

## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

#### BIDEN DETAILS \$2 TRILLION PLAN TO REBUILD INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESHAPE THE ECONOMY

The president will begin selling his proposal on Wednesday, saying it would fix 20,000 miles of roads and 10,000 bridges, while also addressing climate change and racial inequities and raising corporate taxes.

President [Biden](#) will unveil an infrastructure plan on Wednesday whose \$2 trillion price tag would translate into 20,000 miles of rebuilt roads, repairs to the 10 most economically important bridges in the country, the elimination of lead pipes and service lines from the nation's water supplies and a long list of other projects intended to create millions of jobs in the short run and strengthen American competitiveness in the long run.



*Amtrak workers repairing a partially flooded train track bed in Weehawken, N.J.*

Biden administration officials said the proposal, which they detailed in a 25-page briefing paper and which Mr. Biden will discuss in an afternoon speech in Pittsburgh, would also accelerate the fight against climate change by hastening the shift to new, cleaner energy sources, and would help promote racial equity in the economy.

The [spending in the plan](#) would take place over eight years, officials said. Unlike the economic stimulus passed under President Barack Obama in 2009, when Mr. Biden was vice president, officials will not in every case prioritize so-called shovel-ready projects that could quickly bolster growth.

But even spread over years, the scale of the proposal underscores how fully Mr. Biden has embraced the opportunity to use federal spending to address longstanding social and economic challenges in a way not seen in half a century. Officials said that, if approved, the spending in the plan would [end decades of stagnation in federal investment](#) in research and [infrastructure](#) — and would return government investment in those areas, as a share of the economy, to its highest levels since the 1960s.

The proposal is the first half of what will be a two-step release of the president's ambitious agenda to overhaul the economy and remake American capitalism, which could carry a total cost of as much as \$4 trillion over the course of a decade. Mr. Biden's administration has named it the "American Jobs Plan," echoing the \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill that Mr. Biden [signed into law this month](#), the "American Rescue Plan."

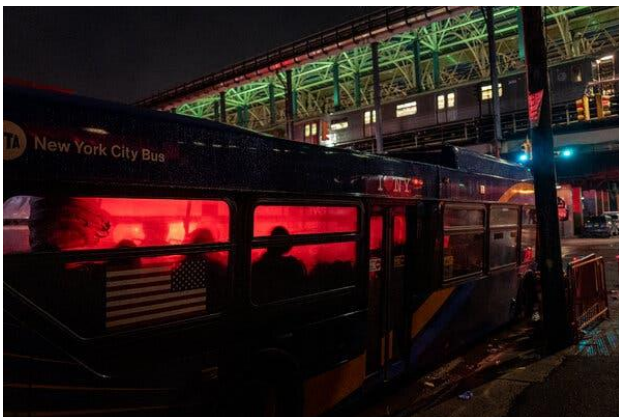
“The American Jobs Plan,” White House officials wrote in the document detailing it, “will invest in America in a way we have not invested since we built the interstate highways and won the Space Race.”

While spending on roads, bridges, and other physical improvements to the nation’s economic foundations has always had bipartisan appeal, Mr. Biden’s plan is sure to draw intense Republican opposition, both for its sheer size and for its reliance on corporate tax increases to pay for it.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has signaled to Democrats that she hopes to pass the package through the House by July 4, though that timeline could easily slip as Democrats race to write the legislation and agree on details.

It remains unclear whether Democrats will attempt to again use the fast-track budget process known as reconciliation to push the proposal through Congress and bypass both Republican opposition and the 60-vote filibuster threshold in the Senate.

But with Republicans already unloading a torrent of objections to the package’s scope and Mr. Biden’s ambitions to increase corporate taxes, budget reconciliation may be the only avenue for Democrats to pass the legislation at its current size. It would require Democratic leaders to keep their caucus united in support of the plan, with little room for defections in the House and none in the Senate.



*A bus underneath a subway station in Brooklyn. \$85 billion would be set aside for public transit. Credit - Jonah Markowitz for The New York Times*

Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the minority leader, spoke with Mr. Biden about the proposal earlier this week. But he suggested he was unlikely to support the package in the form being proposed by the White House.

“If it’s going to have massive tax increases and trillions more added to the national debt, it’s not likely,” he said on Wednesday.

Administration officials said the tax increases in the plan — including an increase in the corporate tax rate and a variety of measures to tax multinationals on money they earn and book overseas —

would [take 15 years to fully offset](#) the cost of the spending programs.

The spending in the plan covers a wide range of physical infrastructure projects, including transportation, broadband, the electric grid, and housing; efforts to jump-start advanced manufacturing, and other industries officials see as key to the United States’ growing economic competition with China. It also includes money to train millions of workers, as well as money for initiatives to support labor unions and providers of in-home care for older and disabled Americans, while also increasing the pay of the workers who provide that care.

Many of the items in the plan carry price tags that would have filled entire, ambitious bills in past administrations.

Among them: a total of \$180 billion for research and development, \$115 billion for roads and bridges, \$85 billion for public transit, and \$80 billion for Amtrak and freight rail. There is \$42 billion for ports and airports, \$100 billion for broadband, and \$111 billion for water infrastructure — including \$45 billion to ensure no child ever is forced to drink water from a lead pipe, which can slow children’s development and lead to behavioral and other problems.

The plan seeks to repair 10,000 smaller bridges across the country, along with the 10 most economically significant ones in need of a fix. It would electrify 20 percent of the nation’s fleet of yellow school buses. It would spend \$300 billion to promote advanced manufacturing, including a four-year plan to restock the country’s Strategic National Stockpile of pharmaceuticals, including vaccines, in preparation for future pandemics.

In many cases, officials cast those goals in the language of closing racial gaps in the economy, sometimes the result of previous federal spending efforts, like interstate highway developments that split communities of color or air pollution that affects Black and Hispanic communities near ports or power plants.

Officials cast the \$400 billion spending on in-home care in part as a salve to “underpaid and undervalued” workers in that industry, who are disproportionately women of color.

Mr. Biden’s pledge to tackle climate change is embedded throughout the plan. Roads, bridges, and airports would be made more resilient to the effects of more extreme storms, floods, and fires wrought by a warming planet. Spending on research and development could help spur breakthroughs in cutting-edge clean technology, while plans to retrofit and weatherize millions of buildings would make them more energy efficient.



*Workers removing lead pipes in Newark, N.J. \$45 billion goes toward elimination of lead pipes. Credit - Bryan Anselm for The New York Times*

The president’s focus on climate change is centered, however, on modernizing and transforming the United States’ two largest sources of planet-warming greenhouse gas pollution: cars and electric power plants.

A decade ago, Mr. Obama’s economic stimulus plan spent about \$90 billion on clean energy programs intended to jump-start the nation’s nascent renewable power and electric vehicle industries. Mr. Biden’s plan now proposes spending magnitudes more on similar programs that he hopes will take those technologies fully into the mainstream.

It bets heavily on spending meant to increase the use of electric cars, which today make up just 2 percent of the vehicles on America’s highways.

The plan proposes spending \$174 billion to encourage the manufacture and purchase of electric vehicles by granting tax credits and other incentives to companies that make electric vehicle batteries in the United States instead of China. The goal is to reduce vehicle price tags.

The money would also fund the construction of about a half-million electric vehicle charging stations — although experts say that number is but a tiny fraction of what is needed to make electric vehicles a mainstream option.

Mr. Biden's plan proposes \$100 billion in programs to update and modernize the electric grid to make it more reliable and less susceptible to blackouts, like those that recently devastated Texas, while also building more transmission lines from wind and solar plants to large cities.

It proposes the creation of a "Clean Electricity Standard" — essentially, a federal mandate requiring that a certain percentage of electricity in the United States be generated by zero-carbon energy sources like wind, solar, and possibly nuclear power. But that mandate would have to be enacted by Congress, where prospects for its success remain murky. Similar efforts to pass such a mandate have failed multiple times over the past 20 years.

The plan proposes an additional \$46 billion in federal procurement programs for government agencies to buy fleets of electric vehicles, and \$35 billion in research and development programs for cutting-edge, new technologies.

It also calls for making infrastructure and communities more prepared for the worsening effects of climate change, though the administration has so far provided few details on how it would accomplish that goal.

But according to the document released by the White House, the plan includes \$50 billion "in dedicated investments to improve infrastructure resilience." The efforts would defend against wildfires, rising seas, and hurricanes, and there would be a focus on investments that protect low-income residents and people of color.

The plan also includes a \$16 billion program intended to help fossil fuel workers transition to new work — like capping leaks on defunct oil wells and shutting down retired coal mines — and \$10 billion for a new "Civilian Climate Corps."

Mr. Biden would fund his spending in part by eliminating tax preferences for fossil fuel producers. But the bulk of his tax increases would come from corporations generally.

He would raise the corporate tax rate to 28 percent from 21 percent, partly reversing a cut signed into law by President Donald J. Trump. Mr. Biden would also take a variety of steps to raise taxes on multinational corporations, many of them working within an overhaul of the taxation of profits earned overseas that was included in Mr. Trump's tax law in 2017.

Those measures would include raising the rate of a minimum tax on global profits and eliminating several provisions that allow companies to reduce their American tax liability on profits they earn and book abroad.

Mr. Biden would also add a new minimum tax on the global income of the largest multinationals, and he would ramp up enforcement efforts by the Internal Revenue Service against large companies that evade taxes.

Administration officials expressed hope this week that the plan could attract bipartisan support in Congress. But Republicans and business groups have already attacked Mr. Biden's plans to fund the spending with corporate tax increases, which they say will hurt the competitiveness of American

companies. Administration officials say the moves will push companies to keep profits and jobs in the United States.

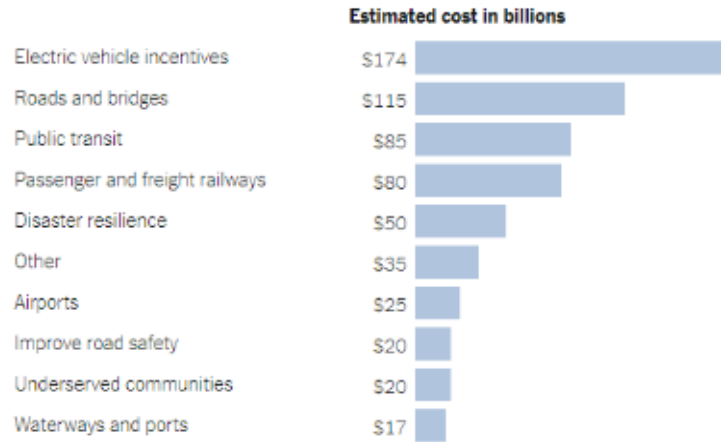
Joshua Bolten, the president and chief executive of the Business Roundtable, a powerful group representing top business executives in Washington, said on Tuesday that his group “strongly opposes corporate tax increases as a pay-for for infrastructure investment.”

“Policymakers should avoid creating new barriers to job creation and economic growth,” Mr. Bolten said, “particularly during the recovery.”

## **WHAT’S IN BIDEN’S INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN?**

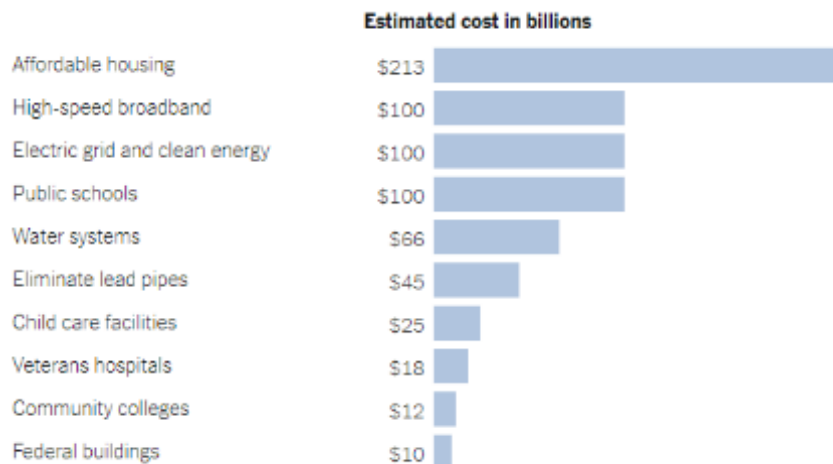
### **TRANSPORTATION**

Among the proposals: Modernize 20,000 miles of highways and roads; repair 10,000 bridges; and, by 2030, build a network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers.



### **BUILDINGS AND UTILITIES**

One of the largest investments includes more than \$200 billion in tax credits and grants to improve and build affordable housing.



## **JOBS AND INNOVATION**

The plan goes beyond physical infrastructure, proposing more than \$500 billion to invest in the manufacturing sector, worker training, and research and development.



## **IN-HOME CARE**

The plan also includes \$400 billion to expand access to caregiving for those who are older and those with disabilities and to improve pay and benefits for caregivers.

**The American Legion strongly urges that all efforts for manpower development and retraining be vigorously pursued so that in the end all veterans are gainfully employed in suitable and respectable occupations in which they can make their greatest contributions to their country and their community. *Resolution No. 542: National Economic Commission Veterans Employment Policy***

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## 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	
	Feb 2020	Feb 2021	Feb 2020	Feb 2021	Feb 2020	Feb 2021
Unemployed	329	497	286	427	43	70
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>

*The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (February 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 February 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 5.5%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.5% in February.

## TOPIC 2: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS

*On Monday, March 29*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a meeting with the Chief of Staff for Representative Ben Cline (VA-06) to discuss proposals for GI Bill improvements. Rep. Clines office expressed interest in a stipend for students to purchase tools for technical training courses, as well as using the GI Bill for small business start-up capital. VE&E staff conducted an analysis of tool reimbursements and did not find tool pricing to be a large enough issue to require legislation.

*On Monday, March 29*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with key leaders of the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission to discuss improvements to the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship. The “Fry Scholarship” is a VA program that allows gold star children to utilize the GI Bill. While we have always supported Fry scholarship improvements in the past under our “Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education”, it was brought to the Commission's attention that we do not have a specific resolution dedicated to the Fry Scholarship.

*On Monday, March 29*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended zoom briefings, presented from the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), about education programs and benefits to the National Veterans Employment & Education Commission.

*On Monday, March 29*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with EdCounsel and National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) team on Risk-Based Surveys and partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Discussed extending the Risk-

Based Survey Model (RBS) pilot till May 31, the forms required for successful RBS onsite visits, and how to report these visits to VA.

***On Monday, March 29***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with State Approving Agencies (SAAs) to discuss the ongoing Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) pilot rollout and the first results of working with schools. Concerns around how best to address Non-College Degree institutions and ensure adequate oversight over these schools.

***On Monday, March 29***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division researched 90/10 legislation within the Rescue Act (The American Rescue Plan is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 117th United States Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021, to speed up the United States' recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing recession.) and how to make sure we do not harm schools providing solid programming resulting in good-paying jobs.

***On Tuesday, March 30***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division discussed with HVAC of a potential hearing in the Fall on oversight of institutions and programs approved for the GI Bill.

***On Tuesday, March 30***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division reviewed the latest distance learning research and discussions with VSOs on the quality of education in online learning.

***On Tuesday, March 30***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division worked on issues with Montana and LA SAAs as well as technical fixes needed for the Roe and Isakson Act. The law will have a transformative effect on the mission of Education Service to provide ready access to, and timely and accurate delivery of, education benefits to Veterans, servicemembers, and their families, and further, enable VA to empower GI Bill beneficiaries to achieve their vocational and career goals.

***On Tuesday, March 30***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a webinar that evaluated the impact of expanding or contracting military bases regarding the expected economic and demographic changes. The United States is currently operating thousands of military installations, both internationally and domestically. In an effort to consolidate resources and assess the efficiency of these installations, the federal government established a periodic review of each location called Base Realignment and Closure. The discussion focused on case studies related to how bases absorb resources from the region during expansion and how local employment is affected by base closures. The discussion also looked at how increases or decreases in federal funding resulting from the BRAC process can influence a region's population and economic output.

***On Wednesday, March 31***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with national school representatives on oversight and the potential application of 90/10. Washington liaisons for these schools are concerned about the impact on veteran access to good programs.

***On Wednesday, March 31***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division reviewed the new American Council of Education rollout of the Joint Service Transcript evaluation program and giving credit to service members at educational institutions. Discussion with American Council on Education (ACE) on how to get schools to adopt this feature.

***On Wednesday, March 31***, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division, along with the National Security Division, had a conference with representatives (Adjutant Bill West) from



the Department of Texas. Plans have been discussed for another global job event featuring Woman Veterans target date of June 10, 2021.

***On Wednesday, March 31,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a meeting with the marketing firm Friday to discuss the MCAI report release follow-up. Friday has written, and legion.org has published, three separate stories on military credentialing, and this week sent video footage for Legion review.

***On Thursday, April 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conversation with NC legislators on veteran's education benefits and how they are safeguarded with proper oversight and compliance.

***On Thursday, April 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with VA leadership (Charmaine, James Ruhlman, and others) on the Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) pilot program and how we will proceed in the next few months.

***On Thursday, April 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with Legion leadership and education representatives on the 90/10 rollout. Also, review the Distance Learning paper.

***On Thursday, April 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a zoom launch event for the Department of Labor's new Employment Navigator Partnership Pilot. This program would substantially enhance DOL support for the TAP program by assigning counselors to military bases to facilitate one-on-one personalized assistance to all transitioning servicemembers. The program has been launched on 13 military installations.

***On Thursday, April 1,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with representatives of Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU), (CECU- is the national organization serving postsecondary career education schools, where members provide skills-based training to non-traditional students, particularly veterans. These schools equip students with the career skills they need to succeed in health care, nursing, mechanics, welding, truck driving, veterinary medicine, etc.), to discuss potential waivers for the recently closed 90/10 loophole. CECU is the lobbying association of for-profit schools and bitterly fought against closing the 90-10 loophole for ten years. As an olive branch, VE&E staff are meeting with them to assess what legitimate concerns that quality for-profit schools have about meeting the 90-10 threshold, and any potential waivers that could be made on their behalf.

***On Friday, April 2,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division has scheduled conferences with Hill Staffers on pending legislation to be discussed at the HVAC Economic Opportunity hearing this month.

***On Friday, April 2,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division will attend a weekly meeting with EdCounsel/Lumina Risk-Based Survey Executive Team to discuss Risk-Based Survey work, including a new potential grant on the RBS work.

## GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

ACE: American Council on Education  
ACP: American Corporate Partners, a veteran's 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  
CCME: Council of College and Military Educators  
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 veteran's 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 veteran's 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 veteran's 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

[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.

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

**H.R.492 -** To amend title 38, United States Code, 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.

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

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

**Status: Passed House Vote, received in the Senate, and referred to the Committee on Veterans Affairs. It did not pass by the end of the 116<sup>th</sup> Session, will need to be reintroduced.**

**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.

**Status: Did not pass by the end of the 116<sup>th</sup> Session.**

**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.

[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.

**Status: Became Public Law No: 116-142.**

**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.

[Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education](#)

**Status: Became Public Law No: 116-315**

**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.

[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.

**S. 3745, Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act:** to require the Department of Education to grant total 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.

[Resolution No. 82: Preserve Veteran and Servicemember Rights to Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense Protections](#)

**Status: Did not pass 116<sup>th</sup> Session.**

### **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.

**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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

**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 employment and reemployment rights and other purposes.

**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.

**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.

[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

Filings for unemployment benefits rose last week but remained near their lowest levels since the pandemic's onset, amid signs of a broader U.S. economic recovery.

Workers filed [719,000 initial jobless claims](#), on a seasonally adjusted basis, in the week ended March 27, the Labor Department said Thursday. The increase followed a downward revision to 658,000 initial claims the prior week, the lowest point of the pandemic.

The four-week moving average, which smooths out the volatility in the numbers, fell to 719,000, its lowest point since the pandemic hit in March 2020.

Initial jobless claims, a proxy for layoffs, remain well above pre-pandemic levels—the weekly average in 2019 was 218,000—but have trended downward since the start of the year.

The labor market has shown other signs of gaining steam. Economists forecast that the U.S. economy in March added 675,000 jobs, compared with a gain of 379,000 in February, and that the jobless rate ticked down to 6% from 6.2%. The Labor Department will release its March employment report Friday.



*The economy is getting a boost as dining restrictions ease in such places as San Bernardino, Calif.*

State and local governments have eased restrictions on businesses and activities this year. Meanwhile, rising Covid-19 vaccinations and federal stimulus measures have helped [to spur a pickup in consumer spending](#), particularly for services such as dining, hotels, and flights.

“All of this is predicated on the trajectory of the virus,” said Constance Hunter, chief economist at KPMG. “If we can really get the virus under control, then we would expect to continue strong payrolls and at least one, if not two, really strong months of upside.”

Still, the economy has much ground to regain on its path toward recovery. There were roughly 19 million continuing claims—a proxy for the number of people receiving benefits through the regular state, pandemic-related, and other programs—in the week ended March 6. The U.S. economy overall [still had 9.5 million fewer jobs in February](#) than it did during the same month in 2020.

Brian Vlasak, 41 years old, said he has been out of work since March 2020, when he was furloughed from his part-time job as a theater stagehand at a Boston-area college. Mr. Vlasak said he doesn’t yet know when the work might resume, and his search for other employment has been limited because he has health concerns that put him at high risk for contracting the coronavirus.

“I’m only going to get back into the workforce as soon as I know for sure that this is under control,” Mr. Vlasak said, referring to the pandemic.

Mr. Vlasak said he has stayed afloat in part by collecting benefits through regular state and federal pandemic-related unemployment programs since last May.

[Federal lawmakers provided additional jobless](#) aid in their recent \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, while also sending \$1,400 cash payments to many Americans. Ms. Hunter, of KPMG, said the most

recent stimulus deal, along with previous rounds of aid, positions consumers to pick up spending in the coming months, which would positively affect employers.

The aid “lays the groundwork for a swifter recovery,” Ms. Hunter said.

A measure of consumer confidence in the U.S. [rose in March to its highest level in a year](#), as optimism increased regarding current and future expectations for the labor market and business conditions. An index of small-business employment from the payroll processor Paychex and the data firm IHS Markit in March saw its largest one-month gain since 2013, with the leisure and hospitality sector showing the most improvement.

Natasha Miller, chief executive of Entire Productions, a San Francisco-based entertainment and production company, said she is looking soon to add two to three full-time workers to her staff of six. At the start of the pandemic last year, Ms. Miller cut her workforce by half when social events dried up in the midst of state lockdown orders.

In subsequent months, Ms. Miller pivoted to hosting virtual-event productions and participated in federal-aid programs for small businesses. She said her business broke even for 2020, and that she is optimistic for a pickup in bookings as the economy more fully reopens.

“You have to hire ahead of the need,” Ms. Miller said. “The opening up and the vaccine is really opening the playground for more events and the need for more full-time people.”

**The American Legion strongly urges that all efforts for manpower development and retraining be vigorously pursued so that in the end all veterans are gainfully employed in suitable and respectable occupations in which they can make their greatest contributions to their country and their community. *Resolution No. 542: National Economic Commission Veterans Employment Policy***

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## **TOPIC 5: SMALL BUSINESS**

### **SBA EYES EARLY APRIL TO BEGIN RESTAURANT REVITALIZATION FUND ROLLOUT**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is targeting early April to launch a phased rollout of the \$28.6 billion Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), a senior SBA official testified during a Senate Small Business Committee hearing.

The [American Rescue Plan Act](#), P.L. 117-2, created the RRF to provide restaurants with grants equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss, up to \$10 million per entity, or \$5 million per physical location. Restaurants and bars have been among the hardest-hit businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, and members of the Senate Small Business Committee pushed for answers on how quickly the program could be launched.

Patrick Kelley, an associate administrator for the SBA’s Office of Capital Access, told committee members that the SBA is working on developing a technology solution capable of deploying hundreds of thousands of grants to restaurants, bars, and other eligible providers of food and drink.

“We are focused like a laser on starting it up as quickly as possible,” he said.

The SBA is aiming to work with the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to build a platform scaled in a way that it can leverage partners such as point-of-sale vendors, which can provide relevant sales data, Kelley said. The new platform could use that information to help automate parts of the application and grant calculation process.



The Restaurant Revitalization Fund will offer \$28.6 billion in grants to hard-hit restaurants and bars, with restaurants able to apply for grants based on lost revenue. *Credit - Getty Images/Volodymyr Rozumii*

“By drafting off (the point-of-sale vendors) and posting our own web application, we believe we can reach the broadest market segment fast,” Kelley said.

Ideally, he said, the SBA would be able over the next seven to 10 days to begin posting RRF information, such as guidance and required documentation, relevant to potential applicants. The program would then move to a pilot phase, in which the program would begin accepting applications based on prioritization established in the American Rescue Plan Act, which sets aside \$5 billion for the smallest applicants (\$500,000

or less in 2019 gross receipts) and requires that during the first 21 days of the grants, the SBA will prioritize applications from restaurants owned and operated or controlled by women, veterans, or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

After the prioritization /pilot phase, grants would become available more broadly.

“That would typically unfurl over 30 to 45 days,” Kelley said.

The grant funds may be used to pay for the following eligible expenses:

- Payroll costs;
- Principal and interest payments on a mortgage, not including any prepayments on principal.
- Rent payments, not including prepayments;
- Utilities;
- Maintenance expenses including construction to accommodate outdoor seating and walls, floods, deck surfaces, furniture, fixtures, and equipment;
- Supplies including personal protective equipment and cleaning materials;
- Food and beverage expenses within the eligible entity's scope of normal business practice before the covered period, which runs from Feb. 15, 2020, through Dec. 31, 2021, or another date as determined by the SBA;
- Covered supplier costs;
- Operational expenses;
- Paid sick leave; and
- Any other expenses the SBA determines to be essential to maintaining the eligible entity.



AICPA experts discuss the latest on the PPP and other small business aid programs during a virtual town hall held every other week. The webcasts, which provide CPE credit, are free to AICPA members and \$39.99 for nonmembers. Go to the [AICPA Town Hall Series](#) webpage for more information and to register. Recordings of Town Hall events are available to view for free on [AICPA TV](#).

The [AICPA's Paycheck Protection Program Resources](#) page houses resources and tools produced by the AICPA to help address the economic impact of the coronavirus.

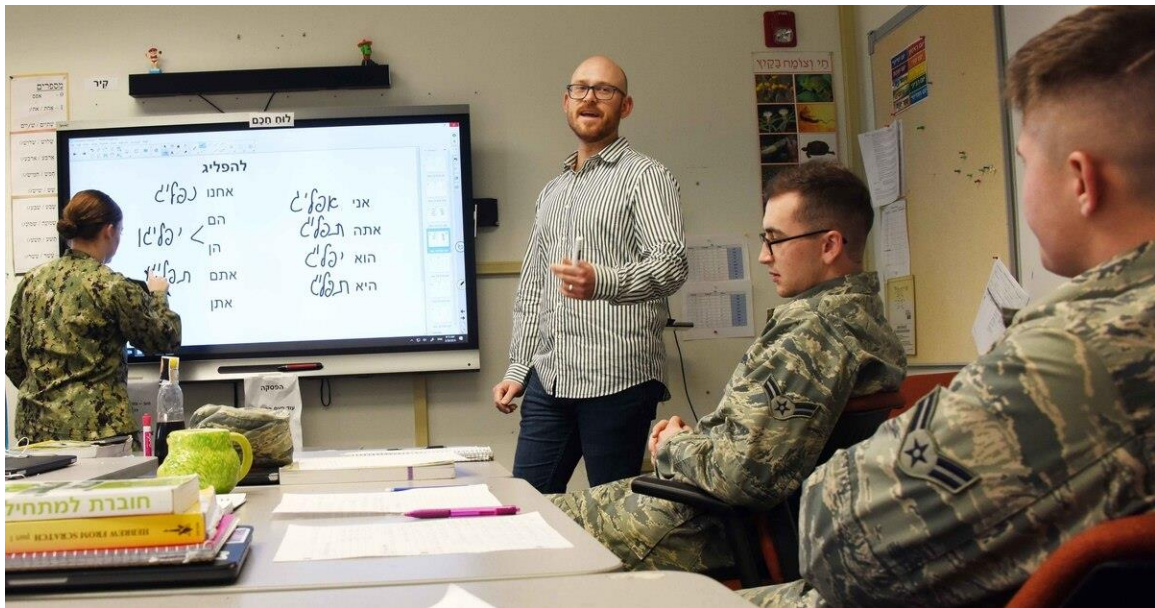
Accounting firms can prepare and process applications for the PPP on the [CPA Business Funding Portal](#), created by the AICPA, CPA.com, and fintech partner Biz2Credit.

For more news and reporting on the coronavirus and how CPAs can handle challenges related to the outbreak, visit JofA's [coronavirus resources page](#) or [subscribe to our email alerts](#) for breaking PPP news.

**The American Legion support legislation that would permit the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals. *Resolution No. 26: Support Effort of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans Business Development and Veterans Business Outreach Centers***

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## TOPIC 6a: EDUCATION



On March 29, the U.S. Department of Education [announced](#) efforts to improve the loan forgiveness process for student borrowers who have a total or permanent disability.

Under existing federal law, students who become totally and permanently disabled are eligible for a [total and permanent disability \(TPD\) discharge](#), which forgives their federal student debt. But for

disabled borrowers, applying for forgiveness can be a cumbersome process, especially for those facing other health challenges.

The Biden Administration seeks to relieve some of the burden and make the application process smoother. The Department of Education [announced](#) that it will pause all paperwork requirements that borrowers are faced with in order to prove that they continue to have a low income for the three years following their loan cancellation. The Department said these actions will help more than 230,000 disabled borrowers total. Part of this effort is retroactively reinstating more than 41,000 disabled borrowers who didn't submit paperwork. The American Legion has pushed for this, along with other organizations such as Veterans Education Success, the American Federation of Teachers, and more.

In August of 2019, the [Trump Administration announced](#) that it would discharge or forgive the federal student debt for veterans with a total or permanent disability. This move was said to impact approximately 25,000 disabled veterans. However, it did not do this for other borrowers.

While this is an improvement of the process, some have said it isn't enough.

The [National Student Legal Defense Network](#) (Student Defense) [issued a statement](#) blasting the administration. It said, "Let's be clear: today's announcement is not a victory for students. There are roughly 400,000 borrowers with a disability who the Social Security Administration has already determined are legally owed debt relief." Student Defense went on to call for the Biden Administration to automatically discharge the debt for these borrowers.

Advocates have called for this for years. However, there were legitimate concerns that the forgiveness would be treated as taxable income.

[Bipartisan legislation](#) to address this flaw by exempting the canceled loans from federal income taxes was eventually included as a small part of the GOP tax reform bill. With this fix, those [same bipartisan legislators called on the Department](#) in 2018 to discharge the student debt of disabled Americans, including veterans. However, the Department did not act. Today's announcement is the first step to making sure disabled student borrowers receive the relief they are entitled to under federal law.

**The American Legion support legislation to amend the Internal Revenue Code, Section 61(a) (12), to not consider a discharged debt taxable when a veteran is rated permanently and totally disabled. Resolution No. 347: Veterans Education Debt Forgiveness**

*[Reported by John Kamin]*

## TOPIC 6b: EDUCATION

Congress invited predatory for-profit colleges to bleed military veterans of education aid — and give them nothing in return — when it wrote a loophole into rules that govern how federal student aid streams are classified. It comes as welcome news that the loophole was [closed](#) as part of the pandemic recovery bill signed into law this month.

Still, there is more that the Biden administration needs to do to protect veterans, and the American public, from companies that earn their profits by stripping students of federal education dollars while giving them valueless degrees.

That means reversing, as quickly as possible, Trump-era rules that benefited the for-profit college industry at the expense of the public. Beyond that, the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) and the Department of Education need to wield their existing authority to cut off federal funds to predatory schools.

The recently closed loophole relates to a provision known as the 90/10 rule. As written in 1998, it required for-profit schools to get at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than federal student aid. The measure was intended to prevent federal aid from serving as the sole source of money for for-profit schools that were unable to attract private dollars. But Congress thwarted this common-sense goal by allowing the colleges to count some forms of federal aid — including G.I. Bill education benefits and Department of Defense Tuition Assistance — as privately raised.

## MILITARY STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



This maneuver turned military veterans into what a Senate report called “[dollar signs in uniform.](#)” Predatory schools, including some that later collapsed under fraud allegations, misrepresented themselves to attract as many veterans as possible. So many service members were left in the lurch when the schools failed that Congress had to pass a law [restoring education benefits to G.I. Bill users](#) who had enrolled in programs that no longer existed.

The new version of the 90/10 rule will require for-profit schools to get at least 10 percent of their funding from “nonfederal” sources. One problem with the new provision is that it does not take effect until 2023, which could allow for more exploitation. This puts the onus on the Biden administration to better police risky or genuinely fraudulent schools.

Despite its documented history of fraud, the for-profit industry found an open door at the Education Department run by the recently departed secretary, [Betsy DeVos](#). Under her leadership, the department was sued for serving the industry’s interests and attacking student borrowers who were legally entitled to have their loans forgiven because for-profit schools had defrauded them.

The Biden administration’s education secretary, Miguel Cardona, took an important step this month when he scrapped a DeVos rule that severely limited loan forgiveness for defrauded students. Under the new, more reasonable policy, [tens of thousands of borrowers](#) will have their student loan debt eliminated. This is a salvational development for young men and women who have been locked out of jobs, apartments, and the credit market because of outstanding debt.

The Department of Education should immediately begin the process of reversing Ms. DeVos’s ravaging of the [gainful-employment](#) rule, which was supposed to cut off access to federal student aid for career training programs that buried students in crippling debt while failing to prepare them for jobs. A strong and fully enforced rule is essential to a regulatory system that holds for-profit schools accountable for the damage they too often do.

**The American Legion wants to ensure that student-veterans and their family members achieve educational success and a positive transition to the civilian workforce; Consequently, we encourage legislation and federal agency action to ensure better quality and student**

**outcomes for institutions approved for use of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits. Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes By Closing 90-10 Loophole**

**VA AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELEASES HIGH DEMAND OCCUPATION LIST FOR THE VETERAN RAPID RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is preparing to launch the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) as part of its continued effort to support Veterans seeking retraining and economic opportunities in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



VA in partnership with the Department of Labor published a list of high-demand occupations. The list is available [here](#) and includes healthcare, education, media, engineering, and high-tech opportunities.

The new program, part of the American Rescue Plan, will allow qualifying Veterans between the ages of 22 and 67 to receive up to 12 months of tuition and fee and monthly housing allowance payments, based on Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. VA will provide further information soon on how Veterans can apply for this program.

The new program, part of the American Rescue Plan, will allow qualifying Veterans between the ages of 22 and 67

The week of April 4<sup>th</sup>, VA will release a participation agreement and begin to work with educational institutions interested in participating in VRRAP. VA will require educational institutions to commit to a participation agreement that will outline VRRAP requirements and specify which training programs are covered under VRRAP. Once reviewed and approved by VA, a comprehensive list of VRRAP educational institutions and programs will be published and made available.

For a program of education to qualify for VRRAP, it must meet the following criteria:

- Be approved for GI Bill or VET TEC
- Not lead to a bachelor or graduate degree
- Provide training for a high-demand occupation

The payment model for VRRAP tuition and fees (paid directly to the VRRAP education institution) is milestone-based:

- 50% when the Veteran begins the program
- 25% when the Veteran completes the program
- 25% when the Veteran finds employment in the field of study

The program is limited to a maximum of 17,250 participants and up to \$386 million.

If you are aware of any GI Bill Beneficiaries who require assistance, please have them contact the Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday to speak with a representative.

To learn more about the program and for updates, go to [our website, or visit our Facebook page.](#)

*[Reported by Joseph Sharpe]*

## TOPIC 7: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

### SAN DIEGO JOINS NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

The city of San Diego is joining a national initiative to address homelessness by focusing on specific populations, a model that has proven effective in ending chronic or veterans homelessness in 14 other communities.

The local effort will kick off with a focus on homeless veterans. The plan involves a monthly count of homeless veterans and a monthly tally of how many veterans have been housed.



U.S. Army veteran Allen Gallagher speaks with volunteers during the annual “Stand Down” organized by Veterans Village of San Diego. VVSD is one of the local partners in an initiative to solve veterans homelessness in San Diego. *Credit - Kristian Carreon For The San Diego Union-Tribune*

When the number of homeless veterans is less than the number of veterans a community has proven it can house in a month, the community has reached a goal of functional zero under the initiative [Built for Zero](#), led by Community Solutions.

Once the system is in place and achieving positive results with veterans, the initiative will be expanded to other subpopulations such as homeless youths.

“Built for Zero isn’t saying there will never be people who are unhoused,” Regional Task Force on the Homeless CEO Tamera Kohler said in a press release. “It is taking a different approach

to how we collect and analyze data, and how we work with every single person in a particular subpopulation, provide opportunities for housing for each of those people, and ensure that if someone becomes homeless, it is brief and does not occur again.”

The 2020 count of homeless people conducted by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless found veterans made up about 8 percent of the 3,971 people living without shelter throughout the county.

As part of the initiative, the task force has partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the San Diego Housing Commission, and Veterans Village of San Diego. Kaiser Permanente is providing funding for dedicated local staff.

San Diego will be part of the Built for Zero Large City Cohort, which includes Denver, Phoenix, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C. Cohort members share best practices and exchange information about successful initiatives, and San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria will have an opportunity to join a Mayors’ Cohort.

“Ending homelessness in San Diego can be a reality if we take different approaches than we have in the past,” Gloria said. “Built for Zero is a proven method. It works because it does more than just count people. It will force us to take a hard look at the resources we have available and how we match those resources with the people who need them.”

In April, the local team will work with guidance from Community Solutions to analyze the city's veteran population, the resources available to them, and the process for matching people to those resources.

The city will update its goals and timelines for addressing veteran's homelessness after the data is gathered.

The city's Community Action Plan on Homelessness from 2019 identified three key goals within reach to accomplish in three years: decrease unsheltered homelessness by 50 percent, finish the job of ending veteran homelessness, and prevent and end youth homelessness.

"The Built for Zero initiative is another important step forward as the city of San Diego continues to make strides to address homelessness under the framework the Community Action Plan on Homelessness provides," said San Diego Housing Commission President and CEO Rick Gentry. More than 80 cities and counties nationwide are part of the initiative.

**The American Legion recommends Congress to support national programs to help at-risk veterans avoid becoming homeless, and rapidly re-house those veteran families who lose their housing. Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program**

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## TOPIC 8: CAREER FAIRS

### **Virtual Job Fair**

April 8, 2021, 1pm - 3pm

#### **VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: OPPORTUNITIES IN SOLAR ENERGY**

Connecting World Class Military Talent with American Employers

Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with employers for solar positions in trades and sales roles at this interactive virtual hiring event.

Presented by [Hiring Our Heroes](#)

[More information](#)

*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 Edwin Cruz]*

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director  
Veterans Employment & Education Division  
202.861.2700 ext. 2989  
Week Ending: 4/2/2021**