

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically affected the American economy, reducing spending by American households on materials goods, air travel, leisure activities as well as the use of automobiles. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions have temporarily fallen dramatically.

While this may be a positive for the environment, the social price is high: Since the U.S. economy depends heavily on consumer spending, the country is experiencing the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression, the threat of homelessness for tens of thousands of people and a failure of businesses large and small. How did the U.S. arrive at the point whereby mass



consumption – and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with it – is necessary for economic and social well-being? Are greenhouse gas reductions and a thriving economy incompatible?

A consumer society is a 20th-century construct. The American Dream has become synonymous with buying material goods such as cars, houses, furniture or electronics, distorting its original meaning. Today, the spending habits of American households make up 70% of the U.S. gross domestic product, a measurement that describes the size of the economy. U.S. companies spend about US\$230 billion on advertising each year, half of all the money spent on advertising globally.

Today's consumer society emerged after the end of World War I, fueled by the emergence of the modern advertising industry and facilitated by the widespread adoption of consumer credit. Edward Bernays, the nephew of Sigmund Freud, is generally credited with inventing the field of marketing during the 1920s. The essence of his approach was to tap into people's desires to feel useful, powerful, and sexy instead of emphasizing the usefulness of a product. Bernays created the term "engineering of consent" and popularized the term "consumer" when referring to American people.

"As horrific as the GDP number is, it's reporting something that we all already knew — that economic activity came to a screeching halt as the virus altered the contours of our lives. Millions lost their jobs, and the real issue is how our economy recovers," economist Justin Wolfers tweeted.

The American Legion continues to monitor the state of the economy as it directly affects the lively hood of many veterans and their families.

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

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	
	July 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020	July 2019	July 2020
Unemployed	316	699	262	591	54	108
Unemployment rate	3.4	7.9	3.2	7.5	5.0	10.7

The national unemployment rate is 10.2 percent (July 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 8.2 percent.ⁱ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 7.9 percent (Down from 10.1 percent in May).

In July 2020, the veteran unemployment rate is 7.9%, down from 8.6% last month and 9.1% two months ago. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 11.1% in June and 10.2% in July

TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

On Monday, August 17 - 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division focused on the upcoming career fair in collaboration with the Department of Texas and Texas Veterans Commission. This will be the first of many more virtual career fairs hosted by The American Legion.

On Monday, August 17, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversation with RBS Project Director Woodall on issues with pilot project for RBS model and upcoming presentation with EdCounsel to national conference.

On Monday, August 17, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with VES on path forward on 90/10 and other initiatives were held. Research on distance learning and COVID 19 impacts.

On Monday, August 17, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division continued the conversation with staff from the House Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations to discuss a developing situation regarding a mismanaged contract at the Department of Veteran Affairs. The adverse effects of the shuttering of one prime vendor that supply critical medical supplies to the VAMCs could causes many problems. The ongoing dispute poses a potential risk in VA's medical supply chain and also resulted in many small business resellers not being paid for supplies already delivered to VA facilities until the contractual dispute has been settled between VA and the prime vendor.

On Tuesday, August 18, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a teleconference with Warrior Scholar Executive Director Ryan Pavel on COVID impact on higher education and opportunities for veterans in higher education. Discussion of in-state residency challenges fueled by pandemic and determination that most schools would allow in state as provided by law. No issues at present with way that VA is handling mitigating circumstances involving students impacted by COVID. HVAC majority still actively considering legislation to provide more rigorous oversight of For Profits that convert to Not For Profit. HVAC Minority still seeking to push HR 7111 and SVAC supports that bill. But won't happen till after recess. (Tokano does not favor the legislation.)

On Tuesday, August 18, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conversation with Julian Purdy on the For Profit Conversion bill and the promising work on RBS. Talked with Kelsey Baron on a path forward for 4625 and important provisions therein dealing with quality of education. SVAC minority working S 4625 and the Benefits Bill. Markup to happen in September.

On Tuesday, August 18, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division engaged staff from the Senate Small Business Committee to discuss the tracking of veteran small businesses as they weather the COVI-19 shutdown. The new grants and lending programs recently created to assist small business during the COVID-19 closings, has few reporting requirements for the collection of data to gauge the resiliency of veteran small businesses. An easy way to accomplish this is to add a few question to the Small Business Pulse Survey which unfortunately does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Congressional Small Business Committees.

On Tuesday, August 18, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the Four corners Veterans Affairs Committee conference call to discuss education benefits. Specifically, provisions of the "Veterans Educational Assistance Transparency and Accountability Improvement Act" were discussed.

On Wednesday, August 19, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a call with Kelsey Baron to discuss needed changes in the bill and how to effect those in such a way as to protect the integrity of the GI Bill educational program. This includes 3696 provisions and Risk Based Surveys as well as SAA and VA authorities.

On Wednesday, August 19, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had discussions of a data system to store and track RBS visits and findings. Conversation with ECPI to discuss the challenges of quality in the for profit and not for profit sectors. Further research needed on veteran student experience and outcomes for veterans that pursue on line and residential education in the for profit sector. (Another call is scheduled to discuss these issues.)

On Wednesday, August 19, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a call with RBS Project Coordinator for RBS model team to discuss presentation, challenges ahead for pilot in pandemic environment and higher education quality oversight. Second virtual convening of the George W. Bush Institute National Task Force on Higher Education. Work groups established, Joe Wescott leads the Policy Work Group for the Task Force. Conversation on Distance Learning in COVID and impact on Veterans as well as discussion of needed initiatives surrounding higher education.

On Thursday, August 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a webinar hosted by the National Health Care for the Homeless Council. The focus was on Hepatitis A Vaccination for People Experiencing Homelessness.

On Thursday, August 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with Project Coordinator for RBS model team to discuss next steps to prepare for RBS pilot program. Also research on quality of online education in the COVID environment.

On Thursday, August 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversation with NAVPA President Del Signore on challenges for higher education. Also agreed to moderate Policy Panel for Virtual national NAVPA Conference in October. (NAVPA was going to Portland, Oregon but have decided to cancel that conference and seek another venue in 2021.)

On Thursday, August 20, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the VA's monthly GI Bill stakeholder meeting. Specifically, the provisions of in-person classes converted to online classes were discussed with respect to the effect on housing allowances.

On Friday, August 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division, Education Counsel, Lumina and NASAA weekly meeting on preparation for presentation to NASAA virtual conference and further liaison with VA on same. Final preparation of PowerPoint for RBS work. NASAA legislative call to discuss initiative and legislative agenda. Conversations with HVAC and SVAC staffers on pending legislation.

On Friday, August 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the SBA's Office of Advocacy to discuss the processes for the collecting veteran entrepreneurship data and how the SBA works with the US Census to compile the data points published.

On Friday, August 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the AI Association. The future of American manufacturing is no longer workers in assembly lines. Robots and artificial intelligence technology have taken over to reduce costs and make manufacturing in America a reality. The AI Association is an association of industry leaders advocating for the innovation and collaboration to support economic growth and leadership in the AI and Automation Industry. With the increased discussion of securing the US national supply chain, discussions have revealed robotics and artificial intelligence as the only options for viable insourcing.

TOPIC 3: TRACKING LEGISLATION

GI Bill of Rights Equity Commission Act: Establish the independent National Commission on GI Bill Equity to identify veterans of World War II who were denied the full effect of their GI Bill benefits because of contemporaneous local, State, and Federal Government policies that discriminated against African Americans.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

Resolution: None on file, presenting for review at Fall NEC.

Status: Currently on hold, has not been introduced

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.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

HR 7445: 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.

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

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

HR 1615: The American Legion supports legislation that would streamline and improve the verification process for veteran-owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses.

[Resolution No. 155: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Business](#)

Passed at the 2016 National Convention.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

[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.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

[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.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

[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.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[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.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus) [Pending Letter of Support](#)

[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.

(Tracked by Raymond Lorminey/Ariel De Jesus)

[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.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[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.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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.

(Tracked by Teresa Lewis)

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

HR 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.

(Tracked by [John Kamin](#))

We submitted written testimony for the July 23, 2020 hearing.

[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.

(Tracked by [Davy Leghorn](#))

We submitted written testimony for the July 23, 2020 hearing.

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

(Tracked by [Ariel De Jesus](#))

We submitted written testimony for the July 23, 2020 hearing.

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

Draft Bill: Veterans Educational Assistance Transparency and Accountability Improvement Act, improves the G.I. Bill Comparison Tool and ensures veterans, servicemembers, and their families are better informed when choosing what educational institution is best for them.

[Pending Letter of Support](#)

[Resolution No. 327: Support Further Assessment and Evaluation of Institutions of Higher Learning to Enable Veterans to Make Informed Education Choices](#)

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

Experts tell us, social distancing is our strongest life-saving tool when it comes to fighting the novel coronavirus, but for veterans, social distancing isn't as easy as it may be for others. Along with social distancing, many are facing sudden job loss and loss of wages during this pandemic, creating the "perfect storm" for a mental health crisis in our veteran's community.

A large number of more veterans are at risk of becoming unemployed as a result of the pandemic, especially the younger generation of veterans. This leads us to believe that the pandemic has immediate and potentially long-term adverse effects on the mental health of veterans, considering the indirect causal relationship between financial instability and suicide in the veteran's community.

According to a newly released report from the Bob Woodruff Foundation, 14% of veterans are working in the most at-risk industries facing lay-offs. The report detailed five industries,



but the UVC believes there is an even higher risk. Unions representing workers are seeing massive lay-offs as a result of the virus. In some cases, whole construction industries are going from 100% employment to 80% unemployment overnight.

"When we're talking about laying off, furloughing, and firing hundreds of thousands of veteran workers, we need to recognize that this will undoubtedly cause a serious mental health crisis and potentially an uptick in veteran suicide." Will Attig, Executive Director of the Union Veterans Council, AFL-CIO, went on to say, "I believe the veteran's community has dark days ahead, but we must do what we can to support every veteran worker."

According to The Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly two million veterans use VHA medical facilities to receive care for some mental illness. Fears of abnormal mental health care, lack of internet accessibility, and shortages in crucial staffing areas have the community on alarm.

"The majority of the VA's nearly 50 thousand vacancies are within the Veterans Health Administration, and the number one vacant clinical position across the system is for psychiatrists," said Brett Copeland, executive director of the Veterans Health Policy Institute. "Secretary Wilkie's failure to focus on hiring means that even if telemental health services were running perfectly, the VA wouldn't have the people to meet the demand."



Veterans are taking their own lives at a staggering rate of almost twenty per day; the vast majority of these veterans do not utilize mental health services. Social distancing risks increasing that rate because of the isolation that often comes along with distancing yourself from others for an extended period.

The Union Veterans Council knows that millions of American workers, many being vets, are finding themselves in situations where no one has their back or the answers they need. We want every worker to know that the informational resources of the AFL-CIO are available whether you're in a union or not. The Union Veterans Council is building a webpage to provide support for veteran workers as well as a series of educational town halls to teach coping skills and create structure.

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

More than 40,000 families struggle to pay their rent each month in Guilford County, according to advocates for affordable housing.

That number is likely to increase during the economic upheaval caused by the coronavirus pandemic, pushing some of the most vulnerable into homelessness.

But some nonprofits that provide temporary, or "transitional housing," are angry that the city has cut funding for programs to get more homeless quickly into permanent homes.

In contrast, the city is funneling its resources into an effort known as "rapid rehousing." Mostly, it gets people who are about to become homeless - like from eviction - into affordable housing for the long term, not shelters for a temporary period.

After years struggling to keep people off the streets, the city says its redefining priorities. In February, City Council doubled down on its efforts to encourage affordable housing through programs that rehabilitate old units and help developers build new apartments.



"From the city's standpoint, we have to be a little more strategic in our housing investments," said Stan Wilson, director of Greensboro's Neighborhood Development Department. "We've got to put our money into helping people get permanent housing."

Every year, Greensboro gives grants to local nonprofits that provide assistance to the homeless, from expectant mothers to disabled veterans. In its most recent round of

funding, however, the City Council approved a series of grants that were, in some cases, far lower than the amounts offered a year ago.

In three instances, agencies serving the homeless were given grants capped by the city at \$25,000 each, for one agency, that represented a 73% cut. And the executive director of that agency - The Servant Center - is crying foul. She said the city warned it would be cutting grants but didn't realize just how dramatic the loss would be.

"If I had known we were going to be limited to \$25,000, I would've said something then," Shanna Reece said. Last year, the city awarded a grant of \$93,000 to a shelter program. The Servant Center runs to help disabled vets who can't find permanent housing.

This year, that program received \$25,000. Reece said she knew when funding discussions began last December; the city would be urging agencies to develop rapid rehousing programs over transitional shelters. But the \$25,000 grant approved by the council in late July was a surprise.

"While permanent housing is always a goal," Reece said, "there's a different path for different people depending on their circumstances. It's imperative to recognize that every element of our continuum of care is as important as the others." To show it's serious with pushing agencies in the direction of rapid rehousing, the city gave The Servant Center \$75,000 for that very purpose.

Still, Reece said her agency couldn't be competent without offering certain services - like the one for homeless vets.

Wilson said the city was clear that changes were coming. Nonprofits were asked to sign agreements they would recognize the city's emphasis on permanent housing. But Reece said it wasn't clear then what that meant for funding. That's why she's speaking out. "I think that when you have a paradigm shift, and you have to make strategic focuses," Wilson said, "these kinds of things occur. "It's not just the city that is emphasizing permanent housing. The state, too, is heading in that direction with money earmarked to help local agencies.

But Reece said the reality, among other things, is that Guilford County doesn't have enough affordable housing to go around. Brian Hahne, the executive director of Partners Ending Homelessness, a nonprofit that guides about a handful of local agencies serving the needy, believes the city wasn't upfront about the cuts that were planned. "The biggest thing I wish we could see more of is a better collaboration with city leadership," Hahne said. "It's a network of all stakeholders trying to end homelessness."

The American Legion is encouraged and please to see that nonprofit organizations are stepping in to assist our most vulnerable veterans. This falls in line with Resolution 326: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families.

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5a: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

On August 18, 2020, the USDA announced their Single-Family Housing Direct Loan and Guarantee Programs are suspended until August 31, 2020.

USDA has waived or relaxed certain parts of the application process for Single-Family Housing Direct Loans, including site assessments, and has extended the time period that certificates of eligibility are valid.

On August 19, 2020, HUD Secretary Ben Carson provided guidance and additional flexibility to states and units of local government who are utilizing their existing federal disaster recovery funds to support low- and moderate-income persons and vulnerable populations for disasters occurring in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 during the coronavirus outbreak. The Federal Register notice [published on August 17, 2020](#) grants extensions and clarifies submission deadlines for Community Development Block Grant disaster recovery (CDBG-DR) grantees.

https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_20_128

On August 18, 2020, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) President and CEO Diane Yentel issued a statement on the Senate Republicans' Second Coronavirus Relief Package.

<https://nlihc.org/news/statement-nlihc-president-and-ceo-diane-yentel-senate-republicans-second-coronavirus-relief>

Three weeks after releasing the “[HEALS Act](#),” Senate Republicans unveiled [on August 18th] a [revised coronavirus relief proposal](#) that is even more unacceptable and inadequate than the first one. The already woefully inadequate \$3.3 billion in housing resources that were included in the HEALS Act are not included in this bill. The so-called “skinny bill” would do almost nothing to ward off the impending tsunami of evictions and increase in homelessness; it contains no meaningful resources or protections for the estimated 30 million to 40 million people at risk of losing their homes in the middle of a pandemic.



NLIHC believes that Congress can prevent evictions and homelessness, but we are running out of time. Congress and the White House must negotiate a comprehensive relief package that includes NLIHC’s top priorities: a uniform, national moratorium on all evictions for nonpayment of rent for the duration of the public health emergency; at least [\\$100 billion in emergency rental assistance](#) through the “[Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act](#)” and housing vouchers, and \$11.5 billion to homeless shelter and service providers to respond to and prevent coronavirus outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness.

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS

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

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

National, Department of Texas, and the Texas Veterans Commission will be hosting a Virtual Career Fair September 15th, 10 am – 4:00 pm CST

Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 13,912, a decrease of 313 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

Here's a look at what President Trump's orders will do for small businesses:

Payroll Taxes

One of Trump's orders directs the Treasury Department to defer payment of employee-side Social Security payroll taxes through the end of the year for those making under roughly \$100,000. The start date for the planned deferral period is listed as Sept. 1, but Trump said it could end up being retroactive to Aug. 1.



Trump said on Saturday that he plans to forgive the deferred taxes if he is reelected. By signing the memo, Trump is taking a step toward his longtime goal of cutting payroll taxes, a move he thinks would provide savings to workers and encourage businesses to rehire employees, but Democrats argue that it undermines Social Security.

As of Monday afternoon, the Treasury Department and IRS had not issued guidance on Trump's directive. Tax experts are hoping that guidance will address questions such as the due date for when suspended taxes would have to be paid.

Legal experts say it's possible that employers would continue to withhold payroll taxes from paychecks because the order doesn't eliminate the taxes. If that happens, employees wouldn't see any boost to their take-home pay. If an employer stops withholding payroll taxes, the employee could end up having a considerable balance due to the federal government when the suspension period ends, assuming the deferred taxes are not forgiven by further action.

Unemployment Benefits

Another of Trump's memos directs the Federal Emergency Management Agency to create a program that authorizes governors to provide \$400 per week to recipients of unemployment benefits. Residents would have to already be receiving \$100 per week in benefits to be eligible. Of the \$400 per week, \$300 would come from the federal government by redirecting up to \$44 billion from the Department of Homeland Security's disaster relief fund. States would provide the remaining \$100 each week. They could use funds that the federal government can provide them under the CARES Act enacted in March, or they could use other funds.

The order represents Trump's effort to unilaterally provide enhanced unemployment benefits to Americans who are out of work. The \$600-per-week boost to weekly benefits provided by the CARES Act expired at the end of last month, and Democrats and Republicans have sparred over the level at which the enhanced benefits should be extended.

State officials and legal experts raised concerns that states would find it difficult to participate in the program since they are already cash-strapped and it would take some time for them to make the necessary updates to their computer programs. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Monday said most states should be able to execute the enhanced unemployment payments in the order in the next week or two.

An email sent by the Labor Department to state unemployment agencies on Sunday said states could use their existing unemployment benefit payments to fulfill the cost-sharing requirement. However, that would have the effect of recipients receiving enhanced benefits of \$300 per week rather than \$400. Trump told reporters Sunday that the federal government would make a decision about state contributions on a case-by-case basis.

Items Not Addressed

There are a number of items that lawmakers and the White House have discussed including in coronavirus relief legislation that were not addressed in Trump's orders. These items include additional money for state and local governments, a second draw for the Paycheck Protection Program, funding for schools, additional money for coronavirus testing, and a second round of stimulus payments.

The American Legion has been tracking the COVID-19 relief packages that are moving through Congress to alleviate the burden of a government enforced shutdown of the economy. Last week as lawmakers left DC without a reconciliation the spending between the HEROES Act and the HEALS Act as the application date for the Paycheck Protection Program was allowed to expire. Which prompted the President to sign executive orders on payroll taxes and unemployment benefits, taking matters into his own hands as negotiations with Democrats over coronavirus relief legislation have stalled. These executive orders will provide relief to Americans who are struggling financially as a result of the coronavirus recession.

[Reported by Davy Leghorn]

TOPIC 7a: SMALL BUSINESS

On August 5, 2020, USDA announced their implementation of measures to rural residents, businesses and communities affected by COVID-19 outbreak.

https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA_RD_SA_COVID19_ProgramImmediateActions.pdf

The Department extended the Business & Industry loan guarantees applications until midnight Eastern Daylight Time on September 15, 2021, or until funds are expended. Program funding expires Sept. 30, 2021.

The FCC has opened the 2.5 GHz Rural Tribal Window. Any federally recognized Tribe or Alaska Native Village may apply for spectrum in the Rural Tribal Window. Consortia of federally recognized Tribes and/or Native Villages, or other entities controlled and majority owned by such Tribes or consortiums, are also eligible to apply.

<https://www.fcc.gov/25-ghz-rural-tribal-window>

This window is a unique opportunity for Tribes in rural areas to directly access unassigned spectrum over their Tribal lands, subject to buildout requirements. The 2.5 GHz band is suitable for both mobile coverage and fixed point-to-point uses, and is currently used to provide broadband service by legacy educational licensees and commercial providers that lease the spectrum. Depending on your needs, it can play an important role in the deployment of broadband and other advanced communications services on your Tribal lands. Please find more detailed information below, including how to determine whether 2.5 GHz spectrum is available over your Tribal lands.

The Rural Tribal Priority Window opened Monday, February 3, 2020, and closes on Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 6PM EDT.

Click the [2.5 GHz Rural Tribal Window Submitted Applications](#) link under Related Links to view a list of submitted applications.

Discover is giving \$5 million to Black-owned restaurants. Nominate your favorite Black-owned restaurant for a \$25,000 award. More information is available at <https://www.discover.com/credit-cards/promo/restaurants.html?cmpgnid=dp-dbr-inet-eatitforward-site>

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 8: EDUCATION

Veteran's education advocates are cautioning students to be wary of schools capitalizing on pandemic uncertainty to pitch new and sometimes questionable education opportunities.

A new report released Wednesday from [The Century Foundation](#) found a significant increase in college advertising related to the coronavirus pandemic, encouraging students to reconsider their short-term learning plans given many school's decisions to shift to online-only classes.

A number of the schools studied by the group have faced penalties in the past for misleading recruiting tactics and questionable practices targeting military and veteran students, whose GI Bill benefits can provide a stable source of revenue for the institutions.

Advocates said students and lawmakers need to keep a close watch on "schools with a history of predatory and aggressive recruiting" using the pandemic to mislead students into poor decisions.

"We have been here before and need to be vigilant to ensure that history doesn't repeat itself," said Carrie Wofford, president of VES. "During the last recession, many proprietary schools targeted veterans and underserved minorities, encouraging them to enroll with the promise of a high-quality education and great job prospects.



to enroll with the promise of a high-quality education and great job prospects.

"In reality, many students were saddled with worthless degrees and mountains of student loan debt."

The group also noted a rise in advertisements this spring for health care degree programs in conjunction with the coronavirus outbreak, but

warns that students should research those types of courses to ensure they are worth the cost.

“Many of these schools’ healthcare programs charged students hefty tuition for careers that required only a high school diploma,” Wofford said. “Oversight by policymakers is warranted.”

Earlier this week, a new poll conducted by College Reaction and Axios found that 22 percent of students enrolled in college classes last spring do not plan to continue their studies this fall, as schools scramble to deal with new social distancing and virus mitigation rules.

Lawmakers this spring passed several measures designed to ensure student veterans’ tuition payments and housing stipends were not disrupted by changes in campus class plans, but most of those protections are set to expire at the end of 2020. Congress is likely to revisit those issues later this fall.

Nearly one million individuals received some type of education benefits from the VA last school year.

[Reported by John Kamin]

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 8/21/20
