

**NATIONAL VETERANS
EMPLOYMENT
& EDUCATION
REPORT**

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

The U.S. shed 140,000 jobs in December as a resurgence of the virus hit restaurants, ending seven months of job growth and weakening the economy.

The Labor Department report Friday showed the jobs market had deteriorated this winter as cold weather, rising covid infections, and new restrictions on businesses deal a setback to the recovery from the pandemic.

In one positive sign, job growth in November was more substantial than previously estimated. The agency said the economy added 336,000 jobs that month instead of the initially reported 245,000.



Meanwhile, the Department also said that the record surge in the unemployment rate last spring due to the pandemic was higher than previously reported. The jobless rate hit 14.8% in April, the highest on record, instead of the previously reported 14.7%.

The December decline was driven by a sharp decline in jobs in the leisure and hospitality industries, which lost 498,000 jobs. Retail businesses added 121,000 while manufacturing and construction operations also posted increases that helped offset the overall decline.

Friday's report showed that 2020 was the worst year of job loss on records that began in 1939. Last year's job loss of 9.4 million eclipsed the 5 million jobs lost in 2009, during the recession caused by the housing crash.

The pandemic and related restrictions led to 22 million job losses in March and April; 12 million have been recovered since then.

After the sharp contraction in March and April, the labor market quickly snapped back to life, adding a total of 9.3 million jobs over the next three months. Since then, job growth has eased each month.

Economists think growth will pick up again later this year. "It's reasonably hopeful this will be a one-off rough patch, and we'll recover from there," Pooja Sriram, U.S. economist at Barclays, said. At least three main factors are behind the slowdown. A resurgence in coronavirus infections has caused states and cities to impose new restrictions on businesses, such as earlier curfews and business closures, and caused some consumers to stay indoors. The onset of cold weather has limited businesses' ability, particularly restaurants, to continue to host patrons outdoors. And earlier efforts by Congress and states to aid businesses—such as stimulus checks and additional unemployment compensation—faded before a new aid package was signed into law at the end of December.

The silver lining is that economists believe the lull will be temporary. The process of distributing vaccines is underway. The roughly \$900 billion aid plan provides stimulus checks of up to \$600 for most families, a \$300-per-week boost in unemployment benefits for laid-off workers, and a new round of aid for businesses. President-elect Joe Biden, a Democrat who takes office on January 20, has said he wants to provide more relief for households. His party will control both chambers of Congress after the Senate elections in Georgia. As households receive that money, many could boost spending, which would prompt businesses to hire workers to meet the demand.

Last month's job losses highlight the importance of The American Legion to be proactive. The need for more virtual workshops and career fairs is essential to ensure that transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and spouses are prepared to meet tomorrow's challenges.

[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	
	Dec 2019	Dec 2020	Dec 2019	Dec 2020	Dec 2019	Dec 2020
Unemployed	264	462	241	420	22	42
Unemployment rate	2.8	5.3	3.0	5.5	1.9	3.7

The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (December 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 5.1 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 5.0 percent (down from 5.7 percent in November).

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 CALL

On Tuesday, January 5, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Damian Sullivan, Director of Veterans Program, and Katherine Wray, veterans coordinator with First Group Corporation. We discussed possible collaboration opportunities to hire veterans across the nation.

On Wednesday, January 6, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division conducted a conference call with the Friday marketing team over improvements to its Military Credentialing

Advancement Initiative Report outreach plan. Several slide decks were developed based on project workstreams that are designed for external presentation.

On Wednesday, January 6, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division conducted a conference call with Teamsters' International Brotherhood to discuss advocacy plans for 2021, including veterans apprenticeship bills.

On Thursday, January 7, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a planning call with the Department of Texas, Texas, Veterans/Workforce Commission regarding the upcoming virtual career fair on February 9.

On Friday, January 8, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held a call with SOLID Design to discuss its MCAI Report's final draft. The report is now over 76 pages and is in its last Veterans Employment & Education Division review phase.

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

The jobless rate among U.S. veterans improved in December even as national employment numbers showed discouraging signs of sluggishness amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

According to estimates released Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate among all American veterans fell to 5.3 percent in December. The number was 6.3 percent in November and had been as high as 11.7 percent last spring when widespread layoffs and furloughs related to virus precautions severely hurt U.S. businesses.

The unemployment rate among veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan War era showed an even more significant improvement, decreasing from 6.9 percent in November to 5.1 percent in December. Veterans of the first Gulf War era saw their unemployment rate drop to 4.4 percent.



Virtual workshops for transitioning servicemembers and veterans

The positive veteran's news comes as the American economy lost about 140,000 jobs last month, the first overall decline for the nation since April. The national unemployment rate now sits at 6.7 percent.

In a statement, BLS officials blamed the job losses on "the recent increase in coronavirus cases and efforts to contain the pandemic."

The virus has infected more than 21.2 million Americans in the last ten months, and more than 360,000 have died from complications related to it. Many of those deaths and cases have come in just the last few months, as nearly every state in the country has seen dramatic spikes due to holiday travel and relaxed restrictions in public areas.

While it is good to see that veterans' unemployment was slightly down from previous months, it is still imperative that every effort is made to ensure that veterans have access to resources. The American Legion will continue to work with all departments to offer virtual workshops and career fairs.

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

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The American Legion is pleased to see that other organizations are making every effort to ensure that resources are available for veterans at risk of becoming homeless or currently homeless. Over this week, staff assisted two veterans with issues that forced them into homeless shelters (Florida and Arkansas.) In Florida, a veteran reached out to The American Legion seeking assistance, staying with friends and families throughout the entire month of December. Staff was able to connect the veteran with resources in the area that could get him into a shelter. On a different occasion, staff received a call from a good samaritan out of Arkansas regarding a homeless veteran. The veterans had been homeless for some time. The individual didn't want to leave the veteran out in the cold, so he researched the internet, and The American Legion was one of the first search results.



Karen is an Army veteran living in her car with two young children after losing her job as a result of the covid pandemic

The individual didn't want to leave the veteran out in the cold, so he researched the internet, and The American Legion was one of the first search results.

Due to the drop in temperature, I told the individual that the best thing to do was to take the veteran to the nearest Veterans Hospital and let them know that he is a homeless veteran.

With the increase in covid cases and companies shutting their doors, we must recognize organizations making every effort to prevent veteran homelessness. The American Legion has seen an uptick in veteran homeless families. We see more of our veterans and their families living in their cars. There are several organizations out there that assist homeless families; It is recommended that all departments submit an organization in their state for the "Michael Guty" Homeless Outreach Award.

[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 American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission's Mission 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.



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

Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 7: EDUCATION

After a lengthy wait, President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed into law a sweeping veterans policy measure that includes new protections for women veterans, student veterans, and individuals struggling with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The measure was approved by Congress in mid-December but wasn't delivered to the White House until Christmas Eve due to the size of the bill. As the days counted down, American Legion staff grew increasingly concerned that the bill would face a "pocket-veto," with President Trump either unwilling or unable due to time to sign the bill, which would result in its elimination. Ultimately President Trump signed the measure into law Monday afternoon, just a few hours before the deadline to finalize the bill.

White House officials did not explain the delay, which had caused concern among some other veterans advocates. The measure is more than 337-pages long, and larger bills typically take more time for review before final action by the president.

In a statement, Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jerry Moran, R-Kan., praised the legislation as a chance to "provide support for every corner of our veteran community."



President signs into law policy measures to protect women veterans, students, and veterans struggling from the covid pandemic.

"I applaud President Trump for signing this important legislation into law to invest in the GI Bill and provide economic opportunities for veterans," he said. "Equally as important, this bill improves care and reduces barriers for women veterans, so they can have greater access to the benefits they have earned and expands resources for veterans hardest hit by this pandemic, whether that be financial hardship or limited access to community resources for homeless veterans."

Trump's signature makes the measure — named for former Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson and former House committee Chairman Phil Roe — likely one of the last bills to become law under his term in office.

But the wide-ranging effects of it could be felt for years to come. Several veterans' education bills — including the Protect the GI Bill Act and the Pandemic Assistance for Student Veterans Act — were included in the final measure.

The latter deals with the effects of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic on student veterans. It extends emergency authorities for V.A. to ensure that changes in class schedules and locations related to the coronavirus outbreak do not reduce payouts for any veterans currently receiving GI Bill benefits.

It would also ensure that students will not lose benefits or eligibility if their schools close or suspend classes due to coronavirus concerns. Students who withdraw from a school for pandemic-related reasons can also retain their remaining months of GI Bill eligibility.

And the measure waives time limits for Montgomery GI Bill and Veteran Readiness and Employment benefits to ensure they do not lapse while pandemic restrictions remain in place. The Protect the GI Bill Act focuses on deceptive advertising practices aimed at student veterans. It would penalize schools for violating advertising rules and creating an eligibility review for schools facing financial penalties or potential closures.

Students whose schools are closed or lose eligibility to receive federal funding could see their GI Bill benefits fully restored under the measure to keep education officials' mistakes from punishing student veterans.

The measure would also wholly phase out the Montgomery GI Bill program by 2030. That benefit has mostly been overtaken by the more generous post-9/11 GI Bill in recent years. Lawmakers included several provisions related to job retraining programs. One would triple the VET TEC Program's available funding, aimed at helping transitioning service members gain technology skills, from \$15 million annually to \$45 million.

Another initiative would create new V.A. grants for organizations that specialize in providing transition services for troops or spouses. Those services include resume assistance, interview training, job recruitment work, and other related services. That program will be coordinated with the Department of Labor.

Labor officials will also work with V.A. and Defense Department leaders on a comprehensive new study examining the military's Transition Assistance Program to find potential challenges and improvements.

The measure provides new financial assistance programs for homeless veterans, including new payouts to individuals dealing with housing support related to pandemic complications. And it would create a new V.A. Advisory Committee on Tribal and Indian Affairs to advise department leaders on matters relating to Native American veterans.

For surviving spouses receiving dependency indemnity compensation benefits, the new bill will lower the age that those individuals can remarry without incurring penalties from 57 to 55.

Most of the provisions in the legislation will be implemented in the coming months. Veterans groups have praised the measure as provisioning essential reforms for the community and closing several gaps in medical care and benefits for veterans.

Multiple American Legion Resolutions supported advocacy and passage of this bill, notably Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education.

[Reported by John Kamin]

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
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