

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

U.S. employers added 49,000 jobs last month, returning growth to the labor market after a one-month dip, while the unemployment rate fell to 6.3%. The small January gain came after payrolls fell steeply in December, the first decline since the coronavirus pandemic triggered business shutdowns last spring. Jobs grew strongly in business and professional services, the Labor Department said in its January report on U.S. employment. Many sectors,



though, lost jobs last month. The leisure and hospitality sector lost 61,000 jobs in January, following a steep decline of 536,000 in December. Retailers, health-care companies, and warehouses cut jobs in January. Two factors drove the unemployment rate decline in January. More people dropped out of the labor force—meaning they weren't actively looking for a job and may have grown frustrated with their employment prospects. The number of people reporting themselves as employed increased, consistent with a generally upward trend in hiring since last spring.

The Labor Department noted that figures from the household survey used to calculate the unemployment rate aren't directly comparable from December to January due to its annual update in population controls. The broader economic recovery stalled significantly this winter. Unemployment claims, a proxy for layoffs, have remained above pre-pandemic levels. Consumers cut back on spending, as some were wary of leaving their homes as virus cases surged. Others wanted to shop and dine out but had limited options. Late last year, many states and local governments mandated that businesses like restaurants close or reduce operations to combat rising numbers of virus cases. Some places have recently loosened those restrictions. Positive areas include manufacturing, with companies reporting increased demand for goods and new hiring, and housing, where low-interest rates and the pandemic have boosted demand. Economists see the winter lull as temporary. They expect growth to pick up later this year as more people get vaccinated and business restrictions ease. Many economists also say the economy could benefit from further government stimulus. Congress is considering as much as \$1.9 trillion in additional financial aid to help households and businesses. The proposal would bolster unemployment aid, provide funds for vaccine distribution and send \$1,400 checks to many Americans.

Employment at restaurants and bars has been particularly hard hit this winter and drove overall payrolls down in December. Warmer temperatures will likely help lift the industry in the coming months. "When the sun comes out down here, and we can get some people out on some patios, we're going to do a lot better," said Chris Hall, operating partner for an Atlanta-area restaurant group that includes a deli, a bar, a contemporary American restaurant, and a pizza place. Mr. Hall said his restaurants rehired workers after reopening from temporary closures last spring, but overall staffing levels have hovered near 75% of pre-coronavirus levels since the summer. "This winter

has gotten scary,” he said. The restaurants’ patios are closed, and customers remain cautious about dining out amid high virus counts, Mr. Hall said. He recently sent out a message to a group of “die-hard” customers, encouraging them to support the business during a severe winter for sales. A strong community of customers has helped Mr. Hall’s restaurants survive the pandemic so far, he added.

Some industries, particularly ones that build and deliver goods, have fared well in recent months. Friday’s report will reveal whether manufacturers, home builders, and warehouses continued to churn out jobs.

Consumers have been ramping up items to spruce up their homes, aiding growth at United Solutions Inc. The 665-person manufacturer produces trash and recycling bins, plastic storage, and paint buckets out of Massachusetts and Mississippi plants. It hired 56 workers in January and is seeking to add 100 more employees to its warehouse and factory floors to meet customer demand, said David Reilly, chief executive of the manufacturer. “We’re just trying everywhere to find the right people,” Mr. Reilly said. “It’s a challenge.” The company raised starting wages for factory workers by \$2 over the past six months to \$14 an hour to attract and retain workers. It is airing job ads on the radio and participating in virtual job fairs. The company is also converting many temporary workers—formerly the bulk of its workforce—to permanent positions. Companies might struggle to find workers in part because the share of people seeking work remains depressed. The labor-force participation rate was 61.5% in December, down from 63.3% in February, before the virus hit. Some people aren’t looking for work out of fear of contracting the virus. Others are burdened by increased child-care responsibilities or discouraged by limited job opportunities.

[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	
	Jan 2020	Jan 2021	Jan 2020	Jan 2021	Jan 2020	Jan 2021
Unemployed	319	500	282	461	36	38
Unemployment rate	3.5	5.5	3.5	5.8	3.2	3.3

The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (January 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 6.3 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 3.8 percent (down from 5.0 percent in November).

In December 2020, the veteran unemployment rate was 5.4%, down from 6.3% last month. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.7% in December..

TOPIC 2: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS

On Tuesday, February 2, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a “Dress for Success” webinar. The focus was to ensure that female veterans returning to the workforce provided the necessary tools and resources for a seamless transition.

On Tuesday, February 2, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a conference call with the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees' four corners to discuss 2021 priorities. The committee staffers shared that they are currently embedded in closed-door budget reconciliation negotiations but expect to resume normal order in March.

On Wednesday, February 3, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in a virtual roundtable hosted by the Department of Labor, Veterans Employment & Training Services (DOL-VETS). The focus was on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). With everything being virtual, they have received complaints that the virtual platform is not providing them with all the tools needed for transitioning out of the military. The American Legion gave several recommendations to help improve the program, especially in these challenging times.

On Wednesday, February 3, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Tyra Nelson, The American Legion Auxiliary, Director, Washington D.C. Office. We discussed their participation in the upcoming career fair (Virtual).

On Thursday, February 4, 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 Thursday, February 4, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Spoke with Australian members; we discussed the upcoming career fair and their participation. They have companies that are looking to hire veterans.

On Thursday, February 4, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division was invited by the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) to participate in a virtual panel discussion on education and workforce development efforts for Armed Services Members and Veterans. Other panelists included Elizabeth Belcaster, Senior Advisor Workforce Development and Policy for Military Licencing and Credentialing Advancements and, Dr. Joseph Wescott, National Association of State Approving Agencies Education Consultant. Both Joe and Elizabeth are on contract with The American Legion as an education consultant. Highlights from the decision included the American Legions Licensing and Credentialing Program, the GI Bill, and legislation that the VE&E division is tracking, such as, H.R. 399 Pre-Apprenticeships to Hardhats Act and H.R. 433 Veterans Entry to Apprenticeship Act.

On Thursday, February 4, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a virtual session regarding Broadband Expansion and Rural Economic Development. The discussion centered on the administration plan for improving energy and infrastructure, which coincides with furthering our nation's economic development and improving internet connectivity. Access to broadband in rural areas is a relevant and heavily considered strategy to spur economic development across the United States. With high-speed broadband internet in rural areas, the benefits include virtual medical appointments and elderly patients who can't drive to see a physician. Education, currently 12 million students in remote and rural areas can't access the

internet at home. During this pandemic, businesses in rural areas had no viable option to remain open due to insufficient or non-existent internet options. Presently 6 million veterans live in rural areas across the country—many live below the poverty line or underemployed. The VE&E division is currently preparing a Broadband resolution to be considered during the Washington Conference's Commission Meetings.

On Friday, February 5, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a planning call with the Department of Labor, discussing a joint meeting on February 10. The meeting will unveil new programs from the Maritime Training Institute, Helmets to Hardhats, the AFL-CIO, and the Legion's new MCAI Report.

On Friday, February 5, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a call with Student Veterans of America regarding their upcoming virtual National Conference on February 18. Student Veterans of America have comped the Legion virtual booth space and feature our National Commander as a VIP during their virtual banquet.

On Friday, February 5, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in the monthly VSO call with DOL-VETS. It was more of a "Meet and Greet" with the new Acting Assistant Secretary, DOL-VETS, and the vision moving forward during the Biden administration.

On Friday, February 5, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Participated in a call with the Director of National Security, Rhonda Powell, and Botswana's Embassy. The discussion focused on the upcoming career fair.

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 [Stephen Harger](#))

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

H.R.492 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to make permanent the Secretary of Veterans Affairs's authority to provide financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing.

(Tracked by Stephen Harger)

[Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program](#)

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 Stephen Harger)

[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 John Kamin)

[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 Stephen Harger)

[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 John Kamin)

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.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[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 other purposes.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

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.

(Tracked by Stephen Harger)

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

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

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

Earnings for Employed Veterans by Occupation

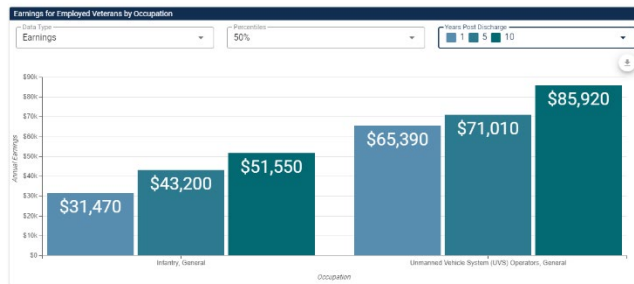
The U.S. Census Bureau's new experimental Veteran Employment Outcomes (VEO) provides information on how Army veterans fare in the labor market one, five, and ten years after discharge. These data highlight labor market outcomes for army veterans by military occupation, rank, demographics (age, sex, race, ethnicity, education), industry, and geography of employment.

Military occupation is a vital forecaster of earnings outcomes in the labor market. Among the VEO findings:

Veterans who worked in electrical equipment repair and intelligence-gathering operations in the military have higher earnings when they leave.

The federal government is consistently one of the better-paying employers of veterans. A year after being discharged, the highest-paid veterans were employed in mining and utility industries.

These statistics from the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics are generated by linking veteran records from the U.S. Army to national administrative data on jobs. VEO provides data on about 650,000 soldiers enlisted in the Army who completed their initial service term and were discharged between 2000 and 2015.



VEO currently tracks only Army veterans, but these statistics could potentially be expanded to other service branches.

The VEO Explorer interactive tool allows you to explore the data previously reported in an America Counts story.

Veterans Unemployment:



The unemployment rate for veterans worsened slightly in January — especially for younger veterans — even as the national rate continued to improve after last year's historic job market upheaval.

According to estimates released Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the veterans' unemployment rate rose from 5.3 percent in December to 5.5 percent in January. That was the second time in the last four

months the figure has increased, even as other sectors of the U.S. economy show consistent signs of recovery.

Veterans from the recent wars saw their unemployment rate rise even higher, from 5.1 percent in December to 6.3 percent in January.

Economic experts have cautioned against relying too much on a single month's employment data to assess the country's job situation, especially in the winter, when seasonal employment opportunities can lead to larger swings in monthly figures.

Still, veterans' stepback is noteworthy because it ran counter to the national unemployment rate, which fell from 6.7 percent in December to 6.3 percent in January.

Veterans employment rates have routinely outpaced the general public in recent years. Only once in the last four years has the general population's unemployment rate been lower than the overall veterans' figure.

All of the job estimates are close to double what they were in January 2020, before the global coronavirus pandemic forced the temporary and permanent closing of businesses across the country. BLS officials said they saw significant job gains in January among companies in technical consulting services, education work, and local government posts. However, that positive news was offset by continued job losses in the hospitality and recreation industry — a significant employer of veterans and the foodservice industry.

The January jobs report covers the final few weeks of President Donald Trump's term in office and the first few days of President Joe Biden's new administration.

Resolution No. 542: National Economic Commission Veterans Employment Policy Origin: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Home First Services of Santa Clara County works with V.A.'s Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program to provide rapid re-housing and homeless prevention assistance to eligible Veterans and their families. They are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Here is how it helped Navy Veteran Erik Anderson find permanent housing.

At the beginning of 2020, Anderson was living in Hawaii. He was just weeks away from a Navy honorable discharge and was thinking about his next steps in life. As he considered his options, he decided he wanted to be closer to his three-year-old son in California, so he set his sails on moving to Santa Clara County. Anderson had no family or friends in the area who could help him find a place to live, so he began calling organizations that serve Veterans in the Santa Clara County area, but to no avail.



One organization finally called him back – HomeFirst. Upon landing in Santa Clara from Hawaii, Anderson was pleasantly surprised to find a hotel room waiting for him. “Our mission is supplying the Veteran with the services and tools they need and deserve to be successful,” said David Muir, a case manager at HomeFirst. “That’s one of the many pleasures of the job.”

Searching for a home, Anderson spent a little over two months in the hotel while working with one of HomeFirst’s housing specialists to find a permanent residence. He also began looking into options for higher education. “The housing process was fairly simple. They explained to me the specific steps being taken and how long I should expect to stay in the hotel,” said Anderson. “They treat you like you are a part of their family; it’s like a second family.”

After those two months, Anderson found a permanent residence that he could finally call home. He continues to receive support from his former case manager, Muir, who pushed him to go to school. He is now attending a local community college, working toward an Associate of Arts degree in Ecology, Conservation, and Biology, hoping to transfer to a university to obtain his bachelor’s degree.

“I now have a sense of safety and can let my worries dissipate,” said Anderson about his current living situation. “Every day, I can go home and have my son run around. It’s very wholesome – I’m just so happy.”

In 2020, V.A. awarded nearly \$400 million in grants under SSVF to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives, which then provide very low-income Veteran families with a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability for Veteran families across the nation. These grants help Veterans access essential services and resources that lead to secure permanent housing. The SSVF program also allows Veterans who previously lacked stable housing to focus on their health, increase their skill levels, and attend to other issues that may be keeping them from realizing their full potential. The SSVF Program is currently in a discretionary status and has the possibility of losing funding every year. This program is essential to our nation’s heroes and their families in lending them assistance when they are in the most need. The story provided above shows the positive and positively life-changing effects this program has on our veterans' lives. The American Legion needs to fight to make this program permanently funded and available to all of those who served our great country.

Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program

[Reported by Stephen Harger]

TOPIC 6: EDUCATION

Carrie Wofford, the Executive Director of Veterans Education Success, published a stirring op-ed in the Stars and Stripes this past week. This position echoes American Legion Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes by Closing 90-10 Loophole. It is shared below in entirety:

“As Denis McDonough prepares to take the helm as the new secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, he must address many difficult challenges. But there’s one easy issue — stopping the fleecing of America’s veterans by predatory for-profit colleges. It’s not just a policy issue; it’s a Biden family issue.

President Joe Biden's late son, Beau, was a national leader in standing up for veterans scammed by for-profit colleges targeting the GI Bill. As Delaware attorney general, he led a successful, multistate action in 2012 to give V.A. control over a for-profit college website, GIBill.com, that had tricked tens of thousands of veterans out of their GI Bill benefits. A year later, Biden partnered with Vice President Kamala Harris (then California attorney general) to successfully sue Corinthian. This for-profit college chain conned tens of thousands of veterans and servicemembers, even posing their salesmen as "Pentagon advisers."



Flash forward to 2020: The Trump administration decimated much of the progress Biden and Harris started. Recently the GIBill.com domain went back to private ownership after V.A. failed to renew it, undoing Biden's hard work. And last summer, the Trump administration overruled V.A. career civil servants who tried to follow the law and stop GI Bill funds' flow to deceptive colleges.

Predatory colleges soak up a highly disproportionate share of the GI Bill and military tuition assistance. They are responsible for a considerable portion of America's student loan default problem, leaving students jobless or with subpar earnings. They single out veterans and servicemembers for aggressive and deceptive recruiting to gain access to the "military gravy train," as one for-profit college whistleblower testified before Congress. Much of this is incentivized by a loophole in the Higher Education Act (the "90/10 loophole") that allows for-profit colleges to use GI Bill funds to skirt the cap on federal funds the schools otherwise face, leading some for-profit schools to view veterans as "nothing more than dollar signs in uniform."

McDonough can start by kicking deceptive colleges out of the GI Bill, as required by law (recently strengthened by a unanimous Congress). This is something the nation's leading veterans and military service organizations called for in 2019 and 2016, as did V.A.'s Inspector General.

Countering deceptive marketing by predatory colleges will require McDonough to help veterans recognize and avoid fraud, including by improving V.A.'s college search tool with a "risk-index," caution flags, consumer protection warnings, student outcome metrics, and complaints, and by making the tool searchable. McDonough also needs to educate veterans about what a "Master Promissory Note" is because too many veterans wind up with student loans they didn't understand. He should also make it easier for student veterans to file complaints and should take those complaints seriously.

McDonough can work with his counterpart, education secretary nominee Miguel Carbona, to reinstate loan forgiveness for defrauded students (many of whom are veterans) and release the data on schools skirting the 90/10 rule, something that hasn't been reported since 2016.

Perhaps most important, McDonough should finish the work Beau Biden started by shutting down abusive websites and holding schools accountable for deceptive practices by the websites they hide behind. He must immediately reclaim the GIBill.Com domain to honor Biden's legacy and should trademark terms that are ripe for abuse, like "Yellow Ribbon" (and help the Defense Department trademark "Army" and "Navy") especially in light of the pernicious websites Army.com and

NavyEnlist.com – for-profit college fronts – that the Federal Trade Commission recently shut down for tricking patriotic Americans. Those websites are just the tip of the iceberg.

In light of the many complicated issues facing McDonough at V.A., one of his easiest decisions should be to stop the fleecing of America’s military heroes.”


[Reported by John Kamin]



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

TOPIC 7: 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 8,613, a decrease of 930 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.

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 2/5/2021