

## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

If gross domestic product is the broadest indicator of the economy, employment is the one most personally felt. These are people's jobs we're talking about.



Two distinct metrics make up the employment forecast. The more important one is the "payroll report," a summation by the Department of Labor of how many jobs the economy has created (or lost) each month. This data is broken out by sector, such as manufacturing, mining and

health care. Note that simply to keep up with population growth, the economy needs to add more than 100,000 jobs every month; otherwise the unemployment rate will rise.

That rate is the other closely watched figure. It's a simple division of the number of people who have looked for work in the prior four weeks but who do not have a job by how many people are currently in the labor force. That simplicity belies some underlying concerns about the unemployment rate. One key one: Potential workers who aren't actively looking for work aren't included in the calculation.

July's pace of rehiring slowed, with 1.8 million rehired compared to June's 4.8 million rehired. The surge in coronavirus cases in the Southern and Western states slowed hiring there, and which also made the Northeastern and Midwestern states more cautious about fully reopening themselves.

Virus cases appear to be stabilizing, which should allow August hiring to pick up. However, large hiring surges like that in June appear to be over. Weekly initial unemployment claims are falling again after a pickup in July, but remain above 1 million per week, an unprecedented number. The virus has shown the need for continued caution, and the difficulty in getting things back to normal without a vaccine. The leisure and hospitality sector will continue to experience hard times for the foreseeable future.

The retail sector could be hurt if the bonus unemployment compensation is not renewed. A second stimulus bill is still not a given, though it is likely that something will pass, eventually, because it's election season after all.

The unemployment rate dropped to 10.2%, from 11.1% in June. The issues that the Bureau of Labor Statistics was having in correctly counting the unemployed were greatly diminished in July's report, so the reported unemployment rate is close to correct now.

However, there is a long way to go. Total unemployment is still 10.6 million higher than in February. Almost five million more people are still out of the labor force now than in February. Another 4.5 million are still working reduced hours. Employment continues to fall in certain industries that are not recovering well, such as mining, nursing homes, and elderly care.

As more workers return, wage growth will likely be subdued. Hourly earnings rates are elevated right now because so many low-paid workers were laid off that it caused the average wage rate to jump for people who were still employed. As those low-paid jobs come back, the still-high unemployment rate is likely to lower wage growth from the 3% to 3.5% trend seen before the coronavirus crisis.

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

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

| <b>HOUSEHOLD</b>  |            | <b>DATA</b> |            |            |            |             |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Table A-5. Employment status of the civilian population 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and sex, not seasonally adjusted</b> |            |             |            |            |            |             |
| [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         |
| <b>Unemployment rate</b>  | <b>3.4</b> | <b>7.9</b>  | <b>3.2</b> | <b>7.5</b> | <b>5.0</b> | <b>10.7</b> |

*The national unemployment rate is 10.2 percent (July 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 8.2 percent.<sup>i</sup> 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, September 31**, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division prep with RBS Project Director Woodall on pilot project for Risk Based Surveys and follow up on information from the NASAA National Conference. Also, conversation with VA leadership on tech school in Texas and follow up with the Texas SAA director.

**On Monday, September 31**, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conference call with the George W. Bush Institute Group Leads and discussion of objectives for the National Task Force on Higher Education. Next convening is September 16. Areas of interest include distance learning, a playbook for higher education ensuring veteran success and issues surrounding program quality.

***On Tuesday, September 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the CEO and staff from Job Path regarding new updates to their online employment platform. Job Path technology platform has live job listings for veterans and military spouses, the best MOS translator for transitioning service members, job training to improve skills, and career mentorship. HR professionals can subscribe to post job opportunities, search for candidates, and be matched to the right job seeker. Organizations can incorporate a white labeled version of Job Path in to their existing website to offer online employment services.

***On Tuesday, September 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a Four Corners Call on Congressional legislation and issues in higher education and employment. There is a hearing on funding for education service this month and the Senate plans to hold a markup as well.

***On Tuesday, September 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division continued emphasis on a Covid Education and training bill and hopes of passing the Job Training Bill pushed by minority staff. Discussion of a VA Hosted ED seminar on August 20 and bad information put out on Work Study. Followed up with Muskogee VA leadership and there is not Ratio requirement for Work Study students (i.e no more than one work study student per 100 veteran student.)

***On Tuesday, September 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had concerns about VA policy changes involving course load at end of program of study (no more rounding out) VSO concern about this change. Teleconference/Zoom meeting with RBS Advisory Council members on the risk matrix and risk taxonomy.

***On Wednesday, September 2,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division along with the Legislative Division met with the staff director of the House Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations to discuss the upcoming hearing on the Department of Veteran Affairs' response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the lessons learned from the missteps the agency made. The Subcommittee has asked The American Legion to provide a statement for the record in lieu of testimony. The American Legion is expected to discuss the role veteran small businesses play within the federal supply chain and the value they bring.

***On Wednesday, September 2,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the US Small Business Administration's Interagency Taskforce meeting where Legion representatives provided a quarterly briefing on The American Legion's veteran small business initiatives as well as discuss Legion's upcoming testimony on an House Veteran Affairs Committee hearing on VA's supply chain and their responsiveness and resiliency to the pandemic on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Legion will discuss the value that small businesses bring to the VA medical and surgical equipment supply chain. We will pin point logistic dependencies that led to national shortages and what needs to be done legislatively to prevent future shortages of emergent supplies.

***On Wednesday, September 2,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with ECPI Senior Leadership to discuss quality programing and delivery of education in a Covid world. Talks with Mark Dreyful, ECPI President, Military Affairs Director and affiliate AL VSO Issakson. Jeff Arthur and Steve Gonzalez talked about need for Veteran tab for Department of Education and also 90/10 legislative changes.

***On Wednesday, September 2,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with three veteran students who were leaders on campus. Excellent information on

why the students choose ECPI, what was their experience in the classroom and challenges faced during the pandemic.

***On Thursday, September 3,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the US Small Business Administration's Advisory Committee on Veteran Business Affairs where Legion representatives provided a briefing on our legislative efforts to obtain fee waivers for veterans and spouses who utilize SBA guarantee loans. This is a fight we've taken on since last October when the fees were added back through the appropriations process. This time, we erased it permanently by legislation in phase 3 of the Coronavirus relief package in the CARES Act.

***On Thursday, September 3,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with Senate Veterans Affairs Committee staff on HR 4625 and needed changes withing. Section 6 will address Risk Based Surveys, what will be required of schools during them and how they will be data driven.

***On Thursday, September 3,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division discussed robust oversight of approved programs, how to deal with schools transitioning from For Profit to Not For Profit status, and policies and procedures relating to schools not in compliance with 3696. Other Sections will deal with SAA outreach and compliance.

***On Thursday, September 3,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conversation with VA Regional Director Worley on NCD school approval issues in Texas and conversations on a tech school with issues there. Conversations with HVAC on data system for RBS oversight and additional conversations with RBS project manager on matrix taxonomy and pending legislation.

***On Friday, September 4,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a call with University of Chicago staff and veteran students on the GI Bill and disability rating. Also conversation on how important it is to be a part of a VSO and the role played by VSOs in legislation and benefits. Further conversations on Texas NCD and challenges for approval oversight as regards tech schools.

### 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

Veterans able to find jobs in an economy devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic will face the continuing problem of "underemployment" in positions unsuited to their skills, according to a new study.

The underemployment issue is particularly concerning for former enlisted troops from fields such as the infantry who lack a college degree, said Thomas Mahnken, author of the report for the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Service members transitioning out of the military tend to "enter the workforce a step behind their civilian counterparts" in terms of familiarity with the language, requirements and responsibilities of the corporate world, Mahnken said Wednesday.

Much of the report, titled "Addressing Veteran Unemployment: A Case Study," went over the well-trod groundwork of other studies on veteran employment, such as the difficulty in adapting to the civilian workplace after committing to the military's hierarchical structure and team-oriented mission.

One of the partial solutions to the underemployment issue is a corporate mentorship program in which civilian business leaders would advise a veteran once a month for a year on navigating the job market, Mahnken said in a webinar co-hosted with retired Gen. Jack Keane, a Silver Star recipient in Vietnam and former Army vice chief of staff.

The 17-page report singled out the program at American Corporate Partners (ACP), which calls on executives to assist in mentoring transitioning service members once a month for a year.

ACP mentors assist veterans on how to "translate military skills into workplace attributes," Mahnken said, and also how to engage with colleagues and advocate for themselves.

About 17,000 veterans have gone through the program nationwide, he said. In 2019, more than 1,900 veterans who participated said they had obtained what they called

"meaningful" employment, according to the report. Keane said he was stating the obvious in noting that there is "a much more significant challenge for our veterans going forward" in an economy with double-digit unemployment rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



ACP helps transitioning veterans find careers.

The ACP program can contribute in preparing veterans for the challenge while also having the side effect of having the corporate leaders "become a catalyst within their own companies" for appreciating what veterans have to offer to their businesses. "They've got enormous personal attributes" and can make a difference "if given a chance," Keane said of the veterans. "There has to be some empathy, some appreciation" for their service, he added. "There has to be some willingness to understand and trust who this person is and how they can contribute."

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

## **TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs will award up to \$1.2 million to two Tucson nonprofit organizations that provide housing to homeless veterans and their families.

Esperanza En Escalante will receive up to \$1 million for providing 72 beds to homeless veterans and then work to transition them into independent living, said Pat Beauchamp, director of operations for the organization.

The other agency, Old Pueblo Community Services, will receive an estimated \$244,000 in funding for transitional housing for veterans, said Ellyn Langer, chief financial officer for the agency. Old Pueblo will provide 23 beds for veterans and transition them into permanent housing, said Laverne McHaney, the organization's program manager for veterans.

Under the grant program, both community agencies will be paid per day on the use of the available beds by veterans, officials said.



Esperanza En Escalante, 3700 S. Calle Polar, has case managers who work with veterans on their medical issues, and those in need of respite care once they are discharged from the hospital.



Transportation is provided for their medical appointments. The housing offered for families is one-and-two bedroom apartments, and male veterans can also stay in five-bedroom units with shared common areas.

“It is a vital tool in the community to help provide housing for homeless

veterans. We are serving more than 250 veterans a year either in our permanent housing or transitional housing programs,” said Beauchamp.

Esperanza En Escalante was formed in 1989 by the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106 of Tucson to help veterans needing respite once they were discharged from the hospital, and it grew into a program offering transitional and permanent housing for veterans.

Old Pueblo Community Services, 4501 E. Fifth St., has received federal money under the Veterans Affairs grant program since 2006. In addition to housing, case managers also work with veterans to provide them medical services and make sure they are receiving benefits such as service-connected disability income and Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, benefits, McHaney said. Job specialists also aid veterans in search of employment.

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

## **TOPIC 5b: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness published their 2020 version of the State of Homelessness report. While COVID-19 is creating a health and economic crisis in America and throughout the world, this year’s report represents a baseline—the state of homelessness before the crisis began.

Compared to the previous year, homelessness increased by 3 percent in the 2019 Point-in-Time Count. This marked the third straight year of national-level increases. Veterans, who are 7 percent of people experiencing homelessness, are prioritized due to their service to our country. They experienced the greatest decreases in homelessness—50 percent.

<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2020/>

On September 1, 2020 Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the availability of up to \$158 Million to advance action plan combating homelessness. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the release of two requests for proposals for programs that build and support homeless housing across the state. Combined, the Homeless Housing and Assistance Program and the Empire State

Supportive Housing Initiative make available \$158 million for projects that will house New Yorkers experiencing homelessness and provide supportive services aimed at addressing the root



causes of housing instability. This funding continues the work of the Governor's unprecedented \$20 billion, five-year housing plan, which is creating or preserving 100,000 units of affordable housing and has spurred the development of more than 6,600 of supportive housing units across the state.

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-availability-158-million-advance-action-plan-combating-homelessness>

On Tuesday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention implemented a nationwide temporary eviction moratorium through the end of the year to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Under the order, landlords cannot evict renters who meet certain conditions: “exhausted their best efforts to pay rent, seek Government rental assistance, and are likely to become homeless due to eviction,” according to a statement from the White House.

Under the CDC Order, American renters who meet certain conditions cannot be evicted if they have affirmatively exhausted their best efforts to pay rent, seek Government rental assistance, and are likely to become homeless due to eviction.

- Those who benefit from this assistance are still obligated to pay accrued rent or housing payments in accordance with their lease or contract.
- Landlords are still permitted to pursue eviction against tenants committing criminal acts, threatening the health or safety of other residents, and damaging property, among other offenses.

The intent of this Order is to use Federal authority to prevent evictions that could exacerbate the spread of COVID-19.

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2020-19654.pdf>

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced disaster assistance for victims of Hurricane Laura in the State of Louisiana by providing foreclosure protection, and other support, for displaced families.

[https://www.hud.gov/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/HUD\\_No\\_20\\_137](https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_20_137)

*[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 15<sup>th</sup>, 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

The American Legion provided a letter of support for Senator Kelly Loeffler's proposed legislation to change the federal contracting process, a move she says will help veterans better access federal contract opportunities. The *Verification Alignment and Service-disabled Business Adjustment (VA-SBA) Act* will streamline the federal contracting process for all veteran-owned small businesses and ensure that contracts reserved for service-disabled veterans are actually available for qualified entrepreneurs. Loeffler serves as a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and today, more than 2.5 million of them are owned by veterans across the country," Loeffler said. "While we continue to prioritize a certain number of federal contracts for our veterans, the current process to access these opportunities is overly complicated and full of red tape. This bill will help streamline the verification process and protect opportunities specifically designated for service-disabled veterans. The federal government should make it as easy as possible for veterans to grow their businesses and serve those who have served our country."

The *VA-SBA Act* moves the responsibility for ensuring that a veteran-owned small business or service-disabled veteran-owned small business is in fact a small business—for the purpose of federal contracts—from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to the Small Business Administration (SBA), aligning such verification with other small business contracting programs. The VA will ensure that a business owner is a veteran, while the SBA will ensure it is in fact a small business.

It also requires that service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses receive front-end certification to qualify for federal contracts set aside for those businesses. Currently, service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses have to be certified by the VA for contracts through the VA but can self-



certify for all other federal contracts. This has created confusion for business owners and opens the door for waste, fraud and abuse by allowing small businesses not owned by service-disabled veterans to take contracts away from actual service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

The American Legion understands the need for verification of VOSBs and SDVOSBs. This bill finishes what we began in aligning the federal regulatory definitions for SDVOSBs and consolidates all verification processes within a singular agency. The move of VA's small business verification functions to the SBA will end the current process of self-certification. This is beneficial for risk-averse contracting officers who will begin taking verified veteran firms seriously and will award more contracts to veteran businesses, knowing that their statuses are backed by Small Business Administration and the Department of Veterans' Affairs as reviewing authorities.

The American Legion supports Senator Loeffler's bill that would streamline and improve the verification process for veteran-owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses; which is why we passed Resolution No. 155: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Business at the 2016 National Convention.

*[Reported by Davy Leghorn]*

## **TOPIC 7b: SMALL BUSINESS**

On September 1, the House Oversight Committee, Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, issued the "Preliminary Analysis of Paycheck Protection Program Data" report. The Subcommittee examined the dissemination of more than 5.2 million PPP loans totaling \$525 billion since April. It found that:

- Some 10,000 loans totaling more than \$1 billion went to companies that received more than one PPP loan, a violation of the program.
- More than 600 loans totaling about \$96 million were given to firms that have been excluded from doing business with the government because they've been "debarred or suspended" from receiving federal contracts.
- More than 350 loans totaling \$195 million were awarded to businesses that have been flagged for "significant performance and integrity issues."
- More than 11,000 loans totaling about \$3 billion were given to companies that did not include complete information from applicants.

[https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-09-01.PPP%20Interim%20Report.pdf?\\_ga=2.49770080.754412456.1599090589-1862944673.1599090589](https://coronavirus.house.gov/sites/democrats.coronavirus.house.gov/files/2020-09-01.PPP%20Interim%20Report.pdf?_ga=2.49770080.754412456.1599090589-1862944673.1599090589)

According to the September 1<sup>st</sup>, Wall Street Journal, the United States faces a wave of small-business failures this Fall if the Federal government does not provide a new round of financial assistance — a prospect that economists warn would prolong the recession, slow the recovery and perhaps enduringly reshape the American business landscape.

As the pandemic drags on, it is threatening even well-established businesses that were financially healthy before the crisis. If they shut down or are severely weakened, it could accelerate corporate consolidation and the dominance of the biggest companies.

Now that aid is [largely gone](#), even as the economic recovery that took hold in the Spring is [losing momentum](#). The Fall will bring new challenges: Colder weather will curtail outdoor dining and other weather-dependent adaptations that helped businesses hang on in much of the country, and epidemiologists warn that the Winter could bring a surge in coronavirus cases.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/01/business/economy/small-businesses-coronavirus.html>

On September 3, 2020 the National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs.

SBA also shared that funds are still available under the Economic Injury Disaster Loans Program. This loan will provide economic relief to small businesses and non-profit organizations that are currently experiencing a temporary loss of revenue.

SBA is currently waiving the guarantee fees on *SBAExpress* loans to veterans. The maximum loan under this authority is \$350,000 and will have no guarantee fee upon origination. The on-going service fee, however, will apply to loans above \$150,000. In order to qualify for these additional fee waivers, the lender must process the loan under the *SBAExpress* program and the business must be 51 percent or more owned and controlled by an individual or individuals in one or more of the following groups:

- Veterans (other than dishonorably discharged);
- Service-Disabled Veterans;
- Activity Duty Military service member participating in the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP);
- Reservists and National Guard members; or
- Current spouse of any Veteran, Active Duty service member, or any Reservist or National Guard member; or widowed spouse of a service member who died while in service or of a service-connected disability.

SBA funding options are available at <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs>

*[Reported by Teresa Lewis]*

## **TOPIC 8: EDUCATION**

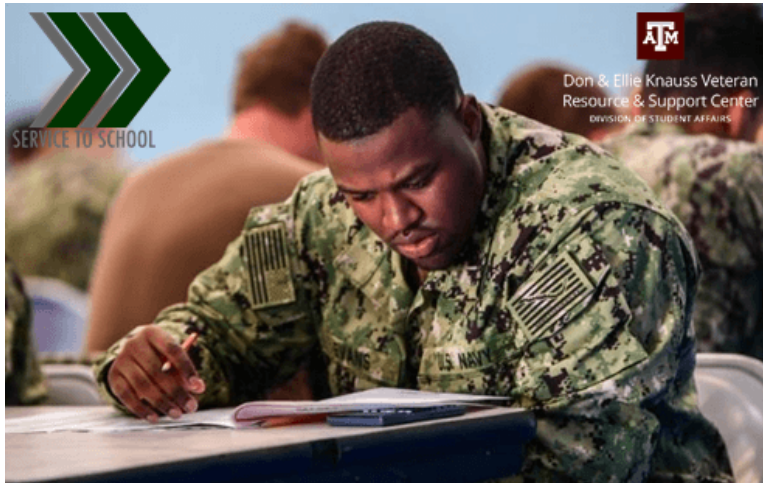
Texas A&M University has announced a partnership with Service to School (S2S) to benefit service members who are transitioning out of the military and wish to pursue undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered by the university.

Service to School is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating transitioning service members and veterans about their options for obtaining a higher education degree.

The partnership, brokered through the Office of Military Admissions and the Don & Ellie Knauss Veteran Resource & Support Center, will make Texas A&M one of the selective institutions across

the country to have its programs come highly recommended to service members looking to pursue higher education after military service.

When transitioning service members and veterans contact S2S, their service records, military education credits and any prior college credits are reviewed and discussed to provide an indication of their academic options.



S2S then makes recommendations to the service members on course prerequisites and other requirements for the programs in which they seek admission, and provides introductions to the institutions they recommend for the service members' long-term educational and career goals. All these services are offered at zero cost to veterans.

The partnership will assist Texas A&M's Office of Military Admissions with advising and setting expectations for perspective students, allowing them to expand their reach among the military community.

“Our staff is small and we stay incredibly busy, so when students come to us with a basic understanding of the prerequisites, requirements and expectations for admission into the university and their college of choice, it allows us to focus our time with them on the details of their program and post-graduation goals,” said Karen Cambronero, assistant director for Military Admissions at Texas A&M.

“If you or a service member you know is transitioning and looking to obtain a higher education degree, please encourage them to seek the no-cost services of Service to School,” Cambronero said. “We are excited about this opportunity and are looking forward to increasing the student veteran population at Texas A&M through the introductions provided by this new partnership.”

*[Reported by John Kamin]*

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