

## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

Yellen Won a Global Tax Deal. Now Comes the Hard Part. The Treasury secretary worked with finance ministers from the G7 to win support for a global minimum tax. But selling the idea to Republican lawmakers will not be easy.



*Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen at a news conference on Saturday in London after a meeting of the Group of 7 finance ministers.*

*Credit: Pool photo by Wpa*

Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen secured a landmark international tax agreement over the weekend, one that has eluded the United States for nearly a decade. But with a narrowly divided Congress and resistance from Republicans and business groups mounting, closing the deal at home may be an even bigger challenge.

The Biden administration is counting on more than \$3 trillion in tax increases on corporations and wealthy Americans to help pay for its ambitious jobs and infrastructure proposals. Republicans have expressed opposition to any rise in taxes and have warned that President Biden's big spending plans are fueling inflation and will deter business investment. Business groups have complained that higher taxes pose a threat to the economic recovery and will put American companies at a competitive disadvantage.

Persuading members of the Group of 7 advanced economies to agree on Saturday to a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent was intended to help the Biden administration win support for its U.S. tax increases. If enacted, the global minimum tax would require that companies pay at least

a 15 percent tax on income, regardless of where they are based, making it less advantageous to relocate operations to countries with lower tax rates.

In an interview on Sunday, Ms. Yellen acknowledged the legislative challenge ahead and defended the Biden administration's plans to raise taxes on corporations. She stood behind Mr. Biden's proposal to raise the corporate tax rate in the United States to 28 percent from 21 percent.

"We think it's a fair way to collect revenues," Ms. Yellen said on her flight back to the United States from London after attending two days of meetings with G7 finance ministers. "I honestly don't think there's going to be a significant impact on corporate investment."

Ms. Yellen played down the relationship between tax rates and business spending, arguing that the \$1.5 trillion tax cuts that Republicans passed in 2017 did little to lift American investment. She said that the changes to the international tax code would ultimately be beneficial to U.S. firms and that even those who face higher taxes, such as Amazon, Facebook and Google, would gain from the additional certainty about their tax bills.

But the fate of Mr. Biden's proposals is not certain, and Ms. Yellen now faces the task of convincing lawmakers that large tax and spending increases will not hinder the economic recovery.

Mr. Biden has been negotiating with Republican lawmakers and has expressed a willingness to narrow the scope of his tax and spending plans to rebuild the nation's roads and bridges. The president has offered to drop his proposal to raise the corporate rate to 28 percent to secure bipartisan support, though White House officials expect to try to push that higher rate through in a separate legislative vehicle that can pass without any Republican support.

Ms. Yellen acknowledged that compromise on the corporate tax rate might be necessary and said that she hoped for a bipartisan infrastructure agreement. Republicans are resisting any changes to the 2017 tax law, which cut the corporate tax rate to 21 percent.

It is unclear if Republicans will support the international tax agreement, particularly a decision to impose a new tax on big, multinational corporations — even if they have no physical presence in the countries where they sell those services. That part of the agreement was offered by the United States to put to rest a fight with European countries over their digital services taxes that would hit large American technology companies.

Some lawmakers have already criticized the idea as ceding taxing authority to other governments, and many business groups were still absorbing the agreement over the weekend. Ms. Yellen believes that the concept will not cost the United States much in terms of lost tax revenue. However, the fact that European countries are not dropping their digital services taxes until a deal is fully enacted has already been criticized by top Republicans in the House and Senate given it could take four years for the agreement to be put in place.

If the Biden administration cannot shepherd the tax legislation through Congress, the agreement on the global minimum tax — and a separate deal that was reached on Saturday on a system for taxing large companies based on where their goods and services are sold — will be for naught. Negotiators are hoping to broaden the agreement to more countries at the Group of 20 meetings in Italy next month and then finalize a pact in October. Then countries, including the United States, will have to change their laws accordingly.

The G7 summit was Ms. Yellen's first trip abroad as Mr. Biden's top economic diplomat. In London, Ms. Yellen received praise from her counterparts for restoring American leadership and for the Biden administration's embrace of multilateralism after four years of President Donald J. Trump's "America First" policies.

The Treasury secretary described the job as more grueling than her previous role as chair of the Federal Reserve, pointing to the scale of the relief programs that she is overseeing and the department's vast portfolio. An economist who has focused for years on monetary policy, Ms. Yellen is now in charge of sanctions policy, tax policy, overseeing regulators and dealing regularly with Congress.

Beyond the tax negotiations, Ms. Yellen is grappling with the sensitive question of inflation and whether the president's policies are going to stoke higher prices for a sustained period. Businesses in the United States have expressed growing concern about rising prices, along with a shortage of commodities, and a lack of available workers.

Ms. Yellen maintained that she believed rising prices were a short-term issue related to the reopening of the economy and snarled supply chains. Still, the chance of a sustained jump in prices remains a concern that she is tracking closely.

To determine if inflation is more than a temporary matter, Ms. Yellen is monitoring two key metrics: inflation expectations and wage increases for low-paid workers. Rising pay for the lowest-wage workers could potentially lead to "an inflationary trend" if there is broad excess demand for workers in the labor market, she warned.

"We don't want a situation of prolonged excess demand in the economy that leads to wage and price pressures that build and become endemic," Ms. Yellen said. "Looking at wage increases, you can have a wage price spiral, so you need to be careful."

She added: "I do not see that happening now."

At the G7 meeting, Ms. Yellen raised eyebrows when she said that inflation could remain higher for the rest of the year, with rates around 3 percent. However, in the interview, she said that the comment was misinterpreted. She said that she expected inflation rates to be elevated for the next few months but then settle down to be consistent with the 2 percent rate that is the Federal Reserve's long-term target.

"I don't see any evidence that inflation expectations are getting out of control," Ms. Yellen said.

Critics have suggested that the Biden administration's extension of pandemic unemployment insurance is fueling the labor shortage by encouraging workers to stay at home and collect generous benefits. At least 20 states have moved to cut off benefits early to encourage people to go back to work.

Ms. Yellen said the difference in how states were handling jobless benefits could shed new light on the dynamic, but that she still saw no evidence that the supplement was slowing job creation. She pointed to a lack of child care and positions that were permanently lost because of the pandemic as the more probable reason that employers in some sectors were struggling to find staff.

“We wanted to support people,” Ms. Yellen said. “This isn’t something that should be in place forever.”

Although the economy is improving, Ms. Yellen said that seven million jobs that were lost since the pandemic still had not been restored. Some of them might never come back.

“We’re not in a tight labor market at this point,” she said.

<b>HOUSEHOLD DATA</b>						
<b>Table A-5. Employment status of the civilian population 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and sex, not seasonally adjusted</b>						
[Numbers in thousands]						
Employment status, veteran status, and period of service	Total		Men		Women	
	May 2020	May 2021	May 2020	May 2021	May 2020	May 2021
<b>Unemployed</b>	800	379	716	314	84	65
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	9.0	4.1	9.1	3.9	7.8	5.5

*The national unemployment rate is 6.1 percent (May 2021). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 4.0 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 6.9 percent.*

In April 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 5.3%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.0% in April.

**TOPIC 2: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS**

*On Monday, June 7,* the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a discussion with Senate and House staffers in reference to flight training for veterans and the approval of residencies in the medical field for the GI Bill.

*On Monday, June 7,* the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) pilot State Approving Agencies (SAAs) and Education Counsel on lessons learned during pilot SAA site visits. All SAAs are excited about the new meaning measures (accreditation, graduation, advertising, and job placement) being reviewed under the new oversight model for RBSs.

*On Monday, June 7,* the National Veterans Employment and Education Division prepared a PowerPoint presentation on the role of State Approving Agencies for Veterans Administration Committee (VACOE) on Education virtual meeting.

*On Wednesday, June 9,* the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended first day of the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE) meeting; VACOE is the national

Veteran Affairs advisory committee on education, which advises the Secretary of the VA. On the first day, we received briefings from the Secretary of VA (SECVA) and Education Service Director Charmaine Bogue. We also received updates from VA staff on VET TECH (Veterans technical training program funded at 45 million a year), the VA Veterans Experience Office and implementation of Isakson Roe as well as the Veteran Rapid Retraining Program. Joseph Wescott chaired the subcommittee on distance learning and gave an hour presentation on the history and role of the State approving agencies as well as future challenges.

***On Thursday, June 10,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended second day of the VACOE meeting. We received an update on the new Digital GI Bill development and implementation. First phases of the processing enhancement automation will roll out this summer.

Each subcommittee reported potential areas of concern /recommendations as follows:

### **OJT/Apprenticeships**

- Experience Map for transitioning Spouses so as to better understand where experiences diverged. Veteran gets a full VA experiences whereas spouses frequently have to go through different avenues such as DOL for information.
- Improving information available to military spouses (active duty, transitioning and veteran) through the TAP program on OJT/ Apprenticeships. Creating a toolkit provided to all spouses to ensure they have knowledge of VA resources, benefits, and eligibility.
- DOL (TEAMS) and VA (TAP) needs to track success metrics for Military spouses and ensure they receive information on programs such as OJT/ Apprenticeships regardless of which track they go through.

### **Modernization of IT Systems**

- Digital GI Bill may resolve some issues, but need to update all systems (i.e. eliminate spreadsheets, eliminate manual data entry/re-entry) and ensure funds remain with VBA.
- Develop solutions with the customer experience as the focal point. Provide a single common user experience through the multiple points of entry into VA gateway – single database / sign-on with numerous services available (ex. Wells Fargo offers savings/checking, investment, ability to wire funds, management of safety deposit boxes, etc.) Perhaps GI Bill is the main entry point due to current work. In order to be most effective as a division and to improve efficiencies within VBA, we see a connection with larger VA.
- Single solution/integrated database/IT modernization synchronized across the entire Department will break down silos and reduce internal competition for funds.
- Continue discovery on other committees focused on IT, as well as staying abreast of inter-agency improvements in data-sharing.

### **Distance Learning**

- A complete review and rewrite of the Code to ensure that modern terminology is reflected, and recent legislation is properly referenced and adhered to.
- Consideration by Congress as the Housing Allowance paid for those enrolled in distance education. Some student Veterans are choosing their classes /programs based upon area of delivery due to the increased housing allowance. Also, Congress might consider a national average for BAH.
- Quality of online learning remains a major concern. Risk Based Surveys, as now mandated in law by the Roe Isaacson Act, should be encourage and State approving agencies adequately resourced to provide needed oversight of programs and institutions.

The Next VACOE meeting (also virtual due to VA COVID Travel Restrictions) will be in October of this year.

***On Thursday, June 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a VR&E Virtual Officer's Leadership Training Symposium. The meeting informed relevant stakeholders about recent updates to the Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) and implementation of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (PL 116-315).

The presenters emphasized the growing demand for technical and IT programs with the VRRAP. The Thrive Act will likely affect the time horizon of the VRRAP but details should be forthcoming in the near future after the VA meets with the DOL.

The presenters mentioned that section 1019 (Overpayments to eligible persons or Veterans) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 was particularly urgent in its implementation. Section 1019 was implemented in January. However, the VA has been resolving complicated debt collection issues since the day of implementation. They expect those issues will be completely resolved by the end of June 2021.

***On Thursday, June 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity hearing to discuss veteran employment and the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting gave insight to programs such as VRRAP, the Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care Benefits Improvement Act, and the American Rescue Plan of 2021. The gentlemen who presented their concerns and suggestions to the subcommittee gave insight on how education and skill bridge programs can make a major difference in the lives of veterans.

The main point of the speakers' ideas is that a more cohesive and comprehensive skill bridge program is needed so that veterans can begin preparing for life as a civilian while they are still active duty. The speakers also touched on the necessity of partnership between the private sector and the public sector to help veterans know their options and gain certifications, internships, and apprenticeships that they will need upon their separation from the military. There was also a focus on military spouses and their need for programs that help them find gainful employment while their spouses are active duty and separated from the military.

Quick Facts:

***Johnny Isakson and David Rowe Veterans Healthcare Benefits Improvement Act***

- The final bill also expands the current in-state tuition provisions for veterans using their GI Benefits at public colleges to include all veterans regardless of how long ago they served. Additionally, the legislation expands the use of the "Yellow Ribbon Program" to international institutions of higher education and codifies the "Principles of Excellence" from the Obama Executive Order requiring postsecondary information for veteran students.
- The bill provides broad flexibility to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure veterans have access to housing and educational benefits during the pandemic, including for veterans attending institutions whose semester calendars may be adjusted because of the pandemic.

***American Rescue Plan of 2021***

- Gave the VA the authority and funding for the Veterans Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) which provides up to 12 months of training in high demand occupations. (\$383 million)

- \$14.5 billion for covid related healthcare, \$1 billion for debt forgiveness, \$750 million for state homes, and more smaller figures

#### **VTEC**

- Veteran employment through technology, part of the “forever GI bill” and helps train veterans for placement in the high-tech job field. So far there have been 1846 grads with a 71% job placement and an average salary of \$57,000.

***On Thursday, June 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division hosted a Global Virtual Career Fair Honoring Women Veterans the first hour. The event hosted a total of 319 registered businesses and 835 registered jobseekers.

***On Friday, June 11***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division preparing final arrangements for Council of College and Military Educators meeting in DC next month to include Power Point Presentation to general session on Education.

***On Friday, June 11***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended weekly meeting with EdCounsel and Lumina Risk Based Survey (RBS) Executive Team to discuss forms and evaluation of site visit phase of RBS project; Reviewed of impact statement for RBS survey project.

***On Friday, June 11***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended HoUSed: Universal, Stable, and Affordable Housing meeting. Discussed new funding to address veteran homelessness from the American Rescue Plan Act and heard about a new report on prioritizing emergency rental assistance to ensure funds reach the lowest-income and most marginalized households, who are most at risk of housing instability.

***On Friday, June 11***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division along with the National Security Division, met with the Minister of Labor and Defense Attaché at the U.S Embassy of Afghanistan to discuss foreign and domestic policy issues. As a result of the drawing down U.S. presence, the Afghans sought us to remain engaged by providing morale and financial support; all the while protecting Afghanistan’s economy during the transition. They also expressed concerns with the potential that youth groups, servicemembers, and veterans transitioning out of the military could be recruited by the Taliban. As they seek to see how the American Legion and the U.S aid transitioning service members and veterans along with how the American Legion conducts youth programs, potential mitigating solutions offered were employment opportunities and programs, such as children and youth programs (Boys & Girls State), small business development, and institutions of higher learning.

### **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

**Recognizing Military Service in Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Act:** Would allow service members who pause their student loan payments while deployed or on extended active duty orders to count that period of time toward their PSLF progress – which is currently not allowed.

**Status: Expected to be introduced within a month**

**H.R.1836 - Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021:** Would expand eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill to count every day that a servicemember is paid and in uniform toward benefit eligibility in order to achieve GI Bill parity for National Guard and Reserve members.

**Student Veterans Transparency and Protection Act:** Would improve veterans' access to information about higher education and allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to restore benefits that veterans use at schools subject to civil enforcement.

**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:** This 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.

### **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**

**H.R. 711, West Los Angeles VA Campus Improvement Act of 2021:** This legislation would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) West Los Angeles Medical Center campus to use revenues from leases and easements as a dedicated funding source to build additional housing for homeless veterans, offset the high costs of housing construction, and help fund the provision of supportive services for veterans in the community.

[Resolution No. 141: Department of Veterans Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing](#)

**Status: This bill was submitted for the April 21, 2021 testimony.**

**H.R. 2082, VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act:** To make certain improvements relating to the supply chain of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

[Resolution No. 13: Support “Buy American” Policy within the Federal Government to Create Opportunities for Veterans](#)

**Status: This bill was submitted for the April 21, 2021 testimony.**

#### TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

On Tuesday, June 8, 2021, the President signed into law: H.R. 2523, the “Training in High-demand Roles to Improve Veteran Employment Act or the THRIVE Act,” which clarifies provisions of the COVID-19 Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance program, and to make certain technical corrections to the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020.

#### THRIVE ACT SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY

We have a once-in-a-generation chance for Congress to pass a transformational economic recovery package that put over 15 million people to work in family-sustaining, union jobs across the economy — from care work to manufacturing— to cut climate pollution in half by 2030 and advance gender, environmental, Indigenous, economic, and racial justice, with particular attention to Black and Indigenous people. It’s called the THRIVE Act. This bill offers a blueprint for economic renewal backed by a movement of movements, including unions, racial justice, climate, and other grassroots groups. The THRIVE Act will be introduced in Congress in April 2021. The THRIVE Act’s lead sponsors are Sens. Ed Markey and Jeff Merkley, and Reps. Debbie Dingell, Ilhan Omar, Jamaal Bowman, Pramila Jayapal, Earl Blumenauer, Ro Khanna, Yvette Clarke, and Nanette Barragan.

## WHAT'S IN THE THRIVE ACT?

### Investment at the scale of the crises we face, while distributing power

We need an economic renewal plan as big and interconnected as the crises we face. The THRIVE Act puts forth a bold investment package where impacted communities play a leading role in building a more just economy.

- **The THRIVE Act authorizes investments of at least \$1 trillion per year** for FY 2022-2031. New economic modeling shows that this is the scale of investment we need to create more than 15 million good jobs and end the unemployment crisis, while cutting climate pollution in half by 2030 and confronting systemic racism and gender, economic, and environmental injustice.

- **Honoring frontline leadership.** The bill creates a THRIVE Board of representatives from impacted communities, unions, and Indigenous Nations to guide the \$1 trillion per year in new investments. The Board will enable communities that have faced chronic underinvestment to take the reins and reorient investments toward justice. Those on the frontlines of historic pollution, the climate crisis, and economic insecurity must be on the forefront of building a more just economy, while also leading the fight against systemic racism and other social injustices.

- **Economy-wide investments to take on injustice, pollution, and joblessness wherever we find it.** The bill includes investments to upgrade our infrastructure for clean water, affordable public transit, and a reliable electric grid (creating 5 million jobs); to expand access to wind and solar power, electric vehicles, and healthy buildings (creating 4 million jobs); to protect our rural and urban spaces, wetlands, prairies, and forests and support family farmers who are embracing regenerative agriculture (creating 4 million jobs); and to invest in public institutions and care for children and the elderly — essential work that is underpaid and largely performed by women of color (creating 2 million jobs).



- **Respecting Indigenous sovereignty.** The bill requires the U.S. federal government to respect the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations in making these investments, which means honoring the U.S. government's trust responsibilities and requiring the free, prior, and informed consent of Tribes for all investments affecting them.

- **At least 50% of investments for frontline communities.** The bill requires that at least half of the new investments directly benefit frontline communities that have borne the brunt of systemic racism, environmental injustice, and economic exclusion, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Arab, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

### Strong Labor, Equity And Environmental Standards To Build A More Just Economy

Economic analysis shows that, without strong labor, equity, and environmental standards, investments would reinforce the unjust status quo by creating millions of mediocre, non-union jobs for predominantly white men. To build a just economy, the Thrive Act requires strong wage and benefit guarantees, access to unions, equitable hiring that favors women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and environmental justice standards to ensure that investments repair, rather than add to, historic harms.

**To Ensure Jobs Created By The Act Meet High-Road Labor Standards, And Boost Workers' Rights To Form A Union, The Thrive Act:**

- Invests in quality, family-sustaining jobs, defined as jobs which provide (a) family-sustaining wages and benefits (at least \$15 per hour, or the prevailing wage, whichever is higher), (b) the right of workers to form or join a union and engage in collective bargaining free of harassment and intimidation, (c) child care support; (d) at least twelve weeks of paid family leave; (e) at least two weeks of paid sick leave; (f) at least two weeks of paid vacation per year; and (g) robust worker safety standards. Critically, the bill includes all care workers and agricultural workers in worker protections.
- Strengthens workers' power and supports domestic job creation using provisions such as Buy America and other domestic content standards, community benefits agreements, local hire standards, high road training partnerships, and Project Labor Agreements
- Requires investment criteria that advance key provisions included in the PRO Act (H.R. 842) and the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, such as stronger and swifter remedies when employers interfere with workers' rights; expanded freedom to organize without employer interference; first contract arbitration; allowing fair share agreements; protected strikes and other protest activity; and expansion of organizing and bargaining rights

**The Thrive Act Invests In Historically Underserved And Impacted Communities, Including, But Not Limited To Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Arab, Asian, And Pacific Islander Communities, To Build Power And Counteract Racial, Ethnic, Gender, And Other Social And Economic injustices. The Act:**

- Ensures that no investment harms historically underserved and disadvantaged communities, using provisions such as equity assessments, guardrails against displacement of existing residents or community-serving businesses, and provisions to ensure communities have the power to democratically plan, implement, and administer projects
- Addresses historic discriminatory practices in hiring, investment, and procurement by prioritizing local and equitable hiring and contracting, including Ban the Box and other fair hire provisions that support traditionally marginalized workers
- Drives funding toward an array of priority investments in disadvantaged communities, while increasing educational opportunities that prepare historically marginalized and disadvantaged youth for high-quality jobs

**To Strengthen And Heal The Nation-To-Nation Relationship with Sovereign American Indian And Alaska Native Tribes, The Thrive Act:**

- Ensures that Federal agencies extend regulatory and adjudicatory authority related to treaty reserved rights and recognized customary rights to off reservation lands, waters, and villages; preserve and protect sacred and cultural sites of significance; adequately and equitably address the violence against Indigenous women, trans women and femmes, and children, inclusive of the inherent authority of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in this regard
- Expands funding to tribes and Indigenous communities for recovery and relief to build sustainable economies and jobs based upon the principles of Indigenous just transition. This includes prioritizing equitable investments in tribe and local community-based projects that contribute to improved infrastructure, health care, clean water and sanitation, food sovereignty and agroecological farming; environmental and ecosystems management, clean-up, and remediation of contaminated and hazardous sites; local and community-based housing and renewable energy; and

innovative and alternative community-based housing programs based upon traditional Indigenous design, use of local natural materials, and localized training and employment.

**To Combat Environmental Injustice And Ensure Healthylives For All, The Thrive Act:**

- Promotes meaningful involvement by impacted communities — especially vulnerable environmental justice communities — in program implementation, in line with Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing
- Tackles toxic pollution by holding corporations accountable, reducing pollution at source and strengthening the regulation of, and accounting for, cumulative health impacts
- Prioritizes investment in remediation of polluted sites in environmental justice communities and expands equitable access to public health resources in historically underserved and impacted communities, recognizing the disproportionate burden of health impacts in these communities and the historic disinvestment in public health resources

**To Avert F Urther Climate And Environmental Catastrophe,The Thrive Act:**

- Authorizes the necessary spending to meet ambitious climate targets, including the emissions reductions necessary to stay below 1.5 degrees of global warming; 100% clean energy by 2035, 100% zero-emission new buildings by 2025; and putting the majority of Americans within walking distance of high-quality, affordable, clean public transit by 2030
- Makes funding conditional on passing an environmental justice screen and ensuring that investments do not displace workers or depress wages and benefits due to increased costs associated with participating in a program
- Ensures that investments under this Act do not expand fossil fuel infrastructure, the use of emissions offsets, or geoengineering; and requires the use of climate-resilient designs for infrastructure and high environmental standards for materials

**To Ensure Fairness For Workers And Communities Affected By Economic Transitions, The Thrive Act:**

- Directs investments to support displaced workers, including 5 years of wage and benefit replacement, housing assistance, fully funded pensions, crisis and trauma and early retirement support, skills training, education, and equitable job placement
- Directs funding to cover local budget shortfalls; economic diversification, including to address historic injustices, as defined by community and worker-led planning processes; physical and social infrastructure; retooling and conversion, reclamation, and remediation of closed and abandoned facilities and sites

**The Thrive Act Reinvests In Public Institutions That Enable Workers And Communities To Thrive. The Act:**

- Prevents privatization of any public lands, water, natural resources, or existing public sector jobs
- Directs funding to support and expand public health care systems, public education and other public services at the state and local level to address the health, environmental and socio-economic impacts of climate crises; and toward institutional reforms to make government investments more coordinated, effective, accountable to disadvantaged communities, and suited to taking on the full scale of the major challenges of the coming decade

The American Legion supports on-the-job training (OJT) programs for eligible veterans and of of joint projects to enhance OJT opportunities for eligible veterans through the Montgomery GI Bill as found in **Resolution No. 296: Support The Development Of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities**

## TOPIC 5: EDUCATION

### AMID TUITION ASSISTANCE UPROAR, ARMY VOWS TO REIMBURSE SOLDIERS WHO PAID OUT OF POCKET

While frustration and confusion grow over the Army's stalled tuition assistance program, Army leaders vowed on Wednesday to reimburse soldiers who pay out of pocket for courses that the Army was supposed to pay for.

"At no point should the schools require any [up-front] payment ... the soldiers should not have any upfront cost, but if they do the Army will reimburse them what they are authorized," said Col. Charles Rambo, director of Army credentialing and continuing education services.

Rambo — along with Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael Grinston and Lt. Gen. Ted Martin, commander of the Combined Arms Center — spoke to reporters on Wednesday to address rising concerns about the service's tuition assistance program. After attempting to switch platforms from GoArmyEd to the new ArmyIgnitED system, the service ran into technical issues that delayed the transition which was originally scheduled for March 8.



*.Army Promises to Reimburse Soldiers Affected by Broken Tuition Assistance Website*

The fumble over the new platform has resulted in widespread confusion for soldiers unsure of who is paying the bill for their classes, with many saying they've had to pay out of pocket in order to move forward with registration or to be able to graduate on time.

"I've had to cancel some of the courses I was going to take because of the sheer cost, so that pushes me back a semester from graduating," one soldier told NBC News.

The majority of the confusion seems to stem from inconsistent messaging about what soldiers should be able to expect while ArmyIgnitED is down.

The Army has said that soldiers should be able to use an exception to policy the service put in place to serve as a sort of IOU and allow them to continue on with their courses. Through this workaround, soldiers should be able to enroll in classes through their school and when ArmyIgnitED is up and running — which may not be until after July 1 — the Army will pay back the schools what they're owed.

But the exception to policy only seems to work if the schools agree to it, and some soldiers have said that their schools aren't.

Additionally, while Army leaders said on Wednesday that soldiers shouldn't be asked to pay upfront for classes, the ArmyIgnitED Facebook page is saying the exact opposite. After one person on Facebook said their school wouldn't accept an IOU from the Army, the ArmyIgnitED page responded that the school support team reaches out to schools when they hear there are issues and the school "agrees to work with us with few exceptions."

Days later, the page said "schools may require payment upfront and will refund the student [when] TA is paid."

Grinston's spokesman later clarified that while some schools may require upfront payment, soldiers should elevate the issue to their leaders in an effort to get it resolved before soldiers make those payments themselves. And if a soldier has already made that payment, they should tell their leaders so the Army can ensure they are reimbursed.

It's unclear how quickly that reimbursement will come if soldiers are indeed paying upfront. Rambo said on Wednesday that when a soldier requests reimbursement, Army University will verify the soldier's data with the school and "pay the school immediately so the soldier can be reimbursed."

Grinston urged leaders to talk with their soldiers, make sure they have the information they need, help them through the process, and "not just send [them] to the education center." And he and Martin — who said they both received degrees through the tuition assistance program — apologized to the soldiers impacted by the dysfunctional transition to ArmyIgnitED.

"As commanding general of the Combined Arms Center, I own this problem," Martin said. "I take responsibility for it, and I humbly apologize to the soldiers out there that have been forced into financial hardship because of this."

## TOPIC 6: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Labor announced the award of more than \$52 million in grants to help address the issues surrounding veteran homelessness.

Administered by the department's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program funding also supports Homeless Female Veterans' and Veterans with Families program and the Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program grants. Ending homelessness among veterans has long been a priority for the department. VETS designs these programs to provide training, skills development and career support.



*DOL Grants Encourage Hiring Homeless Veterans*

"As the nation continues its recovery from the pandemic, initiatives like these are more important than ever," said Department Secretary Marty Walsh. "Our veterans deserve our best efforts to ensure they have a safe place to live, means to support themselves and their families and opportunities to pursue a fulfilling career."



The department will award 119 continuation grants totaling more than \$40 million and 36 new three-year grant awards totaling more than \$12 million to provide a wide range of services to veterans currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. In addition to working with VETS, grant recipients partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Supportive Service for Veteran Families program and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Continuum of Care program.

For detailed information on where the grants will be administered, click [here](#).

The American Legion urge Congress to establish a fund in the Treasury of the United States to be known as the "Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund," to provide assistance to homeless veterans as a supplement to, but not a replacement for, existing funds for such assistance as found in **Resolution No. 330: Homeless Veterans Assistance**

## TOPIC 7: SMALL BUSINESS

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force to Address Short-Term Supply Chain Discontinuities.

The Biden-Harris Administration is announcing key findings from the reviews directed under Executive Order (E.O.) 14017 "America's Supply Chains," as well as immediate actions the Administration will take to strengthen American supply chains to promote economic security, national security, and good-paying, union jobs here at home.

On February 24, 2021, the President signed E.O. 14017, directing a whole-of-government approach to assessing vulnerabilities in, and strengthening the resilience of, critical supply chains. Stemming from that effort, the Biden-Harris Administration has already begun to take steps to address supply chain vulnerabilities:

- The Administration's COVID-19 Response Team has drastically expanded the manufacture of vaccines and other essential supplies, enabling more than 137 million Americans to get fully vaccinated.
- The Administration has also worked with companies that manufacture and use semiconductor chips to identify improvements in supply chain management practices that can strengthen the semiconductor supply chain over time.
- The Department of Defense (DOD) has announced an investment in the expansion of the largest, rare earth element mining and processing company outside of China to provide the raw materials necessary to help combat the climate crisis.
- And the Biden-Harris Administration is working to address critical cyber vulnerabilities to U.S. supply chains and critical infrastructure, including issuing E.O. 14028 on "Improving the Nation's Cyber Security" just last month.

Building on these efforts, the Administration released findings from the comprehensive 100-day supply chain assessments for four critical products: semiconductor manufacturing and advanced packaging; large capacity batteries, like those for electric vehicles; critical minerals and materials; and pharmaceuticals and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). The Administration is taking immediate action to address vulnerabilities and strengthen resilience with the launch of a new effort aimed at addressing near-term supply chain disruptions. And, pursuant to E.O. 14017, it is crafting strategies for six industrial bases that underpin America's

economic and national security, which will be completed within a year. The supply chain reviews reinforce the need for the transformative investments proposed in the President's American Jobs Plan.

These efforts are critical because, as the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis have shown, structural weaknesses in both domestic and international supply chains threaten America's economic and national security. While amplified by the public health and economic crisis, decades of underinvestment and public policy choices led to fragile supply chains across a range of sectors and products. Unfair trade practices by competitor nations and private sector and public policy prioritization of low-cost labor, just-in-time production, consolidation, and private sector focus on short-term returns over long-term investment have hollowed out the U.S. industrial base, siphoned innovation from the United States, and stifled wage and productivity growth.

At the same time, the reviews find that the United States is well-positioned to maintain and strengthen our innovative leadership and rebuild our productive capacity in key sectors and value-chains. Our unparalleled university and research systems, skilled and diverse workforce, ecosystem of entrepreneurs and small businesses, and position as a global leader with strong relationships with allies and partners are the building blocks to revitalizing domestic competitiveness and strengthening supply chains. Working together, industry, labor, the government, and other stakeholders can chart a new path forward that emphasizes resilience and security, as well as broad-based growth and tackling the climate crisis.

### **Taking Action to Address Vulnerabilities in Critical Product Supply Chains**

The actions the Biden-Harris Administration announced today are the first step in a whole-of-government effort to strengthen domestic competitiveness and supply chain resilience. To address vulnerabilities in the supply chains of the four critical products identified by E.O. 14017, the Biden-Harris Administration will immediately:

#### *Support domestic production of critical medicines.*

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), under the Defense Production Act (DPA) and building on current public-private partnerships, will establish a public-private consortium for advanced manufacturing and onshoring of domestic essential medicines production. The consortium's first task will be to select 50-100 critical drugs, drawn from the Food and Drug Administration's essential medicines list, to be the focus of an enhanced onshoring effort.
- HHS will make an initial commitment of approximately \$60 million from the Defense Production Act appropriation in the American Rescue Plan to develop novel platform technologies to increase domestic manufacturing capacity for API. Greater API production domestically will help reduce reliance on global supply chains for medications that are in shortage, particularly during times of increased public health need.



#### *Secure an end-to-end domestic supply chain for advanced batteries*

- The Department of Energy (DOE) will release a National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries.
- This Blueprint will codify the findings of the battery supply chain review in a 10-year, whole-of-government plan to urgently develop a domestic lithium battery supply chain that combats the climate crisis by creating good-paying clean energy jobs across America. Later this month, the Department of Energy will host a Battery Roundtable, including representatives from each segment of the battery supply chain, to discuss the Blueprint.
- DOE's Loan Programs Office (LPO) will immediately leverage the approximately \$17 billion in loan authority in the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Loan Program (ATVM) to support the domestic battery supply chain. LPO will leverage full statutory authority to finance key strategic areas of development and fill deficits in the domestic supply chain capacity. This will include the ATVM program making loans to manufacturers of advanced technology vehicle battery cells and packs for re-equipping, expanding or establishing such manufacturing facilities in the United States.
- DOE's Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) will launch a new effort to support deployment of energy storage projects by federal agencies. It will begin with a federal government-wide energy storage review that will evaluate the current opportunity for deploying battery storage at federal sites. FEMP will also launch a call for projects from federal sites interested in deploying energy storage projects, and provide the necessary technical assistance to get those projects built. These actions build on steps taken earlier this year to leverage \$13 million in FEMP's Assisting Federal Facilities with Energy Conservation Technologies grants to unlock an estimated \$260 million or more in project investments, including battery storage projects.



*Invest in sustainable domestic and international production and processing of critical minerals.*

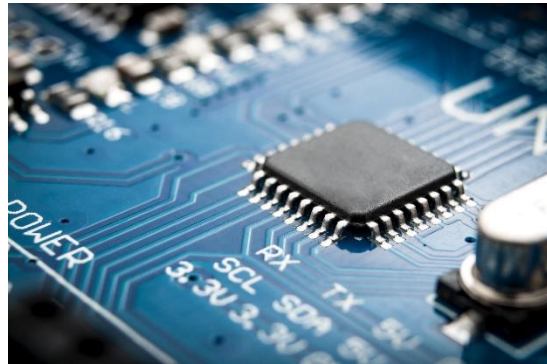
- The Department of Interior (DOI), with the support of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, will establish a working group composed of agencies such as the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify sites where critical minerals could be produced and processed in the United States while adhering to the highest environmental, labor, and sustainability standards. This working group will collaborate with the private sector, states, Tribal Nations, and stakeholders—including representatives of labor, impacted communities, and environmental justice leaders—to expand sustainable, responsible critical minerals production and processing in the United States.



- The Administration will establish an interagency team composed of staff from agencies including DOI, USDA, EPA, and others with expertise in mine permitting and environmental law. This team will identify gaps in statutes and regulations that may need to be updated by Congress to ensure: new production meets strong standards before mining begins, during the mining process, and after mining ends; meaningful community engagement and consultation with Tribal Nations, respecting the government-to-government relationship at all stages of the mining process; and opportunities to reduce time, cost, and risk of permitting without compromising strong environmental and consultation benchmarks are fully explored.
- DOD will deploy DPA Title III incentives—including grants, loans, loan guarantees, and offtake agreements—to support sustainably-produced strategic and critical materials, including scaling proven research and development (R&D) concepts and emerging technologies from other programs such as the Small Business Innovation Research awardees.
- The DOE LPO, through its Title 17 Renewable Energy and Efficiency Energy Projects solicitation, has more than \$3 billion in loan guarantees available to support efficient end-use energy technologies, such as mining, extraction, processing, recovery, or recycling technologies, of critical materials projects that satisfy Title 17 requirements.
- The U.S. Development Finance Corporation will expand international investments in projects that will increase production capacity for critical products, including critical minerals and other products identified pursuant to the E.O. 14017 process, ensuring that investments that support supply chain resilience and uphold international standards of environmental and social performance.

*Partner with industry, allies, and partners to address semiconductor shortages.*

- Through strategic engagement with industry, the Department of Commerce (DOC) has supported nearly \$75 billion in direct investments from the private sector in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and R&D. DOC will bolster its partnership with industry to facilitate information flow between semiconductor producers and suppliers and end-users. Leveraging the Department's convening power, including through its advisory committees, DOC will bring stakeholders together to promote improved transparency and data sharing.
- Building on the success of recent engagements with Japan and the Republic of Korea, including the announcement of more than \$17 billion in U.S. semiconductor investments by leading companies in ROK, the Administration will strengthen engagement with allies and partners to promote fair semiconductor chip allocations, increase production, and promote increased investment.



### **Building Fair and Sustainable Industrial Bases**

In addition to the immediate actions taken in the supply chains of the critical products identified in E.O. 14017, the Administration is also announcing a series of actions to be taken

across the Federal government to support supply chain resilience, workforce development, production and innovation, and strong sustainability and labor standards at home and abroad.

The Administration will:

*Support American workers and innovation.*

- The Department of Labor (DOL) will announce later this month more than \$100 million in grants to support state-led apprenticeship expansion efforts as well as establish national Registered Apprenticeship Technical Assistance Centers of Excellence. The Apprenticeship Occupations and Standards Center of Excellence will provide support and technical assistance to employers and industry to build out model registered apprenticeship programs in critical supply chains.
- DOE will announce a new policy to ensure that all innovations that are developed with taxpayer dollars through DOE's Science and Energy Programs require awardees to substantially manufacture those products in the United States, creating good-paying domestic jobs. This change will cover more than \$8 billion in clean energy and climate innovation funding requested in the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, as well as future fiscal year spending. DOE will implement these actions through a Determination of Exceptional Circumstances under the Bayh-Dole Act. Additionally, the Administration will establish an interagency working group to identify best practices to develop and implement further improvements across the government.

*Invest in sustainable supply chains at home and abroad.*

- The Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council, in connection with the implementation of Executive Order 14005, "Ensuring the Future is Made in America with All of America's Workers," plans to issue a proposed rule to develop a new process for preferencing critical products that are in manufactured products or component parts, under the Buy American Act. This will leverage the buying power of the nearly \$600 billion in federal contracting to strengthen domestic supply chains for critical products.
- USDA will commit more than \$4 billion in a new, robust suite of Build Back Better initiatives focused on rebuilding the U.S. food system and strengthening and diversifying supply chains for food production, food processing, food distribution and aggregation, and markets and consumers. Build Back Better efforts by USDA will seek to provide improved access to nutritious food, address racial equity and justice as well as climate change, make markets fair and competitive, provide ongoing support for producers and workers, and create greater resilience in the food supply chain.
- The President will convene a global forum on supply chain resilience that will bring together key government officials and private sector stakeholders from across key U.S. allies and partners to collectively assess vulnerabilities, develop common approaches to supply chain challenges, and work to build strength through diversity and shared prosperity.

*Combat unfair trade practices.*

- The Administration will establish a trade strike force led by the U.S. Trade Representative to propose unilateral and multilateral enforcement actions against unfair foreign trade practices that have eroded critical supply chains. The trade strike force will also identify

opportunities to use trade agreements to strengthen collective approaches to supply chain resilience with U.S. partners and allies.

- DOC will evaluate whether to initiate an investigation into neodymium magnets, which are critical inputs in motors and other devices, and are important to both defense and civilian industrial uses, under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962.

### **Tackling Near-Term Supply Chain Disruptions As the Economy Reopens**

The Administration's historic vaccination and economic relief efforts have spurred a rapid return of economic activity. As the United States and the broader global economy emerge from the pandemic, we have seen signs of new pressures on supply chains due to changes in demand. While these short-term supply chain disruptions are temporary, the President has directed his Administration to closely monitor these developments and take actions to minimize the impacts on workers, consumers, and businesses in order to bolster a strong economic recovery. To address these challenges, the Administration will:

*Establish a whole-of-government effort to monitor and address transitory supply chain challenges.*

- The Administration will establish new Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force to provide a whole-of-government response to address near-term supply chain challenges to the economic recovery. The Task Force will be led by the Secretaries of Commerce, Transportation, and Agriculture and will focus on areas where a mismatch between supply and demand has been evident: homebuilding and construction, semiconductors, transportation, and agriculture and food. The Task Force will bring the full capacity of the federal government to address near-term supply/demand mismatches. It will convene stakeholders to diagnose problems and surface solutions—large and small, public or private—that could help alleviate bottlenecks and supply constraints.
- DOC will lead a coordinated effort to bring together data from across the federal government to improve the federal government's ability to track supply and demand disruptions and facilitate information sharing between federal agencies and the private sector to more effectively identify near term risks and vulnerabilities.

### **Charting A New Course: Toward a Long-Term Strategy for Strengthening U.S. Supply Chain Resilience**

President Biden believes this is the moment to reimagine and rebuild a new American economy, not go back to the way things used to be. The report delivered to the President offers six sets of recommendations that, collectively, will not only strengthen the four prioritized supply chains, but will rebuild the U.S. industrial base and restart our innovation engine.

The supply chain reviews reinforce the need for the transformative investments proposed in the President's American Jobs Plan. The American Jobs Plan will make a once-in-a-generation capital investment to create millions of good-paying jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position the U.S. to compete globally in key industries. This agenda aligns with and reinforces the Administration's strategy outlined above to invest in US supply chain resilience.

*Key Recommendations Include:*

Rebuild America's production and innovation capabilities. Long-term competitiveness will require an ecosystem of production, innovation, skilled workers, and diverse small and medium-sized suppliers. Those ecosystems are the infrastructure needed to spur private sector investment in manufacturing and innovation. But that infrastructure cannot be created or sustained without the support and leadership of the federal government. Specific recommendations to rebuild our industrial base for critical sectors include:

- Provide dedicated funding for semiconductor manufacturing and R&D: We recommend Congress support at least \$50 billion in investments to advance domestic manufacturing of critical semiconductors and promote semiconductor R&D.
- Provide funding and financial incentives to spur consumer adoption of EVs and other EV incentives: We recommend Congress authorize new and expanded incentives to spur consumer adoption of U.S.-made electric vehicles. In addition, we recommend Congress support \$5 billion in investments to electrify the federal fleet with U.S.-made EVs, and \$15 billion in infrastructure investment to build out a national charging infrastructure to facilitate the adoptions of EVs.
- Provide financing to support advanced battery production: DOE should use existing authorities and funding to support U.S. manufacturing of advanced technology vehicle battery cells.
- Establish a new Supply Chain Resilience Program: We recommend Congress enact a Supply Chain Resilience Program at DOC to create a focal point within the government to monitor and address supply chain challenges. This program should be backed with \$50 billion to make transformative investments in strengthening U.S. supply chains across a range of critical products.
- Deploy the DPA to expand production capacity in critical industries: A DPA Action Group should determine how best to leverage the authorities of the DPA to strengthen supply chain resilience, building off work done to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Invest in the development of next generation batteries: Agencies should support technologies that will reduce the critical mineral requirements for next generation electric vehicle batteries and grid storage technologies, and that improve U.S. competitiveness in this critical sector.
- Invest in the development of new pharmaceutical manufacturing processes: Agencies should increase their funding of advanced manufacturing technologies to increase production of key pharmaceuticals and ingredients, including using both traditional manufacturing techniques and on-demand manufacturing capabilities for supportive care fluids, APIs, and finished dosage form drugs.
- Work with industry and labor to create pathways to quality jobs, with a free and fair choice to join a union, through sector-based community college partnerships, apprenticeships and on-the-job training: DOL's Employment and Training Administration should support sector-based pathways to jobs, for example in the semiconductor industry.
- Invest in small, medium and disadvantaged businesses in critical supply chains: The Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer competitive programs should support a diverse portfolio of small businesses to meet R&D needs, and increase commercialization.
- Examine the ability of the U.S. Export-Import Bank (EXIM) to use existing authorities to support U.S. manufacturing of products: EXIM should develop a proposal for Board consideration regarding whether EXIM should establish a new Domestic Financing

Program that would provide financing to support the establishment and/or expansion of U.S. manufacturing facilities and infrastructure projects in the United States that would facilitate U.S. exports.

*Support the development of markets that invest in workers, value sustainability, and drive quality.* These reports identify key areas where government could play a more active role in setting standards and incentivizing high-road business practices. By establishing strong domestic standards and advocating for the establishment of global standards, the United States can support the private sector's ability to create and adopt sustainable and resilient practices.

- Create 21st century standards for the extraction and processing of critical minerals at home and abroad: The government, working with private sector and non-governmental stakeholders, should encourage the development and adoption of comprehensive sustainability standards for essential minerals, such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, copper, rare earth elements, and other materials.
- Identify potential sustainable production and processing locations for critical minerals: The United States' non-fuel mineral resources are significantly under-mapped relative to those of other developed nations. Congress should fully resource programs like the U.S. Geological Survey's Mineral Resources Program at DOI to develop a comprehensive map of domestic critical mineral resources and reserves.
- Improve transparency throughout the pharmaceuticals supply chain: HHS should develop and make recommendations to Congress on new authorities that would allow HHS to track production by facility, track API sourcing, and require that API and finished dosage form sources be identified on labeling for all pharmaceuticals sold in the United States.

*Leverage the government's role as a purchaser and investor in critical goods.* As a significant customer and investor, the Federal Government has the capacity to shape the market for many critical products. The public sector can deploy this power in times of crisis, as in the case of Operation Warp Speed, or in normal times. The Administration should leverage this role to strengthen supply chain resilience and support national priorities.

- Reform and strengthen U.S. stockpiles: The Administration and Congress should take actions to recapitalize and restore the National Defense Stockpile of critical minerals and materials. In the private sector, industries that have faced shortages of critical goods should evaluate mechanisms to strengthen corporate stockpiles of select critical products to ensure greater resilience in times of disruption.
- Ensure that new automotive battery production in the United States adheres to high labor standards: Tax credits, lending and grants offered to businesses to produce batteries domestically should ensure the creation of quality jobs with the free and fair choice to organize and bargain collectively for workers.

*Strengthen international trade rules, including trade enforcement mechanisms.* While fair competition from abroad is welcome, too often unfair foreign subsidies and other trade practices have adversely impacted U.S. manufacturing and more broadly, U.S. competitiveness. The U.S. government must implement a comprehensive strategy to push back on unfair foreign competition that erodes the resilience of U.S. critical supply chains and industries.



- Develop a comprehensive trade strategy to support fair and resilient supply chains: The Administration should develop a comprehensive trade strategy to support supply chain resilience and U.S. competitiveness. Supply chain resilience should be incorporated into the U.S. trade policy approach towards China, including in the ongoing review of U.S.-China trade policy. The Administration should also examine existing U.S. trade agreements to identify ways to strengthen collective supply chain resilience.

*Work with allies and partners to decrease vulnerabilities in the global supply chains.* The United States cannot address its supply chain vulnerabilities alone. Even as the U.S. makes investments to expand domestic production capacity for some critical products, we must work with allies and partners to secure supplies of critical goods that we will not make in sufficient quantities at home. We must work with America's allies and partners to strengthen our collective supply chain resilience, while ensuring high standards for labor and environmental practices are upheld.

- Use diplomatic tools to encourage and facilitate resilient supply chains: The U.S. should expand multilateral diplomatic engagement on supply chain vulnerabilities, particularly through groupings of like-minded allies such as the Quad and the G7.
- Leverage financial tools to support sustainable and resilient international supply chains: U.S. development and international finance tools offer a powerful avenue for working with allies and partners to strengthen supply chains for key products. The U.S. should explore initiatives and mechanisms for investing in projects to expand production in critical supply chains. Even as the U.S. expands the manufacture and mining of critical products domestically, it must take steps to ensure that the manufacturing and mining that takes place abroad supports supply chain resilience and meets high labor and environmental standards.

### **Key Findings from 100-Day Critical Product Supply Chain Reviews**

The reports being released today document a wide range of risks and vulnerabilities to U.S. supply chains for critical products. Over the course of the year, pursuant to E.O. 14017, the Departments of Transportation, Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, Defense, Energy, and Health and Human Services, working with other Departments and Agencies across the U.S. government, will develop comprehensive strategies for revitalizing six industrial bases: defense, public health and biological preparedness, information and communications technology, energy, transportation, and agriculture and food production.

Highlights of these risks and vulnerabilities identified by the 100-day reports include:

#### *Semiconductors*

Semiconductors are essential to our national security, our economic competitiveness, and to our daily lives. These tiny chips are vital to virtually every sector of the economy—including energy, healthcare, agriculture, consumer electronics, manufacturing, defense, and transportation. Semiconductors power our cell phones and dishwashers; as well as our fighter jets and cybersecurity defenses. Once a global leader in semiconductor production with robust public support, the United States has outsourced and offshored too much semiconductor manufacturing in recent decades. The United States has fallen from 37 percent of global semiconductor production to just 12 percent over the last 20 years.

The United States also lacks production capability at the most advanced technology levels. For leading edge logic chips, the U.S. and U.S. allies rely primarily on facilities in Taiwan, which produces 92 percent of such chips. Our reliance on imported chips introduces new vulnerabilities into the critical semiconductor supply chain. The United States produces only six to nine percent of the more mature logic chips, which are severely impacted by the current shortage. The loss of production capacity threatens all segments of the semiconductor supply chain as well as our long-term economic competitiveness.

We must build resilient and competitive semiconductor supply chains for the long-term. Our strategy must include taking defensive actions to protect our technological advantages. But we must also proactively invest in domestic production and R&D. We must develop an ecosystem that includes growing our innovative small, medium, and disadvantaged businesses, along with building a pipeline of skilled workers who can benefit from well-paying semiconductor jobs. Finally, we must engage our partners and allies to promote global resilience.

### *Large capacity batteries*

Advanced, high-capacity batteries play an integral role in 21st-century technologies that are critical to the clean energy transition and national security capabilities around the world—from electric vehicles, to stationary energy storage, to defense applications. Demand for these products is set to grow as supply chain constraints, geopolitical and economic competition, and other vulnerabilities continue to increase.

Today, America relies heavily on importing the inputs for fabricated advanced battery packs from abroad, exposing the nation to supply chain vulnerabilities that threaten to disrupt the availability and cost of the critical technologies that rely on them and the workforce that manufactures them. With the global lithium battery market expected to grow by a factor of five to ten by 2030, it is imperative that the United States invest immediately in scaling up a secure, diversified supply chain for high-capacity batteries here at home that supports good-paying, quality jobs with a free and fair choice to join a union and bargain collectively. That means seizing a critical opportunity to increase domestic battery manufacturing while investing to scale the full lithium battery supply chain, including the sourcing and processing of the critical minerals used in battery production all the way through to end-of-life battery collection and recycling.

### *Critical minerals and materials*

A range of critical minerals and materials are the building blocks of the products we use every day. As demand for clean energy technology increases over the short- and medium-term, an increased supply of critical minerals and materials will be necessary to meet national and global climate goals. China, using state-led, non-market interventions, captured large portions of value chains in several critical minerals and materials necessary for national and economic security. China accounts for an outsized share of the world's refining capacity, meaning that even if the United States were to diversify our sources of critical minerals or increase domestic extraction, we would still be reliant on China for processing before use in end-product manufacturing.

To secure a reliable, sustainable supply of critical minerals and materials, the United States must work with allies and partners to diversify supply chains away from adversarial nations and sources with unacceptable environmental and labor standards. U.S. investments abroad

must incentivize environmentally and socially responsible production. The United States must also invest in sustainable production, refining, and recycling capacity domestically, while ensuring strong environmental, environmental justice, and labor standards and meaningful community consultation, including with Tribal Nations through government-to-government collaboration.

### *Pharmaceuticals and APIs*

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical importance of a resilient U.S. healthcare manufacturing sector. Private sector innovation and robust federal investment allowed the U.S. to rapidly develop and strengthen COVID-19 supply chains. But the United States remains critically dependent on imports for a range of key pharmaceutical products and APIs—the primary ingredients of generic drugs—which represent 90 percent of all prescription medications filled. About 87 percent of API facilities for generic drugs are located overseas which has left U.S. supply chains of essential medicines vulnerable.

China and India are estimated to control substantial parts of the supply chain where there have been issues with shortages due to a range of disruptions that have impacted supply as well as quality and safety. The drive toward lower costs as well as unfair trade practices have led to a hollowing out of domestic production. A new approach is needed to ensure more resilient supply chains that includes improving transparency, building emergency capacity, and investing in domestic production.

The American Legion supports legislation and policy that mandates all federal agencies adopt and enforce a “Buy American” policy in the procurement of goods and services to the highest extent possible and for the return of manufacturing from overseas and the creation of more domestic manufacturers as found in Resolution No. 13: Support “Buy American” Policy within the Federal Government to Create Opportunities for Veterans. The American Legion has been asked to testify in an upcoming hearing: Pending Legislation on June 23, 2021., S.887: VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act.

## **TOPIC 8: CAREER FAIRS**

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### [Virtual Job Fair](#)

June 17, 2021, 1pm - 5pm

#### **RECRUITMENT FOCUS: VIRGINIA**

1-3pm: Reserved for job seekers with active security clearances

3-5pm: Open to all job seekers

Presented by [JobZone](#)

[More information](#)

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**Virtual Job Fair**

**June 17, 2021, 1pm - 3pm**

**VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

1-3pm: Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with telecommunications industry employers at this interactive virtual hiring event.

*Presented by [Hiring Our Heroes](#)*

[More information](#)

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*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.*

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director**  
**Veterans Employment & Education Division**  
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**Week Ending: 6/11/2021**