolution No. 329: Support Home Loan Guaranty Program](#)

Draft Bill: JSF - To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the scope of procedural rights of members of the uniformed services concerning their employment and reemployment rights, and for other purposes. (Davy)

This draft bill was submitted for the July 23, 2020 testimony.

Draft Bill: USERRA Protections for State Active Duty - To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain employment and reemployment rights to members of the National Guard who perform State active duty. Submitted written testimony to the Legislative Division. (Ariel)

This draft bill was submitted for the July 23, 2020 testimony.

[Resolution No. 315: Support Employment and Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment](#)

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT



Anthony Weeks, 88th Force Support Squadron veteran affairs benefits advisor, shows students the eBenefits website during a class session for the Transition Assistance Program at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. (US Air Force/Michelle Gigante)

Over the past 3-4 years, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) has changed three times; the latest change was effective on October 1, 2019. The American Legion always has and will continue to advocate for improvements to TAP. In these challenging times, and the veteran unemployment rate at record highs, it is imperative that we continue to improve how our transitioning servicemembers are being prepared for life in the private sector.

US Rep. Mike Levin, D- Calif., introduced legislation to adjust how service members are placed in counseling pathways provided by the Transition Assistance Program.

This bill would build on the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act of 2019, which established at least three pathways for servicemembers receiving TAP counseling. These pathways are “designed based on service members’ risk level,” said Eric Mee, the communications director for Levin.

Currently, the pathways are determined by several factors, including rank, the term of service, disability, health, educational and employment history, and more.

[Levin’s bill](#), introduced last Thursday, aims to help counselors better determine the risk of not having a successful transition through a set of additional factors. These new factors include:

- Childcare requirements of the member (including whether a dependent of the member is enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program).
- The employment status of other adults in the household.

- The location of the duty station of the member (including whether the member was separated from family while on duty).
- The effects of operating tempo and personnel tempo on the member and their household.
- Whether the member is an Indian or urban Indian, as those terms are defined in section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (Public Law 94-437; 25 USC 1603).

Levin said these changes are vital to guarantee that TAP adequately serves every service member.

“One of my top priorities is ensuring that service members have all of the support they need to start a new career when they leave the service, and the Transition Assistance Program is fundamental to that effort,” said Levin in a press release.

“These resources are also critical as we work to address veteran suicide, which can often be driven by economic distress. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure these much-needed fixes are made as soon as possible.”

This is a draft bill that is supported by the following American Legion Resolution:

[Resolution No. 70: Improve Transition Assistance Program](#)

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The American Legion is consistently monitoring all efforts to assist those veterans. California has one of the highest homeless veteran population. Therefore, The American Legion is encouraged to see that while it doesn't eradicate the veteran homeless problem, it does provide a small relief to those seeking shelter within the West Los Angeles Department of Veterans Affairs facility.

Inside the fence on the Department of Veterans Affairs West Los Angeles campus, staged on a parking lot, is a government-facilitated campground that's home to about 30 people. The VA set it up at the beginning of April for homeless veterans who needed a place to ride out the pandemic.



The residents are provided tents, drinking water, three meals a day, porta-potties, and electrical outlets to charge their phones. The site has on-site security and health care as well as access to case management, substance abuse counseling, and mental health support.

Lisa Thompkins, a former Air Force medic, is one of the few women at the camp. She had been staying at a Salvation Army shelter but was forced to leave when it reduced its capacity to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

"There were some issues with social distancing and face mask-wearing, and I found myself all of a sudden without a place to go," Thompkins said. As a vet, she was able to turn to the VA. "Within a couple hours, I was here with the tent, a sleeping bag, and a trunk for all of my worldly belongings - my mats and jackets and all that kind of stuff," she said. "I'm sober today, and I'm happy today and I'm walking in peace today."

Thompkins said she has struggled with homelessness for nearly two decades as she dealt with a combination of post-traumatic stress and alcohol abuse. "This place is awesome. I wish they had done this a long time ago," she said.

Government sanctioned campsite

The VA encampment is what is known as a government-sanctioned or "safe" campsite, a seldom-used option among the tools state and local governments have to manage homelessness.

California has a handful of such sites from San Diego to Sacramento, but the strategy has never been broadly adopted. The idea is to provide a designated location with services that address homeless people's most basic needs - food, water and safety.

Officially, the VA camp is the "Care Treatment Rehabilitation Service" program, or "CTRS" in federal acronym speak. It's a first-come, first-served, low-barrier-to-entry program that aims to provide up to 50 veterans access to supportive services.

"One of the reasons that this is so far working is that we are engaging every day, all day, clinically," said Dr. Anjani Reddy, the clinical director of the VA of Greater Los Angeles homeless program. "We have a physician on site every day. We have social workers on site every day. And so, we're really collaborating across this clinical spectrum." While the ideal would be to move people into stable housing as soon as possible, that can take years under normal circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even harder. The camp is a place where those experiencing homelessness can stay during the interim.

"We continue to move them towards stable housing, but we recognize that that's limited right now, and it may be limited more in the future," Reddy said. "We are committed to keeping the site open during the duration of the pandemic." Lisa Thompkins says the CTRS is head and shoulders above life on the street. She doesn't have to go looking for food and water. and she can get regular medical care. "When you're outside, you don't really take your meds as prescribed, or you don't even go in to get checked for it in the first place," Thompkins said. "There are a lot of people out there that are sleeping on sidewalks or on grass in a park or in makeshift tents or whatever they can find who don't have one clue about what is really the underlying issue."

The camp also is what Thompkins called a "wet environment," meaning you don't have to be totally clean of drugs and alcohol to live on site. Thompkins described it as a "harm reduction" environment, where clients have access to resources to help break the cycle of addiction.

"So, if you want help, this is a really, really healthy place to be able to ask for it and get it," she said.



Tents in a parking lot at the West Los Angeles VA are part of an encampment for homeless veterans. In addition to shelter, the site provides drinking water, three meals a day, porta-potties, electrical outlets, and on-site security and health care.

A way forward?

For some, opening public land for sanctioned camping is a public policy pariah. Some homeless service providers, advocates for the homeless, and local politicians balk at the idea. Sanctioned camps can be difficult to manage and can seem like a city is just giving up.

Although residents of sanctioned campsites have access to food, water and trash pickup, they're still homeless and living outside in tents that lack indoor plumbing and electricity. Many politicians consider them non-starters for fear of angry neighbors and lawsuits, and some advocates say sanctioned campsites take the focus off providing permanent housing.

At the same time, the urgency of the growing homelessness crisis, and the particular vulnerability of homeless people to the Coronavirus, has other people in high places pushing for the government to open its public land. Southern California's homelessness crisis continues to worsen, jumping another 13% since last year. It has some thinking the sanctioned-camp model piloted at the VA could become an option for non-veteran homeless people in Los Angeles.

Among those looking at the model is federal Judge David Carter, who's overseeing a lawsuit filed by advocates and property owners who charge LA's government has handled mass homelessness with negligence. That judge has ordered the city to shelter thousands in just a few months, potentially in sanctioned camps. A May 2 order from Judge Carter's court said that while the eventual goal should be to provide transitional and permanent housing for homeless residents, "that goal appears unattainable in the short term." Carter wrote:

"It appears, moving forward, that the most viable option is to use public property for the creation of a safe and healthy living environment for the homeless population currently living without shelter," Carter wrote. Judge Carter has given presentations on United Nations camps that house displaced Syrian refugees. In Carter's court in April, Dr. Jonathan Sherin, who directs the LA County Department of Mental Health, outlined a vision for "intentional interim communities," where residents have access to food, water, and bathrooms, but also advanced physical and mental health services, social workers, and legal assistance.

"That is something that you contrast with waiting while people deteriorate for a \$500,000 or \$600,000 unit with long term services," said Sherin. As for Lisa Thompkins, she is still far from getting into permanent housing, but she has a modicum of stability for the time being. It's the simple things she appreciates the most -- a small water bottle refill station and easy access to ice cubes for a chilled drink. "It's not ideal, no. But I'm making it work. I've got my pink comforter in here, and I got my unicorn Squishmallow for a pillow. I even have a doorbell," Thompkins said as she demonstrated a little chime.

It's a work in progress. No on-site showers mean coordinating a ride to a nearby Y. It took two weeks to figure out access to electrical outlets for charging cell phones. But for Thompkins, it's still a step up.

"You know, I'm grateful. rather than focus on what they didn't do. I'd really like to focus on what a benefit this is to me."

The following American Legion Resolution supports efforts like this:

[Resolution No. 324: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5b: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS



HUD grantees are generally required to certify that they will "affirmatively further fair housing" (AFFH) through HUD's implementation of the 1968 Fair Housing Act and other applicable statutes. HUD terminated the Obama Administration's AFFH regulation issued in 2015, which implemented a 92-question grading tool in January 2018.

On Thursday, January 23, HUD issued a new rule, called [Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice](#), which defines fair housing broadly to mean housing that,

among other attributes, is affordable, safe, decent, free of unlawful discrimination, and accessible under civil rights laws. It then defines "affirmatively furthering fair housing" to mean any action rationally related to promoting any of the above attributes of fair housing.

AFFH certifications will be deemed sufficient provided grantees took affirmative steps to further fair housing policy during the relevant period.

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS

ALL IN-PERSON CAREER FAIRS SCHEDULED THROUGH JULY HAVE BEEN CANCELLED, SUSPENDED, OR POSTPONED.

The American Legion is working on future virtual workshops and career fairs.

Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 14,052, an increase of 1,260 from the prior week.

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

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 7: SMALL BUSINESS

A rough outline of the GOP's initial coronavirus relief bill is being circulated among top aides in Congress.



The summary contains a slew of provisions dealing with coronavirus relief efforts and others that are further afield. Given the highly fluid state of stimulus negotiations, its details may change. But it indicates how congressional Republicans diverged from the White House on some of its initial priorities.

Senate GOP preps Covid-19 relief bill

The GOP wants to allocate around \$25 billion for coronavirus testing. Initially, the Trump administration

attempted to entirely eliminate that funding. It would also fund \$26 billion in vaccine research. It outlines \$105 billion for schools, keeping in line with parts of the GOP plan that have already been made public. But it conditions only a small part of that federal aid to schools reopening, another prime concern of the Trump administration.

The GOP also seeks to ramp up aid to small businesses by easing the terms of the Paycheck Protection Program for covering worker payrolls and designing a new loan program for "operating expenses." Other elements include an increased deduction for business meals from 50% to 100% in what appears to be an effort to encourage dining at restaurants. Another measure would also provide \$20 billion in direct payments for farmers.

The summary also explicitly left out additional aid to state and local governments, which have confronted massive budget shortfalls due to falling tax revenues. The GOP, however, expects to negotiate an unspecified amount with Democrats and will try to impose strict conditions on the funding's use. Democrats are seeking to provide nearly \$1 trillion for states — the same level of spending that the GOP is aiming in its opening coronavirus relief plan. The GOP's efforts to release a full stimulus package and kick start negotiations with Democrats fell apart on Thursday amid sharp disagreements on unemployment aid.

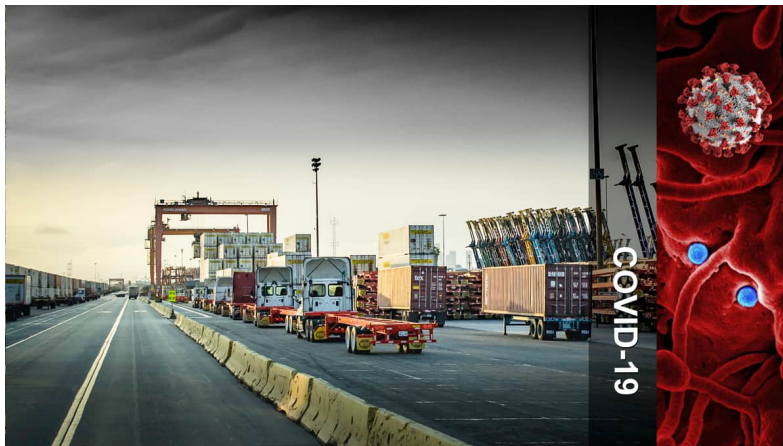
Republicans also jettisoned the payroll-tax cut from the legislation on Thursday, which had been a key priority for President Donald Trump. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Republicans would seek to structure federal unemployment aid, so it amounts to 70% of jobless person's past wages.

In effort to get information out to our Legion Posts and Departments, The American Legion has been tracking a rough outline of the GOP's initial coronavirus relief bill is being circulated among top aides in Congress. Changes to benefits such as tax credits, subsidies and loan extensions being considered in the second stimulus package can assist Posts and Departments weather the COVID-19 shutdowns. The summary contains a slew of provisions dealing with coronavirus relief efforts and others that are further afield. Given the highly fluid state of stimulus negotiations, its details may change. But it indicates how congressional Republicans diverged from the White House on some of its initial priorities.

[Reported by Davy Leghorn]

TOPIC 7b: SMALL BUSINESS

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, Trade Subcommittee webinar on Trade, Manufacturing, Critical Supply Chains: Lessons From COVID-19. Chairman Earl Blumenauer



stated repairing critical supply chains is “one of the utmost importance to our ability to emerge from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic with a stronger, more resilient economy: re-examining the trade and manufacturing policies that have led to fragile, brittle, and opaque global supply chains and applying the painful lessons we are learning from COVID-19 to make sure that we are better

prepared for inevitable future crises and challenges.”

Dr. Erica Fuchs, Professor of Engineering and Public Policy, Carnegie Mellon University: Manufacturing eco systems are unable to pivot. Making advanced products domestically, can open jobs for high school graduates. She stated we need to (1) Assist U.S. innovators by increasing SBIR funding. (2) Build the U.S. infrastructure and (3) Project Managers and Analysts need to work together to repair the supply chains.

Ms. Roxanne Brown, International Vice President at Large, United Steelworkers, recommended we (1) Improve domestic pharmaceutical production. (2) Update export facilitation program. (3) Empower the workforce because they must learn to pivot and (4) Strengthen our manufacturing base.

Ms. Kim Glas, President and CEO, National Council of Textile Organizations, stated there is an over-reliance on China since it has had a negative impact on the manufacturing base. She stated there is a need for strong domestic procurement rules and we need to crack down on offshore manufacturing practices. Ms. Glas also recommended there be an outreach program to connect the personal protection equipment manufacturers with the communities that need it.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division has been working closely with a Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB) that sells Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to introduce him to Federal agencies that are responsible for procuring PPE on behalf of the Government. VEE is also assisting the VOSB with the expeditious processing of their 510(K) registration for protective gloves by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The 510(K) is a premarket submission made to FDA to demonstrate that the device to be marketed is safe and effective.

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 8: EDUCATION

In an attempt to curb for-profit colleges' targeting of military students, House lawmakers on Tuesday voted to reclassify how military tuition assistance money is counted in funding formulas for higher education federal aid.

If the provision were to become law — the proposal still faces a long legislative road ahead — the move could lead to major changes in how for-profit colleges recruit and retain troops taking classes while still in the service.

At issue is the so-called 90-10 rule, which requires that any for-profit education institution derive at least 10 percent of their revenue from non-federal sources.

The idea behind the law is to ensure that schools are providing education benefits to at least a minimum base of students, and not simply siphoning federal dollars into empty programs.

But military and veterans education advocates have long lamented that under existing statute, Defense Department tuition assistance programs and the Veterans Affairs GI Bill program are not considered part of the 90-percent limit on federal funds. As a result, tuition payments through those programs can help schools meet their 10 percent requirement, making the veteran and military students potentially lucrative targets.

“The 90-10 rule was put in place to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of federal education dollars, but for-profit colleges have exploited the loophole to earn millions in profits by targeting servicemembers and veterans,” said Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., sponsor of the measure and chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

“This loophole incentivizes these predatory for-profits to aggressively recruit servicemembers and veterans for their earned education benefits ... We must close the loophole to rein in the predatory for-profit college industry and protect servicemember and veterans’ hard-earned education benefits.”



Tuesday's proposal — which was added to the annual defense authorization bill by a largely partisan 232-184 vote — would not apply to veterans education benefits. Advocates have also pushed in the past for restricting how those GI Bill dollars are classified, but without success in Congress. For-profit schools have argued in the past that such changes unfairly target their students, many of whom choose the institutions because of flexible learning schedules and programs, not because of heavy-handed recruiting.

The move comes just weeks after VA officials reauthorized a pair of for-profit schools to receive GI Bill funding despite past deceptive advertising. Officials from University of Phoenix and Bellevue University had been barred from enrolling new GI Bill students for several months.

The House proposal faces long-odds in the Republican-controlled Senate, where similar measures have failed to gain legislative traction in recent years. Furthermore, this measure is outside of the jurisdiction of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and instead will be led by leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Negotiators for the annual defense authorization bill to which the proposal was attached may also decide to dump the plan in favor of passing the bulk of the rest of the budget policy measure, which includes items like the annual military pay raise and military end strength requirements.

American Legion Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes By Closing 90-10 Loophole supports passage of this Amendment.

[Reported by John Kamin]

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