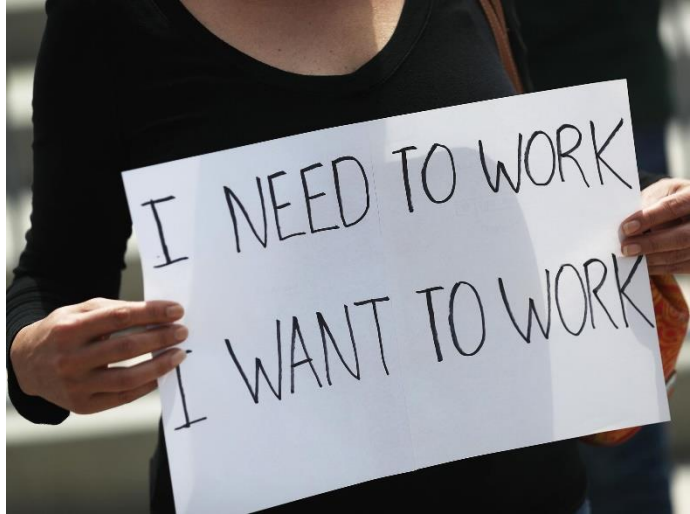


## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

The number of workers seeking unemployment benefits increased to a three-month high. Another sign the economy is entering a winter slowdown as coronavirus cases rise and trigger new business restrictions. Unemployment claims rose for the second straight week to 885,000 in the week ended Dec. 12, the Labor Department said Thursday. Last week marked the highest level for claims since September when 893,000 workers applied for jobless benefits.



*Claims rise to 885,000 as economists expect the labor market to cool until Covid-19 vaccines are widely distributed*

More broadly, claims are down sharply from a peak of nearly 7 million in March, but the four-week moving average, which smooths out weekly volatility, is increasing after trending downward since the spring. The weekly figures can be volatile around the holidays due to seasonal-adjustment issues.

“The next few months will be pretty rough for the labor market as you do see businesses having to contend with this latest wave of Covid cases,” Sarah House, senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities, said. “You are seeing those government restrictions coming into play again.”

Ms. House, and many other economists, project the labor market will cool until vaccines are widely distributed. More than 90% of economists in a recent Wall Street Journal survey said they expect the rollout of coronavirus vaccines will cause hiring to accelerate in the second quarter of next year.

Claims declined in many states last week. But they rose in some populous states, including Illinois and California, that have seen steep infection increases and new rounds of government restrictions. Economic data broadly point to a slowdown. Retail sales dropped 1.1% in November from a month earlier, according to a Commerce Department report Wednesday. Overall consumer spending, which includes retail and services consumption, has continued to increase, but more slowly than over the summer.

Housing has been a bright spot in the economy throughout the pandemic. Construction of new homes in the U.S. increased in November for the third consecutive month, the Commerce Department said Thursday.

Job growth cooled in November as many workers gave up looking for jobs. Robust job gains in the late spring and early summer primarily reflected businesses adding back staff after lockdowns were lifted. But the recovery is far from complete, and many businesses continue to operate below capacity. Some state and local governments implemented new restrictions as coronavirus cases surged this fall.

Many states cited layoffs in industries particularly vulnerable to cold weather, such as food services, retail, and construction industries, for the week ended Dec. 5. Continuing claims, a proxy for the number of people collecting unemployment benefits through regular state programs, fell to 5.5 million in the week ended Dec. 5, from 5.8 million a week earlier, on a seasonally adjusted basis, according to the Labor Department. Continuing claims declined throughout the summer and into the fall, a sign many laid-off workers returned to jobs.

Many individuals, though, are experiencing long spells of unemployment. About 4.8 million people who had exhausted state benefits received aid through a federal extended-benefits program in the week ended Nov. 28, up from 4.5 million a week earlier. Others had run through benefits altogether, as job opportunities are limited in industries struck by the virus.

Andrew Poulton, 63 years old, of Palm Springs, Calif., was recruiting guest lecturers to speak on luxury cruise ships before the pandemic hit and shut down cruise operations. Mr. Poulton has been unemployed since April, and even though he has 40 years of experience in marketing and management, he said he is struggling to find a new job.

“Between the pandemic and my age, nobody is really, I’m sure, giving my résumé more than a cursory glance at this point,” Mr. Poulton said. Mr. Poulton is relying on unemployment payments of \$275 a week as his sole source of income. He hopes to land employment soon to “stop the hemorrhaging” of his savings. Both the extended-benefits program and a program that provides benefits to those not typically eligible for jobless aid—such as independent contractors and self-employed individuals—will expire at the end of this year.

On Wednesday, congressional leaders were closing in on a coronavirus relief bill that was expected to include enhanced unemployment benefits of \$300 a week. But congressional aides noted negotiations were continuing and no final agreement had been struck.

*[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	
	Nov 2019	Nov 2020	Nov 2019	Nov 2020	Nov 2019	Nov 2020
Unemployed	307	552	252	492	55	60
Unemployment rate	3.4	6.3	3.1	6.4	5.1	5.3

*The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (November 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 6.9 percent. Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 5.7 percent (up from 3.6 percent in October).*

In November 2020, the veteran unemployment rate was 6.3%, up from 5.9% last month. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.6% in November.

## TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

***On Monday, December 14,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had conversations with the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) on HR 7501. Also, I had conversations with NASAA pilot states on the RBS progress and plans for pilot rollout next month.

***On Monday, December 14,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the meeting of the George W. Bush research assistance group. Also, I attended the VES Award presentation virtually and worked on SAA issues in L.A. and Texas.

***On Tuesday, December 15,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation's hearing. The Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet, convened a hearing titled: Betting on the Rest: Expanding American Entrepreneurship Outside Traditional Hubs. The hearing examines the capital access gap between different geographic regions in America, how COVID-19 could redefine this gap, and what the private and public sectors are doing to address it.

***On Tuesday, December 15,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had conversations with SVAC and HVAC on the new V.A. Omnibus (HR 7501) and potential COVID package.

***On Tuesday, December 15,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the MilGears presentation to the George Bush Institute Higher Education task force. Also, VE&E attended a meeting of the Donald Southerland Group with Mick Auger.

***On Tuesday, December 15,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with several nonprofit organizations regarding homeless veterans' uptick. With the cold weather upon us, we must have the necessary resources to help those veterans in need.

***On Wednesday, December 16,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a House debate on HR 7501. Bill passed with the suspension of the rules and U.C. Major benefits to veterans education includes more oversight of approved programs, outreach for SAAs to App/OJT, etc., with HVAC personnel and VSOs.

***On Wednesday, December 16,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in a conference call with the National Education Association on Department of Education priorities. VE&E staff shared the American Legion's resolution on 90-10 and the desire to have a military affairs team at the Department of Education to coordinate data sharing between the Department of Defense and V.A. on veterans education.

***On Thursday, December 17,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the meeting of the George W. Bush Institute COVID 19 working group, which discussed the impacts of the pandemic on higher education. Discussion of next year's legislative agenda with NASAA leadership and A.L. leadership.

***On Thursday, December 17,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held a conference call with the Texas Veterans Commission planning committee. Discussed the upcoming local, state, national, and international career fair, February 9, 2021.

***On Friday, December 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the National Veteran Small Business Coalition. Regarding potential impact and strategies in engaging the new administration's appointees within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration to address some shared concerns regarding the government's access to medical supplies and pharmaceuticals and their ability to provide adequate care for veterans in the future.

***On Friday, December 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a meeting with NASAA/EducationCounsel/Lumina on RBS project rollout Discussions with HVAC staffers and congressional offices on moving HR 7501 out of the House and to the President's desk. Also, I had discussions with VSOs on the impact of new legislation.

***On Friday, December 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Chris Jones, Legislative Associate, Office of Congressman Gus Bilirakis (FL-12), to co-host a career fair in his district early in the next Congress.

## **GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS**

ACE: American Council on Education

ACP: American Corporate Partners, a veterans support organization

ATLAS: Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations, a V.A. telehealth initiative

BLS: Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics

C&P: V.A.'s Compensation and Pension exam

CAVC: Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

CSAAVE: California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education

DIMO: Defense Security Cooperation Agency/Defense Institute for Medical Operations

DOD: Department of Defense

DOL-VETS: Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services

EdCounsel: Higher education consulting firm

EIDL program. SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans

EIDL: Economic Injury Disaster Loan

GAO: Government Accountability Office

GPD: V.A.'s Grant and Per Diem Program for homeless veterans

GWB: George W. Bush Higher Education Policy Work Group

HEROES ACT of 2003: Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003. Grants the Secretary of Education the authority to waive requirements that impede military borrowers' access to critical repayment protection during the war, military operation, or national emergency.

HVAC: House Veterans Affairs Committee

MCAI: American Legion's Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative

MSLP: The Federal Reserve's Main Street Lending Program

MSO: Military Support Organization

NAICU: National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities

NASAA: National Association of State Approving Agencies. Responsible for approving school funding for GI Bill

NAVPA: National Association of Veterans Program Administrators

NCA: V.A.'s National Cemetery Administration  
NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act  
NLD: American Legion's National Legislative Division  
OPM: Office of Personnel Management  
PPP: Paycheck Protection Program  
RBS: Risk-Based Survey Model  
RPIC: Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge  
S2S: Service to School, a veterans organization  
SAA: State Approving Agency, responsible for approving school funding for GI Bill  
SBA: Small Business Administration  
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Medical  
SVA: Student Veterans of America, a veterans organization  
SVAC Senate Veterans Affairs Committee  
TAPS: Transition Assistance Program for Survivors, a nonprofit for Gold Star Families  
TEAM Act: Senate Bill 4393, to improve the provision of health care for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances from burn pits  
TFA: American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program  
USAID: United States Agency for International Development  
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture  
USERRA: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act  
VA&R: American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division  
VACO: Veterans Affairs Central Office  
VBA: V.A.'s Veterans Benefits Administration  
VE&E: Veterans Employment and Education Division  
VES: Veterans Education Success, a veterans organization  
VSO: Veterans Service Organization

### TOPIC 3a: TRACKING LEGISLATION

**GI Bill Repair Act of 2020:** To extend to black veterans of World War II, their surviving spouses, and direct descendants eligibility for specific housing and educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[Resolution No.: None on file](#)

**Status:** Currently on hold, has not been introduced

**Homeless Veteran Coronavirus Response Act:** The bill allows V.A. 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 V.A. to ensure veterans participating in V.A. homeless programs have access to V.A. telehealth services.

(Tracked by Teresa Lewis)

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

**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 V.A. Medical Centers to allow homeless veterans to shelter on V.A. 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 1615:** The American Legion supports legislation that would streamline and improve the verification process for veteran-owned small businesses and veteran-owned small businesses.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

**Status: Passed at the 2016 National Convention.**

**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](#)

**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 PPP loans' terms 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 V.A. 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)

[Resolution No.: Currently studying for appropriate resolution.](#)

**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.

**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](#)

**S. 3745, 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](#)

### TOPIC 3b: ACTION TAKEN ON LEGISLATION

**Building Credit Access for Veterans Act:** A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to establish an automated process for obtaining alternative credit rating information and other purposes.

(Tracked by Ariel)

**Status: Draft Bill / Letter of Support submitted on October 13**

**HR 8426: Protecting Apprenticeship Training for Veterans Act:** Currently, veterans must meet a minimum number of apprenticeship hours to receive their Housing Allowance. Due to pandemic work shortages, veterans in those programs now face a reduction or suspension in their stipend. This would allow veteran apprentices who were laid off to roll over excess hours from a previous month to meet the hourly requirement.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[Resolution: Resolution No. 25: Support and Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities for Servicemembers](#)

**Status: Letter of Support drafted**

**HR 4941: Veteran Employment Transition Act” or the “VET Act”** was sponsored by Representative Andy Kim. The bill's last action 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 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 in the area.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

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

**Status: Letter of Support submitted**

**HR 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 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 Ariel/Raymond)

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

**Status: Pending Letter of Support**

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

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

**Status: Letter of Support submitted**

**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)

**Status: 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, 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)

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

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

**HR 7111: Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020:** Require the Secretary of V.A. 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 students' and schools' payments through the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

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

**HR 7445:** To expand eligibility for home loans from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to individual members of the Armed Forces reserve components.

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

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

## TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

Northern Virginia Technology Council (NVTC), the NVTC Foundation's Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI), along with Monster and Military.com, Today announced CACI the winner of the fifth annual NVTC VEI Veteran Service Award. Monster and Military.com sponsor the NVTC VEI Veteran Service Award. It honors NVTC member companies who have demonstrated a superior level of engagement with the VEI and support for the Veteran community.

CACI, a Virginia Values Veterans (V3) certified company, was selected for exceptional engagement and outreach by its talent acquisition team to assist and support job-seeking veterans



and military spouses. CACI also provides career opportunities, resources, and training to its veteran employees with its Veterans Employee Resource Group and other veteran-focused programs.

NVTC selected CACI as this year's Veteran Service Award winner for its long-standing commitment to hiring and supporting military veterans, their families, and the military community. At CACI, 37 percent of employees are veterans, military spouses, or serving members of the National Guard or Reserves. Veterans and these military

community members add tremendous value to any organization. Their talent, integrity, a sense of purpose, self-discipline, initiative, and commitment make them particularly well-suited for CACI. In addition to CACI, Maximus and Noblis were named finalists for the award.



Launched in 2013, the NVTC Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) connects Veterans and military spouses to employment, internship, apprenticeship, and educational opportunities. It also supports NVTC member companies in their efforts to recruit, hire, train, and retain qualified Veteran and military spouse employees. V3 certified NVTC member companies had hired over 16,000 Vets since 2013.

"The VEI Veterans Service Award winner CACI, as well as our other two finalists, Maximus and Noblis, demonstrated the highest level of commitment to hiring Veterans, and they put that commitment into practice with programs and a deep engagement in our region. CACI's ability to hire over 2,000 military service members, spouses, and veterans during the pandemic is truly noteworthy. Effective Veteran hiring programs start from the top. John Mengucci's commitment to hiring veterans has been embraced by CACI's recruiters and hiring managers. It's evident in the results," said Steve Cooker, Executive Vice President of Monster Worldwide and Co-Chair of the NVTC Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force.

"CACI is honored and grateful to receive this year's NVTC Veterans Employment Initiative Veteran Service Award. Our company is committed to hiring, supporting, and retaining veterans, veterans with disabilities, military spouses, and current members of the National Guard and Reserves. These talented men and women enrich our company and contribute greatly to the expertise and technology we provide to our customers' national security missions." John Mengucci, CEO and President, CACI International Inc.

An independent panel of judges evaluated finalists for the award on their Veteran and military spouse hiring and retention, participation in the VEI, and support of other Veteran and military-related activities in the community. Previous winners of the VEI Veteran Service Award were The MITRE Corporation, PRISM Inc., IntelliDyne, LLC., and PenFed Credit Union.

While The American Legion is pleased to see that companies like CACI are continuing to hire veterans and spouses and retention. It is still concerning that many veterans are being denied positions that they would otherwise be qualified for if it were not for their expired security clearance. In a meeting with CACI, Lockheed Martin, and BAE Systems, one of its significant complaints is that veterans could not get their security clearance renewed two years before leaving the military. The American Legion will continue to monitor this issue.

## ***Resolution No. 311: Federal and State Incentive for Employees to use Veterans' Preference***

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

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

U.S. Housing and Urban Development's Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Joseph J. DeFelice announced the awarding of \$83,607 in rental assistance and housing vouchers to help ten veterans at risk of experiencing homelessness in Delaware.

The funding, part of the \$46 million in grants awarded nationwide, is provided through the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program, which combines rental assistance from HUD with case management and clinical services provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In Delaware, the Delaware State Housing Authority will receive \$39,332 in funding to support housing for five veterans, and the New Castle County Housing Authority will receive \$44,275 to help with housing for an additional five veterans. Both agencies will receive supportive services from the Wilmington VA Medical Center.



*Tiny Homes for Homeless Veterans*

A component of the Housing Choice Voucher program, the HUD-VASH vouchers being awarded enable homeless veterans to obtain affordable, decent housing in the private market. These vouchers are critical tools in helping communities effectively end homelessness among veterans. "Ending veteran homelessness has been a top priority for the Trump administration since Day One," said HUD Secretary Ben Carson. "We have an obligation to ensure that our nation's veterans, who have given so much for our country, are not left out on the streets. They fought for us. Now, it's time for us to fight for them."

Mr. DeFelice said the program is an excellent success in Delaware. "The HUD-VASH program is the driving force behind the decline in veteran homelessness, and in Delaware, one of only three states in the nation to have effectively ended veteran homelessness, it is a priority for those championing the First State's efforts," he said. "During this pandemic, it is critical that we provide a safety net for our most vulnerable populations — especially those who have honorably served our nation." Vincent Kane, director of the Wilmington VAMC, concurred.

"Wilmington VA is pleased to partner with the community and HUD and expands housing and services for our most vulnerable veterans," he added. "Now, more than ever, during this pandemic, we view supportive housing as essential to our mission of delivering safe and exceptional health care."

In the HUD-VASH program, V.A. medical centers assess veterans experiencing homelessness before referring them to local housing agencies for these vouchers. Decisions are based on various factors — most importantly, the duration of homelessness, and the need for longer-term, more intensive support in obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. The HUD-VASH program

includes the voucher's rental assistance and the comprehensive case management that VAMC staff offers.

Veterans participating in the HUD-VASH program rent privately owned housing and generally contribute no more than 30% of their income toward rent. The VA offers eligible homeless veterans clinical and supportive services through its medical centers across the U.S., Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

**Resolution No. 332: Support Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (V.A.) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program**

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

**TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS**

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

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

Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 9,143, a decrease of 2,011 from the prior week.

The Department of Georgia participated in a career fair on December 10<sup>th</sup>, having 101 stop by their booth, and engaging with 16 job seekers.



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT of TEXAS

**VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR**

Employment Opportunities are Waiting for You. Register Now and Connect with Local and Nationwide Employers Looking to Hire.

Tuesday, February 9, 2021 ★ 10:00am-2:00pm (Central Time)



Job Seeker Registration

Employer Registration

*The Mission of The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is to take actions that affect veterans' economic well-being, 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's Veterans Employment and Education Division continues to track the progress of a new COVID-19 relief package. Bilateral talks continue this week over the new nearly \$1 trillion relief package, including a second draw on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and direct payments. Significant for American Legion Posts and Departments have taken advantage of the PPP in the past or those interested in applying for the first time after the August deadline.



*Lawmakers Near Covid-19 Relief Deal With  
Second Round of Stimulus Checks*

Congressional negotiators must pass an almost \$1 trillion COVID-19 economic relief package and struggle through a handful of remaining snags this week. The holdups mean a weekend session now appears virtually certain, along with a stopgap spend at midnight Friday.

All sides appeared hopeful that the wrangling wouldn't derail the legislation from becoming law. The central elements of a hard-fought compromise appeared in place: more than \$300 billion in aid to businesses; a \$300-per-week bonus federal jobless benefit and renewal of soon-to-expire state benefits; \$600 direct payments to individuals; vaccine distribution funds and money for renters, schools, the Postal Service and people needing food aid.

The hang-ups involve GOP conservatives' effort to curb emergency lending programs by the Treasury Department and Federal Reserve. Democratic demand to eliminate local government matching requirements for COVID-related disaster grants, and numerous smaller disagreements over non-pandemic add-ons, lawmakers and aides said.

The delays aren't unusual for legislation of this size and importance, but lawmakers are eager to leave Washington for the holidays and get antsy.

Now, Republicans are motivated to extend business subsidies and some jobless benefits and provide money for schools and vaccines. Democrats have focused on more significant economic stimulus measures and more help for those struggling economically during the pandemic. The urgency was underscored Thursday by the weekly unemployment numbers, which revealed that 885,000 people applied for jobless benefits last week, the highest weekly total since September.

The details were still being worked out, but the measure includes a second round of "paycheck protection" payments, especially for hard-hit businesses. \$25 billion to help struggling renters with their payments, \$45 billion for airlines and transit systems, a temporary 15% or so increase in food stamp benefits, additional farm subsidies, and a \$10 billion bailout for the Postal Service.



The emerging package would combine the \$900 billion in COVID-19 relief with a \$1.4 trillion government-wide funding bill. Then numerous unrelated add-ons are catching a ride, known as “ash and trash” in appropriations panel shorthand.

One leading candidate is an almost 400-page water resources bill that targets \$10 billion for 46 Army Corps of Engineers flood control, environmental, and coastal protection projects. Another potential addition would extend a batch of soon-to-expire tax breaks, including one for craft brewers, wineries, and distillers.

The end-of-session rush also promises relief for victims of shockingly steep surprise medical bills, a phenomenon that often occurs when providers drop out of insurance company networks.

Earlier this week, a key breakthrough occurred when Democrats agreed to drop their much-sought \$160 billion state and local government aid package. In exchange for McConnell abandoning a key priority of his own — a liability shield for businesses and other institutions like universities fearing COVID-19 lawsuits.

The addition of the \$600 direct payments came after recent endorsements from both President Donald Trump and progressives like Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., along with ambitious GOP Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri. The idea isn't trendy in other corners since it's incredibly costly and would give money to millions of people who may not need it. Still, it has enormous political appeal and proved difficult to stop.

*[Reported by Davy Leghorn]*

## TOPIC 8: EDUCATION

A massive 337-page veterans bill, H.R. 7105, was approved by Congress on Wednesday, which increases legal protections for GI Bill benefits and aims to further scrutinize schools with a history of taking advantage of beneficiaries.



*For-Profit Schools Under Fire For Targeting Veterans*

A key provision would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to analyze whether schools facing legal or punitive actions from the government should be cut off from GI Bill money, a critical protection clause that has been lobbied for by advocates for more than a decade.

Central to the bill was adjustments to Title 38 Section 3696, which prohibits schools from participating in the GI Bill if they utilize “advertising, sales or enrollment practices of any type which are erroneous, deceptive, or

misleading either by the actual statement, omission or intimation.”

In 2018, the V.A. inspector general warned the Department could waste \$2.3 billion in payments to “ineligible colleges” during the next five academic years. In the bulk of cases, the payments would go to for-profit universities or bogus schools.

Veterans have long been the targets of aggressive recruiting by for-profit colleges, which are required to get at least 10% of their revenues outside of federal student loans or grants. The so-called “90/10 loophole” allows veterans’ benefits to count toward that 10%.

Because of this loophole, the for-profit school industry has drawn intense scrutiny among lawmakers and veteran advocates for conducting questionable business practices to recruit veterans. One for-profit school, the University of Phoenix, was required to refund \$50 million and cancel another \$141 million in debt for GI Bill recipients' marketing practices.

The new bill also includes a provision forbidding schools from deceptive marketing practices such as lying about accreditation, exaggerating job placements, and fabricating endorsements.

In October, the California trucking school owner was sentenced to four years in prison after admitting to recruiting veterans to take classes paid by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. In many cases, the students never attended class and sought to pocket some of the GI Bill money for themselves. According to U.S. prosecutors, the owner, Emmitt Marshall, was ordered to pay \$4.1 million in restitution.

The bill also contains a measure that restores education benefits to students whose school was closed or later disapproved by the V.A. as long as they transferred fewer than 12 credits.

That provision follows a 2016 incident in which all ITT Technical Institute schools suddenly shut down, and thousands of veterans who attended them were out of luck with the benefits they used to go to school there.

The bill also protects students from V.A. debt collection for overpaid tuition. Previously, the V.A. could send a bill to students or turn them over to collection officials for any overpayments. The bill passed Wednesday moves the burden to the school to pay back the V.A.

In 2014, a report from the Government Accountability Office found one in four veteran beneficiaries across 6,000 schools were impacted by overpayments that totaled \$416 million. According to the GAO, this usually occurred because the V.A. pays the school based on classes that the students have scheduled at the start of the semester but doesn’t consider when students drop courses or withdraw from the school. In some cases, overpayments occurred due to processing errors by the school or the V.A. The bill allows students to reverify their course load each month.

Other education provisions include allowing students to withdraw from school due to the coronavirus pandemic without losing their benefits and permitting foster children as dependents eligible for GI Bill benefits. Another change directs the V.A. to limit GI Bill benefits for veterans attending law school to accredited institutions.

Following the Senate’s approval last week, the House passed the bill Wednesday without any objections. It now heads to President Donald Trump’s desk for his signature.

The bill is named for Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., who didn’t seek reelection this year, and Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., who resigned from the Senate the end of 2019. Both men were leaders on their chamber’s veterans affairs committee.

The bill's education provisions were initially part of H.R. 4625, the “Protect the GI Bill Act” introduced in late 2019. This bill was part of our National Commander’s 2020 Legislative Agenda



introduced by National Commander Bill Oxford. With only two weeks left in 2020, Congress was able to meet our request.

*[Reported by John Kamin]*

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director**  
**Veterans Employment & Education Division**  
**202.861.2700 ext. 2989**  
**Week Ending: 12/18/2020**