

The Weekly Report

October 8th, 2021

The latest news, views, and announcements

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National Veterans Employment & Education Division



VE&E'S LATEST NEWS STORY

The National Executive Committee approved VE&E's 8 resolutions presented:

1. Cybersecurity Protections for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses
2. Department of Defense Issuance for Military Credentialing Programs
3. Enhancing the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) for Veteran Workers
4. GI Bill Risk Based Survey
5. Mandatory use of the Veterans First Contracting Program by the Department of Defense
6. Support for Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot
7. Veteran and Servicemember Financial Protection
8. Women Veterans Homelessness Resource Provisions and Protections

The newest Veterans Employment & Education Commission Chairman was appointed during the National Executive Committee meetings in Indianapolis, Indiana – (October 6-7, 2021)



Please welcome VE&E
Commission Chairman,
James LaCoursiere
(CT)

Outgoing Chairman, **Daniel Seehafer (WI)** will be moving on to the Legislative Division.



*It was an honor working
with you the past two years.
Wishing you the best in
future endeavors.*



*A trade fair for semiconductor technology in Shanghai this year.
(Photo: Aly Song/Reuters)*

ECONOMY

U.S. TRADE POLICY ADAPTS TO A CHINA THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE

Biden's emerging China strategy doesn't involve China, instead focuses at home and on allies

While Ms. Tai steered clear of grand strategy, she nonetheless described China's interests as fundamentally at odds with the U.S.'s. By subsidizing steel, solar panels and other sectors, China wiped out entire U.S. industries and thousands of jobs, and intends to do the same with semiconductors, she said. It has unleashed "a zero-sum dynamic in the world economy where China's growth and prosperity come at the expense of workers and economic opportunity" in the U.S. and its allies, Ms. Tai said.

This appraisal raises something of a dilemma. If you assume China will never change, how do you formulate a China trade strategy? The answer is to leave China out of it. Ms. Tai did say she would engage with Chinese officials—she is, after all, a negotiator—while lowering expectations for the results. The U.S., she suggested, had long given priority to market access for U.S. business with little to show for it. That forced "us to open our eyes and think about, is what we're looking for

more liberalized trade (or)...smarter and more resilient trade?," she said.

Mr. Biden's China strategy, as she described it, would instead have several thrusts. First, rebuild the U.S.'s own domestic economic strength, by investing in infrastructure, research and development—the focus of a bipartisan bill worth roughly \$1 trillion that passed the Senate earlier this year.

Second, rather than hope China opens its markets to U.S. companies, the Biden administration will push them to manufacture more at home, to insulate the U.S. from supply disruptions and build up domestic innovative capacity: "I don't think enough people appreciate the degree to which manufacturing activity is a vital part of the innovation ecosystem," she said.

Third, the administration would work with allies on new trading arrangements that deal with those

features of China's system the WTO can't constrain, such as subsidies and state-controlled enterprises.

The virtue of these steps is that none require cooperation from China. The problem is that all require cooperation from others that may not be forthcoming. For example, progressive Democrats last week refused to pass the Senate infrastructure bill unless they also secure a much bigger, costlier and more controversial expansion of the social safety net that has nothing to do with China's challenge.

Even among allies, new trade arrangements routinely take years of painstaking negotiations. Mr. Trump pulled out of one such effort, the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, in 2017, and Ms. Tai shows no interest in joining its successor, though she

expressed support for a joint effort with the European Union and Japan to toughen subsidies rules.

Hardest of all is bringing back U.S. industrial supply chains. Events of the last year have shown how indispensable China is to global manufacturing. Despite tariffs, Covid-19 and other disruptions, few American companies are reshoring operations and most find leaving China unthinkable. Indeed, their priority is to get the U.S. tariffs on China lifted, and Ms. Tai's most notable policy announcement Monday was to let importers again apply for exemptions.



U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai this week said China has 'doubled down on its state-centric model.'
(Photo: Craig Hudson/Bloomberg News)

Ms. Tai said Mr. Biden's strategy is to engage China from a "position of strength." The problem is that even if successful, it will take years to show results—and China has a 20-year head start.

U.S. ECONOMY ADDED 194,000 JOBS IN SEPTEMBER

Unemployment rate dropped to 4.8%

The U.S. economy added 194,000 jobs in September and the unemployment rate fell to 4.8%. The Delta variant and a tight labor market held back hiring.

The labor market remains depleted from last year's pandemic-induced recession—and job growth was stronger earlier this year. In the first seven months of 2021, the economy added an average 636,000 jobs a month.

The spread this summer of the Delta variant, a particularly contagious strain of Covid-19, likely spooked would-be job seekers and impeded speedier job growth in September, despite many companies being desperate to hire, economists and business leaders say.

"Ramped up production may be necessary, but you can't find the employees to ramp it up," said Ann Silver, head of the local Chamber of Commerce in Reno, Nev. "We're hearing that from every sector—hospitality and touring, healthcare, you name it. People can't be found. Everybody's quick to say, 'Wow, the economy is rebounding.' Well, it can't without human beings."

Employers appear eager to hire across the country. There were nearly 11 million unfilled jobs at the end of July, the highest on record and exceeding the number of unemployed workers seeking jobs, Labor Department figures show. The U.S. had roughly five million fewer jobs in August compared with February 2020.

Employers are increasingly holding on to the workers they do have, with layoffs across the U.S. declining. Applications for initial jobless claims fell by 38,000 last week to 326,000, close to a pandemic low, the Labor Department said Thursday.

The jobless rate remains higher than the pre-pandemic level of 3.5%. But other measures—chiefly, wage growth—suggest the labor market is tight. The average hourly pay of private-sector workers climbed 4.3% in the year through August, Labor Department data show, as employers raised wages to compete over a shrunken pool of workers.

At Great Basin Brewing Co.’s two restaurants in the Reno, Nev., area, managers have raised the wages of cooks by 30% since January, said co-founder Tom Young, who recently sold the company to private investors. Diners have returned to the restaurants in droves this year, but instead of seating the normal 180 patrons in each store they will only seat a maximum 150 due to the lack of kitchen staff, Mr. Young said. The company seeks to hire 10 people. “There aren’t enough workers to go around here,” Mr. Young said.

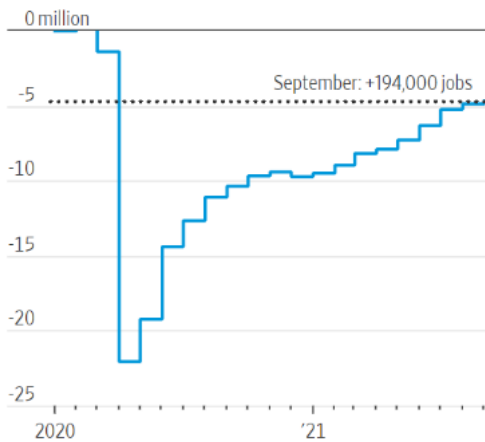
The labor-force participation rate—or the share of workers with a job or actively looking for one—stood at 61.7% in August, down from 63.3% in February 2020.

The number one reason why people are avoiding the workforce is fear of catching the coronavirus, according to an August survey by the job-search website Indeed. Other factors include parents staying at home to care for children while some schools remained closed this year.

Economists point to at least two reasons for why they think job growth picked up last month. One is that many school districts reopened and likely hired workers such as cafeteria workers and bus drivers. The reopening also may have enabled parents, particularly mothers, to return to work. With Covid-19 cases declining recently and vaccinate rates rising, more workers could return to the labor force, economists say.

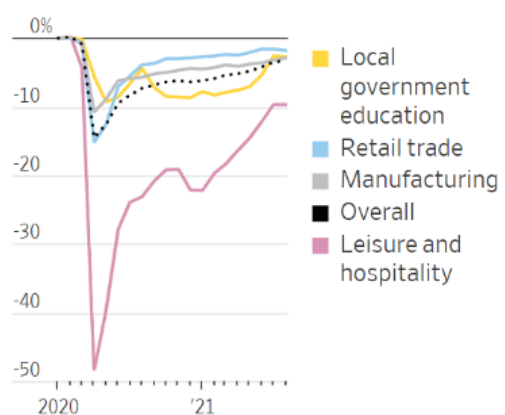
“If previous declines in case counts are any guide, the reduced salience of the pandemic will lead to more folks returning to the labor force,” said Nick Bunker, economist at Indeed.

Payrolls, change since January 2020



Note: Seasonally adjusted
Source: U.S. Labor Department

Payrolls by sector, change since January 2020



Note: Seasonally adjusted
Source: U.S. Labor Department



EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION

ONWARD TO OPPORTUNITY: STANDING IN THE GAP FOR VETERAN EMPLOYMENT

For America's 18.5 million veterans, the complexities, challenges, and difficulties of navigating civilian life after military service start the day that they return home. Veterans currently comprise about 7 percent of America's civilian adult population and a significant portion of the labor force. Their journeys in post-service employment and careers are often complicated by service-related trauma, disconnects between military skills and civilian job opportunities, and cultural differences between military and civilian life.

Research on veteran transitions paints a sobering picture of post-service employment outcomes, especially for enlisted personnel. Upon re-entering civilian life, 63 percent find themselves

underemployed. Forty percent are affected by PTSD and self-harm, 35 percent have issues with alcohol, and 44 percent experience financial stress. For many veterans, service-related trauma results in psychological challenges severe enough to affect their ability to complete employment-training programs, to secure a job, and to sustain employment. Alongside post-service trauma, one in four veterans also have a service-related disability, further limiting or complicating work and careers.

To support exiting service members, the Department of Defense operates a mandatory Transition Assistance Program (TAP) that prepares transitioning veterans for civilian employment. Engagement in TAP begins 6

months prior to separation and includes career fairs, career coaching, skills-matching guidance, and job search assistance. Unfortunately, TAP program offerings drop significantly after exit from service and little is known about the effectiveness of the services it offers. Some studies suggest that TAP is difficult to navigate and leaves significant gaps between veteran needs and TAP services.

Onward to Opportunity (O2O), a program developed and administered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University, has stepped into these gaps to provide ongoing employment preparation, mock interviews, salary negotiation skills training, and long-term mentoring support. O2O also helps connect veterans and their families to employers, education, and other community-based services to ease the transition to employment and life in civilian society. Research has shown that veterans using O2O, and other non-governmental programs like it, are 29 percent more likely to find employment. Participants were also more likely to be promoted and secure wage increases. Where programs included job-search skills and assistance aimed at helping veterans connect the skills they developed in the military to civilian jobs, participants were up to twice as likely to advance in their careers by securing new and better job opportunities.

In recognition of the success of non-governmental programs like O2O, Congress recently passed the Onward to Opportunity Act, which would expand investment in public-private partnerships that engage and support veterans throughout their transition experience. This legislation is a worthy effort to acknowledge the sacrifice of those who “have borne the battle” and an important step in binding up the wounds that often linger long after the conflict has ceased.

The American Legion commends the efforts of Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families Program, Onward to Opportunity, in assisting transitioning servicemembers and veterans to acquire gainful employment after service. Additionally, the Legion looks forward to further examining Representative Katko’s introduced bill, H.R. 4769. These efforts fall in line with [Resolution No. 12: Accountability and Enhancement of Transition Assistance Program; Outcomes and Delivery for Today’s Digital Transitioning Servicemembers](#), whereby The American Legion urges Congress to ensure the TAP continues to improve through assessments in order to assure servicemembers are helped in transitioning to civilian life and can find gainful employment.

¿Did You Know?

Kick-start your new career with VA benefits

What do you want to be when you grow up? This common question to children brings out optimism, hope and a lot of imagination.

[VA career and employment](#) benefits give Veterans the opportunity to experience this



VA CAREERS

excitement again. Whether the goal is to be a veterinarian, chef or mechanic, VA may be able to help Veterans with their career goals.

[VA education and training](#) benefits may be used toward traditional degrees, non-college degrees, on-the-job training, apprenticeships and more. A few key programs that Veterans may be able to use to pursue dream careers include:

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)

VR&E assists Veterans and service members with an established employment handicap resulting from a service-connected disability. Natasha, an Army Veteran, used VR&E to advance her career and help her realize her dreams for the future.

“In the long run, having the career that I want will let me be the mother that I want to be,” she said.

VR&E services may help Veterans with:

- Job training
- Employment accommodations
- Resume development

- Job seeking skills and coaching

Get more information about [VR&E](#).

Other Employment Resources

VA offers employment resources for every stage of a Veteran’s job search. Veterans who qualify for VA employment services can:

- Search for jobs and find employers who want to hire Veterans
- Access apprenticeships and on-the-job training using the GI Bill
- Receive one-on-one career counseling

Check out additional [VA career and employment resources](#) and visit [VA.gov](#) to learn more about all VA benefits.

Staff Meetings & Conferences on Employment

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division had an introductory meeting with Rolls-Royce to learn what programs they offer veterans and how Rolls-Royce can be involved with The American Legion. Rolls-Royce has an extensive Employee Resource Group (ERG) that regularly convenes not only how to attract members of the military community, but also how to engage veterans internally, providing support throughout the recruitment process. Regarding reskilling since covid, Rolls-Royce has shifted talent from civil aerospace into defense, with an increased focus on diversifying from engineering into artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science, and analytics; described that since covid, reskilling and redeploying talent shifted from civil aerospace into defense.

Rolls-Royce has been involved in the two previous American Legion virtual career fairs and described interest in taking part in future events throughout the United States. Additionally, Rolls-Royce was keen on taking part in the Employment Innovation Taskforce.

ECONOMIC NEWS RELEASE

- **The national unemployment rate is 5.1 percent (September 2021)**
- **Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 3.5 percent (September 2021)**
- **Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 2.1 percent (September 2021)**

- In August 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was **3.8%**. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was **5.2%** in August
- Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled **5,569** an increase of **82** from the preceding week.

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	
	Sept. 2020	Sept. 2021	Sept. 2020	Sept. 2021	Sept. 2020	Sept. 2021
Unemployed	568	304	496	266	72	37
Unemployment rate	6.4	3.6	6.4	3.6	6.5	3.3



EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING

MILITARY MEMBERS PROMISED STUDENT DEBT RELIEF IN EXCHANGE FOR TEN YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE SAY PROMISE IS OFTEN BROKEN

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program was meant to erase student loan debt for borrowers who spent a decade as public servants. But the program has come up woefully short for members of the military. Lesley Stahl reports.

Student debt is a crushing burden on millions of Americans. To help, Congress passed a law in 2007, creating the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, promising that if you're a public servant - a cop, a teacher, a soldier - and you work for 10 years, your debt will be erased.

But maybe it should be called the unforgiveness program: 98% of those who've applied for relief were told they're ineligible. We focused on the military. According to an April report by the GAO – the government's watchdog agency - of nearly 180,000 active-duty service-members with federal student loans, only 124 individuals have managed to navigate the confusing rules of the program and get their debt wiped clean.

We talked with a group you'd assume could figure it out: JAGs – lawyers who work for the military.

Lesley Stahl: What was your student debt when you went into the service?



Heather Tregle: About \$90,000.



Brandon Jones: \$108,000.



Carson Sprott: \$150,000.



Charles Olson: over \$150,000.

Charles Olson – a Marine; Carson Sprott – Air Force; and in the Army: Heather Tregle, Jonathan Hirsch and Brandon Jones. They say the rules laid out in the law seemed clear - they had to be employed in a public service job and repay typically small increments of their loans until they reached 120 payments. And whatever remained of their debt at that point would vanish: no matter how much.

Lesley Stahl: How many of you in your own mind think that you have paid up the 120 months and that you deserve to be forgiven? [ALL RAISE HANDS] All of you.

But all of them were told they're mistaken: they were off by years.

Lesley Stahl: Were any of you derelict in making your payments?

ALL: Never. No. No. Never.

Carson Sprott: As military members, if we fail to pay our debts, we're subject to discipline under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Brandon Jones: And our security clearances are on the line. So all this--

Lesley Stahl: If you don't pay, you lose your security clearance?

Brandon Jones: You can. If you default on your loan, you can lose your security clearance.

They all say they were walked through a bureaucratic maze that tripped them up.

Carson Sprott: Nobody ever explained that some of your loans are coded one way. Some of them are coded the other. And some of those don't qualify.

Major Carson Sprott was told he had 41 extra months of payments after he thought he was done. Turns out under the rules of the program only one type of federal student loan is eligible for relief. His type of loans didn't qualify. But he says that wasn't explained to him by the loan servicing companies contracted by the Department of Education to collect his money.

Carson Sprott: Not until I'd been paying on the loans for two and a half years.

Lesley Stahl: Aren't you angry?

Carson Sprott: I'm a little angry. (LAUGHTER) I'm a little angry. I wrote a dozen letters over my first two years to all my lenders. And I got no response other than assurances that everything was fine.

His loan servicer told him his only recourse was to convert to another type of loan and restart the month count from zero. And his other headache? Under the rules, he had to make small monthly repayments. But his repayments were so small – they didn't cover his interest.

Lesley Stahl: Do you actually owe more now than you did when you started this program?

Carson Sprott: Significantly. My initial loans of \$150,000 are now at approximately \$215,000.

The way this program is set up, many borrowers don't find out there's a problem for years. Army JAG Lt. Colonel Jonathan Hirsch found out after a decade.

Jonathan Hirsch: I got a letter that said I had zero months accumulated towards Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

Lesley Stahl: No!

Jonathan Hirsch: Zero. And I had been paying for ten years.

He had the right type of loans, but the wrong type of repayment plan - so he had another decade to go!

Jonathan Hirsch: All of my kids are going to college. And so I am taking out parent plus loans to help pay for their college--

Lesley Stahl: Oh, no--

Jonathan Hirsch: --at the same time that I am making payments on my loans.

Lesley Stahl: Heather, you were in Afghanistan for a year?

Heather Tregle: Yes.

Lesley Stahl: So did that year count toward your 120 months?

Heather Tregle: Half of it did.

Army JAG Major Heather Tregle, mother of two, doesn't know why those six months didn't count. She always stayed on top of her loan, even when she was in warzones. Like when she was in Kandahar and noticed her loan servicing company suddenly hiked up her payments.

Heather Tregle: So I spent days, because when you're in Afghanistan, you only can call for 20 minutes at a time--

Lesley Stahl: You're calling from over there?

Heather Tregle: Correct. So you had to use a morale line to call. And it cuts off after 20 minutes. So I would wait on hold and try to speak to them-- and get it all sorted out. And then tell them, "I am calling from Afghanistan. Can you please give me a number that I can just call you back-- that I don't have to wait on hold?" And they couldn't do that—

Here's something else that's maddening: as long as they're in a warzone they're allowed to skip their loan payments. But what's not always explained to them – we discovered - is that that brings their monthly count to a grinding halt. In other words: serving in actual combat can set them back years in getting relief

Seth Frotman: Think about what that means. Think about someone who is serving overseas. Think about how many of their kids' birthday parties they missed, only to be told, "None of that time counts."

Seth Frotman heads an advocacy group called the Student Borrower Protection Center. He says borrowers should have started getting relief through the forgiveness program four years ago – a decade after it started – but over 9 out of 10 military members who have applied for debt relief have been turned down.

Seth Frotman: Well, the first thing a 90%-plus denial rate shows you is this isn't one-off borrower's fault. This isn't just individual people who made mistakes.

Lesley Stahl: Right.

Seth Frotman: This is an entire system who let down our men and women in uniform.

Lesley Stahl: We're talking not just about JAGs. We're talking about military doctors, we're talking about cyber experts.

Seth Frotman: The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program was created because the country was desperately worried that student debt was going to stop America's best and brightest from entering critical fields like the military.

But the rules drive them crazy - like making them chase after their commanders for their signature to verify that they're even in the military.

Seth Frotman: This is where the system breaks down. Where service members are told "You're not eligible because we don't think you got the right officer to fill out your form." Or, "You may have found the right officer, but they forgot to date the form."

Lesley Stahl: Oh, come on.

Heather Tregle: They make it more difficult than it needs to be.

Major Tregle thought she did everything right to qualify: She had the right loan, right repayment plan. She can follow the fine print, afterall, her title is chief of complex litigation for the Army's prosecutors. So after nine years of paying, she confidently started filing the necessary paperwork.

Heather Tregle: I should have been about 12 payments away from 120 at that point. And they said that I had only paid 12 qualifying payments.

Lesley Stahl: They're telling you that your nine years of monthly payments amounted to one year.

Heather Tregle: Yes. So I obviously called them and said, "I don't understand. I have been in auto-payment the entire time, so you guys take my payment when it's due and the amount that is due." And the woman looked through my account and she says, "You may have an issue that we know is an issue where the auto-debit takes the payment but one penny short of what is actually due so it doesn't count."

Lesley Stahl: Woah, woah, woah. What?

Heather Tregle: So it's a known problem that through the auto-payment, it's not-- it doesn't take the full amount due. It takes one cent shorter than it should.

Nobody's ever told me if that is in fact what was wrong with those payments. That was just

something the servicer said on the phone that day of, "Well, this is a known problem."

Lesley Stahl: If it's known - fix it.

Heather Tregle: Right.

And online, borrowers complain that paying a few pennies over the sum can get payments disqualified too.

Heather Tregle: I submitted my case for a review. And it sat in review for three years. And in the interim, I was paying because you're like, "Okay, well, they're reviewing it. They're doing something." But it-- the review never-- three years later, it was still under review.

It's an obstacle course. We found payments often disappear when the student loan is transferred from one servicing company to another, which happened to Marine Judge Advocate Major Charles Olson. When he applied for relief, his new servicer provided him this endless list of why he wasn't getting credit for over six years' worth of payments.

Charles Olson: All those payments don't count for a variety of different reasons. The payment wasn't on the correct due date. The payment wasn't the correct amount. And the frustrating part is I've sent the payment information via mail, via uploading to prove to them that I've-- I've made the payments, the 120 payments.

Lesley Stahl: On time. The right amount?

[CHARLES NODS AFFIRMATIVE]

He figured out that most of his records just hadn't transferred properly between servicers.

Lesley Stahl: I can't imagine that when you saw that, you didn't run out of your house and start screaming!

Charles Olson: If I wasn't a Marine-- yeah, I would have lost my bearing, ma'am.

He's been arguing and appealing for over a year in vain. Army JAG Major Brandon Jones thinks

repeated human errors cost him over three years of payments - his arguing and appealing has also proved futile.

Brandon Jones: It seems like they're just trying to wear us down to the point where we either have to hire an attorney or do something else.

Lesley Stahl: Or give it up and continue to pay--

Brandon Jones: Or just give up. Yep.

Carson Sprott: These are three years of my life in the service of my nation that-- as I counted on them to count for this, they don't. And the reason they don't count, in my opinion, is that I was misled.

Seth Frotman: One of the reasons why we are in the mess we are in is because the student loan companies, who have gotten hundreds of millions of dollars to implement these programs, have cheated borrowers. They have deceived borrowers. They have chosen their bottom line over helping our men and women in uniform.

You see this in the lawsuits that have been filed across the country. You see this in the federal regulators who have taken to task the student loan industry.

Regulators like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which recently concluded that loan "servicers regularly provided inaccurate information", accusing them of deception.

Carson Sprott, whose debt has grown, has left the Air Force, but he got a civilian public service job, so he's still counting months. Jonathan Hirsch, after many appeals, just got his debt wiped clean. Heather Tregle heard earlier this year that hers was too.

Heather Tregle: It was absolutely amazing. I believe I cried. (LAUGH)

This problem didn't start under President Biden, but Seth Frotman says he could fix it immediately.

Seth Frotman: So there is a law that Congress passed as the War in Iraq was raging, as the War in Afghanistan was raging, which said, no member of the military should ever be denied a benefit because of bureaucratic red tape or government bureaucracy.

Lesley Stahl: So there is an actual law that could deal with every one of the glitches the JAGs are talking about?

Seth Frotman: Yes.

Lesley Stahl: And the president, you believe, has the power to put that law in over the law that created this law.

Seth Frotman: He could do it tomorrow.

At the end of this past week, the Department of Education told us that the number of military people whose student debt has been forgiven has inched up to 350. It also said it plans to announce

a major overhaul of this program as early as this week.

The vast majority of servicemembers applying for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) are rejected. The program is not functioning as intended nor is it adequately serving servicemembers ([GAO](#) report). The American Legion has made its stance on this issue clear through [Resolution No. 101: Support for Continuation of Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program](#), “supports legislation and/or administrative rulemaking that protects and enforces veterans access to Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program as originally drafted.” Overhauling the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program was much needed, and The American Legion commends the Department of Education for addressing this issue.

Staff Meetings & Conferences on Education

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on Veterans Credentialing meeting. Facilitated a discussion between professional staff members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Senate side as well as VSOs regarding ongoing legislation and future events. Some future committee hearings revealed were:

October 26 – Hearing - House

- Focusing on women service members and their transition from the military
- VA, DOL and other agencies will be invited
- Organizations specifically focusing on female veterans will be invited
- Education may be included

October 27 – Education hearing - House

- Witnesses have already been identified
- May add VA for housing and home loans

November 3 – Hearing - Senate

- Chairman Tester and Ranking member Moran will meet with the undersecretary of VA
- The topic will be coordination with the VA and other agencies
- The hearing may cover TAP

November – Possible markup – Senate

- Coordinating on legislation with extension and Isakson Roe Bill fixes

Late October – Tentative Employment Hearing – Senate

- Transition focused

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with both House Veteran Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee senior staff to discuss current legislation and upcoming congressional hearings regarding veterans' employment and education. Other prominent veteran service organizations and stakeholders also participated in the meeting. A few of the important topics discussed were extending the timeline on full monthly housing allowances (MHA) for student veterans attending online classes due to the pandemic, and small changes to the Isakson and Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act.



**THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION
PUSHES CITIES TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS**

A federal initiative called House America will ask cities, counties and states to pledge to curb homelessness, in exchange for federal support and resources.

The White House is launching a new national initiative to combat the rising tide of homelessness, a pact with local governments to commit resources and energy to the people suffering most due to the national housing crisis.

With “House America,” the administration of President Joe Biden is asking leaders of city, county, state and tribal governments across the U.S. to make a public pledge to reduce homelessness. In turn, the federal government will provide guidance and support to achieve two goals: providing permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and building new affordable units for those on the brink.

Housing Secretary Marcia L. Fudge announced the initiative, a signature policy push for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, with Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough and other cabinet officials at a virtual event on Sept. 20. Billed as “an all-hands-on-deck effort to address the nation’s homelessness crisis,” the campaign establishes lofty targets for its twin goals — rehousing at least 100,000 people and adding at least 20,000 affordable housing units.

The policy’s first cohort of 25 local and state leaders will include the mayors of Austin, Oakland, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., as well as Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., and the governors of California and Maine. Both Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and Los Angeles County Supervisor Holly Mitchell are among the first adopters. The hope is to replicate the success of the campaign to end veteran homelessness under President Barack Obama, an initiative that cut veteran homelessness in half by 2016 with the support of some 800 city mayors and county executives.

Asking leaders to publicly announce their commitments, including their targets for housing people and building units, will lend urgency to the issue locally, Biden administration officials say. Such a focus is especially important as city

councils and state legislatures make plans to spend billions in federal resources allocated to them under the American Rescue Plan. These pledges will be well above and beyond typical housing placements, according to HUD.

The program is an effort to elevate the issue among local officials, according to a HUD official who declined to be identified. While homelessness does fall in the shoulders of mayors and governors, they don’t always own it as much as they could and should, the official said.

For some communities, House America will look like a moonshot — a public pledge to end homelessness or reach other significant milestones. In a sense, the rocket’s already paid for: Much of the resources for House America will come from the \$350 billion in federal relief under the American Rescue Plan for state, local, territorial and tribal governments. Cities and counties that lack the capacity or expertise to assess the problem on the ground will have an engaged federal partner offering technical guidance and support. For cities and counties struggling the most with homelessness — namely high-cost coastal metros like Los Angeles and the Bay Area, where the lack of available housing drives the crisis — the White House push could raise the salience of the issue in spending discussions and force local leaders to set meaningful goals and expectations.

“Oakland is ground zero for the housing crisis,” says Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. “Our county saw one of the greatest increases for homelessness for the state of California during our last point-in-time count.” The California city is committing to provide housing for 1,500 people over the next 16 months while creating 125 new permanent supportive housing units — a small fraction of the city’s estimated homeless population. But dollars and units can’t fully convey what it will mean for older people to have a roof over their heads and for families to gain the dignity of housing, the mayor adds, and for

policymakers to see how these dollars translate into health benefits.

Any number of factors complicate a federal effort to bring an end to homelessness, the unstated goal of House America. Even as the White House tries to put a higher profile on housing solutions, the end of the federal eviction moratorium and the failure to distribute billions of dollars in emergency rent relief could dramatically exacerbate the state of need in America. The success of House America may depend in part on whether local and state governments are finally able to get federal relief to renters before they run out of options. Meanwhile, exclusionary local zoning policies that make apartment buildings illegal — a main wellspring of the affordability crisis, housing advocates say — remain in place across much of the U.S., despite the recent wave of state and local efforts to reform them.

The Biden administration will measure the success of House America in two ways. Federal officials will help local partners come up with a meaningful target for finding permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness, and also ask local leaders to commit to putting a certain number of affordable housing units in the development pipeline before the end of 2022. There's existing federal support for both of these goals: The American Rescue Plan authorized 70,000 emergency housing vouchers for people experiencing homelessness, for example, plus \$5 billion in HOME Investment Partnership grants for developing affordable housing and permanent supportive housing.

For Oakland, this support means 515 emergency housing choice vouchers and a one-time allocation of \$9.6 million in HOME-ARP grants — about four times what the city receives in federal support from these programs in a typical year.

Schaaf, who currently serves as co-chair for the nonprofit Mayors & CEOs for U.S. Housing Investment, says that she often hears members of

Congress and their staff express doubt that lawmakers can do anything to change the bleak housing situation. For them, House America could serve as proof that federal investments in housing and in the safety net writ large can indeed be effective. “We are going to demonstrate how the extraordinary resources that HUD has provided, particularly the emergency housing choice vouchers and HOME grants, can go rapidly to work to get people off the streets and into safe, affordable housing,” she says.

Another secondary goal of the campaign is to get local leaders to ditch counterproductive policies around homelessness. Cities across the country favor clearing out homeless encampments, even though researchers have shown that it's expensive and wasteful, not to mention disruptive for people who lose their belongings and communities only to be shuffled from one tent city to another. The federal government wants cities and counties (and states) to prioritize the suite of permanent solutions known as Housing First over quicker fixes such as congregate shelters or tiny-home villages.

“We do not want them to build shelters. Shelters are not our answer,” Fudge testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee on federal relief efforts back in April. “We’re hopeful the shelters are going to go away as a consequence of what we’re doing.”

Mayor Steve Adler of Austin, another House America member city, says that local leaders convened a summit earlier this year to develop a plan to eliminate homelessness in Texas' Capital Region. Representatives from Austin, Travis County, the local chamber of commerce, homeless service providers, and nonprofits such as Austin Justice Coalition and Homes Not Handcuffs set a goal to house 3,000 people over the next three years. The cost? \$520 million — unthinkably steep, at least before the American Rescue Plan and House America.

When it came to CARES Act funding, Adler says, the pandemic need was so great that emergency funds had to put out fires everywhere. But when the American Rescue Plan arrived, conversations within the U.S. Conference of Mayors turned to solving bigger problems. For Austin, House America is an opportunity to do something truly

transformational — to make homelessness infrequent, non-recurring and short in duration.

“If you’re actually going to house 3,000 people in three years, you have to touch a lot more people than that. You have to divert people from homelessness. To accomplish that goal, you need to build a system,” Adler says. “In Austin, if we actually built out the homelessness response system, if we actually build out the infrastructure, then we can reach equilibrium.”

To support cities in these efforts, the Biden administration aims to convene monthly calls with local leaders who take the House America pledge. Some efforts will be tailored to places with unique housing struggles. In Maine, for example, record numbers for homelessness in recent years reflect both an urban and rural problem marked by a steep loss of existing affordable housing. The House America challenge includes officials from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services in order to support leaders in rural areas and legacy industrial cities, where the housing crisis takes different shapes. “The technical assistance is just as valuable as the dollars,” Schaaf says.

The lack of affordable housing is an enormous challenge for the nation, one that the Biden administration is trying to tackle on several fronts. Earlier this month, HUD announced an effort to build and preserve 100,000 affordable homes over the next three years. Both Congress

and the White House are looking at ways to push local governments to ease restrictive zoning policies. And the federal government is trying to shake things up at the top: To speed the construction of subsidized housing, HUD announced that it will make 5% of funds under the \$5 billion HOME-ARP grants available immediately to cities and counties, before any plans are approved.

Homelessness specifically has emerged as a priority for Fudge, who in addition to her work as housing secretary has also taken on the mantle of chair of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which coordinates federal policy between 19 different agencies. House America will now test the Biden administration’s commitment to the principle that housing is essential infrastructure.

The American Legion supports funding Housing Choice Vouchers provided to the HUD-VASH program as found in [Resolution No. 357: Mandatory Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) Homeless Program](#). Whereas, HUD allocates rental subsidies from its Housing Choice Voucher Program to the VA, which then distributes them to enrolled veterans, and the need for safe, affordable, and permanent housing is imperative.

Staff Meetings & Conferences on Homelessness

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated in a review of a discussion draft bill directing the Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) to make certain improvements to the Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program, and for other purposes. The VJO program is a prevention-focused component of the VA’s Homeless Program Office, whose mission is to end veteran homelessness. The program’s purpose is to identify and assist Justice-Involved Veterans, which are veterans with active, ongoing, or recent contact with some component of the criminal justice system. The Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) is one of the primary tools used to address unmet clinical needs of this special group of veterans.

VTCs are hybrid drug and mental health courts that have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans. Many veterans that enter these courts are unaware of their federal, state, or local benefits. The VTC helps to place veterans in contact with service providers within these benefit programs. Because veterans often deeply value their military experience and bonds with other veterans, VTCs build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people in similar situations and common past experiences.

Through [Resolution No. 145: Veterans Treatment Courts](#), The American Legion supports legislation which would improve, fund the expansion, and adequately staff the VJO program.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division routinely receives and responds to inquiries from veterans seeking assistance or answers to questions. Often, these inquiries pertain to several areas to include veterans' homelessness, employment assistance, small business, and education benefits. The answers or solutions may be somewhat straightforward and not overly complicated; however, there are times when more complex issues are raised that require a significantly different approach. For example, veterans' homelessness.

Veteran homelessness is often a difficult problem to address, dependent upon the complexity of the situation. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the main reason people become homeless is because they cannot find affordable housing. Other factors include chronic health conditions, domestic violence, and systemic inequality.¹ However, veterans have been found to experience additional significant risk factors. A U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs study conducted in 2015 found that the strongest and most consistent risk factors among veterans were substance abuse disorders and mental illness, followed by low income and other income related factors. Additionally, past incarceration was identified as a risk factor.² This may indicate why VA homelessness programs and policies tend to target these factors to end veteran homelessness. However, when confronted with homeless veterans experiencing some or all these risk factors, "What can we do?"

One of the most important things we can do is to know the resources available to us. For example, the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans has trained counselors on staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can be contacted at 1-877-424-3838. They're able to connect veterans to the nearest VA staff person, provide information on VA homeless programs such as Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), healthcare, and other services in the area.³ Another resource is the Veterans Crisis Line, which can be contacted by calling 1-800-273-8255. It's a free confidential resource that's available, even if the veteran is not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA healthcare.⁴ Additionally, it's helpful to establish and maintain relationships with local homeless shelters, food banks, social service providers, and other community resources.

As indicated in Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veterans' Families (SSVF) Program, The American Legion is in favor of veteran specific programs to help

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition. The Primary Causes and Solutions to Homelessness. <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Causes-and-Solutions-to-Homelessness.pdf>

² U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. (2015). Risk Factors for Homelessness Among U.S. Veterans. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4521393/pdf/nihms-709743.pdf>

³ U.S Department of Veteran Affairs. VA Homeless Programs. National Call Center for Homeless Veterans. <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>

⁴ Veteran Crisis Line. What to Expect. <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/about/what-to-expect>

at-risk veterans prevent becoming homeless, and rapidly rehousing those veteran families who have lost their housing.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a livestream presentation of “Combating Homelessness in America’s Cities.” The purpose of the presentation was to discuss the rise of “street homelessness”⁵ in America’s major cities, policy responses, and the significance of severe mental illness and substance abuse disorders contributing to homelessness. Additionally, the philosophy of the “Housing First” model was also a topic of discussion.

The moderator, Howard Husock, Senior Fellow for the American Enterprise Institution (AEI), joined by panelists Lisa Dailey, Executive Director for the Treatment Advocacy Center, Stephen Eide, Senior Fellow for the Manhattan Institute, and Salley Satel, Senior Fellow for AEI began the presentation. They discussed a broad range of topics regarding homelessness to include the effectiveness of the housing first model, severe mental health illness and treatment options for homeless individuals, the evolution of mental health treatment, common reasons as to why chronically homeless persons are resistant to living in shelters (i.e., robbery, assault, substance abuse), the impact of COVID-19 on America’s homelessness problem, and the criminalization of homelessness. Additionally, the panelists provided their individual recommendations on incremental changes to the ways in which we address the problem of homelessness in America such as improving the way we collect data across the homelessness spectrum to determine outcomes, treating people before they become severely mentally ill, and enforcing laws and ordinances, in which the failure to do so creates a system of unaccountability.

As supported by [Resolution No. 357: Mandatory Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Supportive Housing \(HUD-VASH\) Homeless Program](#), The American Legion supports funding for permanent housing subsidies and case management services to homeless veterans with mental health and addictive disorders.



SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

*Community, Economic and Recreational
Development Committee*

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary. Definition: Street Homeless “living on the streets, with nowhere to sleep at night.”
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/street-homeless>

SENATE COMMITTEE ADVANCES TWO BILLS

The state Senate Community, Economic and Recreational Development Committee recently advanced two pieces of bipartisan legislation.

Senate Bill 830 would establish a guaranteed loan program for veteran-owned businesses. Loans would be guaranteed for up to \$250,000 and would be authorized out of a \$5 million allotment designated for the new veteran-owned business endeavor.

“There are more than 700,000 veterans residing in Pennsylvania, and this legislation represents an opportunity for the General Assembly to thank those American heroes for their service,” state Sen. John Yudichak (I-Carbon County), committee chairman, said. “I can think of no better way to honor our veterans than by helping them launch a prosperous and productive civilian life.”

Senate Bill 635 would update an existing property-assessed clean energy program to include new provisions.

The Property-Assessed Clean Energy Program (C-PACE) was enacted in 2018. It originally

enabled property owners to take advantage of long-term financing and private capital for commercial and industrial properties, water conservation and clean energy for agricultural, and to implement energy efficiency.

Updates would include eligibility for indoor air upgrades, resiliency improvements, and multifamily commercial buildings.

“Nationwide, C-PACE programs have led to over \$2 billion in investments, more than 2,500 commercial projects, and 24,000 new jobs,” Yudichak said.

The bills move to the full Senate for consideration.

The American Legion supports low-interest loan and grant funding for veteran-owned small businesses, as seen in [Resolution 14: Reauthorize and Fund the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Patriot Express Loan](#), and will continue to advocate for legislation at the federal, state, and local level to the same effect.

SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS AND LOANS FOR FELONS

Convicted felons, like everyone else, often want to change their lives for the better by starting a business once they have served their time. And yet, they may have a more difficult time of it, since there is some prejudice against ex-convicts.

You might wonder: can I even start my own business? Can I qualify for grants or loans? Is it even worth the effort?

Let’s explore your options as an ex-convict looking to turn over a new leaf.

CAN YOU OWN A BUSINESS IF YOU ARE CONVICTED OF A FELONY?

Before we talk about small business grants and loans for felons, let’s first determine whether a felon is qualified to start a business.

The good news is that there are no laws against an ex-convict owning a business! That means you’re only limited by your own imagination when it comes to running a business.

That being said, starting a business requires money, and you may not have the kind of capital you need to realize your dreams. Fortunately, there are options to help you secure that money.

Small Business Grants for Felons

Our first stop on this journey to finding funds for your business is a look at [small business grants](#). Grants offer free money that doesn't have to be paid back the way business loans do.

Grants are offered by city and state governments, as well as the federal government. Also, private corporations, nonprofits, and foundations offer grants.

Each grant will target a specific audience. Some are for small businesses in general, while others may target a specific type of business owner, like a minority, woman, or veteran. Some are for businesses in particular industries. Know that grants often have heavy competition, so you'll want to review the requirements carefully before applying and make sure you check all the boxes with your application.

Here are a few grants you may want to consider.

Nav's Small Business Grant

Every quarter, [Nav's small business grant](#) provides up to \$10,000 to businesses looking to overcome a challenge.

FedEx Small Business Grant Contest

[FedEx](#) offers \$25,000 grants to businesses each year. You'll need to capture your business's story via video to apply.

National Association for the Self-Employed (NASE) Growth Grants

[NASE Growth Grants](#) are offered to members of the organization National Association for the Self-Employed who are looking to take their business to the next level. These grants are worth up to \$4,000 and can be used for all types of activities, like purchasing new equipment, hiring help, and creating promotional material.

CAN FELONS QUALIFY FOR FEDERAL GRANTS?

In addition to grants offered by private companies like those above, local and federal governments

also offer grant programs, and your past felony conviction isn't a barrier to qualifying.

You can search for federal government grants on [Grants.gov](#). You may also want to check with your local government to see if there are other programs you qualify for.

CAN FELONS GET SMALL BUSINESS LOANS?

If you're curious about [small business loans](#), know that your criminal record isn't necessarily a barrier to getting the funds you seek.

There are a wide variety of small business loans you may qualify for, whether you're launching a startup or looking to build an existing business. Even if you have low credit scores, there are lenders you may qualify for loans with.

Small Business Loans for Felons

Taking out a loan for your financial needs can ensure you have the capital you need for your business.

If you have excellent credit, you might consider a loan from the Small Business Administration



(such as the SBA microloan program). There are no eligibility restrictions around having a felony record, and the loans have some of the lowest interest rates of any financing options available.

Here are some loans to consider.

SBA Microloans

Qualifying businesses can borrow up to \$50,000 with the [SBA microloan program](#). Some may require a background check for ex-convicts.

Kapitus Short-Term Loans

[Kapitus](#) has a variety of lending options, from equipment financing to revenue-based financing. Borrow up to \$500,000.

Newtek Long-Term Loans

[Newtek](#) provides loan programs to suit every kind of business. You can borrow \$1,000 to \$15 million.

Other Resources for Small Business Owners with a Felony

Beyond the resources we've listed above that provide small business loans and grants that ex-convicts may qualify for, here are a few other resources to help you launch or grow your business.

Inmates to Entrepreneurs

[Inmates to Entrepreneurs](#) provides entrepreneurship programs to people with criminal records. There are several in-person and online courses to help you decide what kind of business you want and learn how to find customers.

HelpforFelons.org

[HelpforFelons.org](#) provides a variety of resources to give felons a second chance, including reentry programs and lists of grant opportunities and loans. Whether you want to start a business or go back to school, there are a variety of financial assistance options, from federal education loans to small business grants.

Small Business Development Centers

Another helpful resource for your business is your local [Small Business Development Center](#) (SBDC). These centers provide free access to mentoring, workshops, and assistance in creating a business plan, developing your business idea, and inspiring you to start your own business. You can also get guidance about where to seek business funding.

Crowdfunding

Another option for raising funds for your business is [crowdfunding](#). You create a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for your business or for a specific project or product. Anyone who's interested can contribute to it. Crowdfunding marketplaces include [Indiegogo](#), [GoFundMe](#), and

[Kickstarter](#).

HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL DREAMS COME TRUE?

If you're ready for a second chance, starting your own business could be the ticket. Carefully research your options for financing and choose the one that best fits your needs.

And remember: anything, absolutely anything is possible!

Staff Meetings & Conferences on Small Business

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the SBA Small Business Equity Initiative Meeting. The meeting provided an overview of the Initiative's purpose and scope. The Initiative serves to respond to the needs of underserved small businesses and promote the COVID EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan) program.

The initiative is comprised of 3 major constituent components:

1. The Equity Allies
2. The Nationwide Tour

3. Digital Targeting

Equity Allies are the groups/organizations directly connected to small businesses that the program can use to facilitate dialogue and transmit messaging. Over 100 confirmed companies, faith groups, chambers, and associations are registered with the SBA as equity allies. These allies will serve as the primary liaison between the SBA and the targeted companies.

The National Tour operates as the program's rollout strategy for targeting businesses in regions with the greatest need of support from the SBA. Programming includes physical and virtual tours of field offices in every state at all 68 SBA field offices.

The SBA plans to use digital marketing tools and partnerships with software entities to home in on businesses that have suffered the greatest because of the pandemic. Data collected from these pilot programs will be used to examine the effectiveness of different outreach and engagement methods.

VE&E will continue working with the SBA to engage and connect with veteran-owned small businesses that the pandemic has negatively impacted.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the U.S. House Committee on Small Business hearing titled "SBA's Entrepreneurial Development Programs." The hearing examined the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Entrepreneurial Development programs, which provide counseling, training, and outreach to small businesses, as well as discussed the challenges the Office of Entrepreneurial Development (OED) faces in implementing the broad range of services and programs under its jurisdiction. The SBA's Associate Administrator Office of Entrepreneurial Development, Mark Madrid, was the committee witness.



Chairman, Daniel Seehafer discussed two important matters at the National Executive Committee meetings: The Veterans First Contracting Program and the Veterans Employment & Education Awards Program.

The Vets First Contracting Program within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was created under Public Law, P.L. 109-461. The purpose is to ensure that legitimately owned and controlled VOSBs and SDVOSBs are able to compete for VA VOSB and SDVOSB set-aside and are credited by VA's large prime contractors for subcontract plan achievements.

Veteran-owned small businesses comprise a vital cornerstone of the American economy. Across the nation, 2.5 million small businesses are owned and operated by veterans. These firms employ 6 million people and generate over \$1.2 trillion in annual revenue across a wide array of industries. However, veteran entrepreneurship has been declining in recent years, and VE & E is determined to reverse this trend and

revitalize business opportunities for veterans throughout the American economy. One critical aspect of this initiative is protecting and expanding veterans preference in government contracting.

VE&E not only opposes any attempt by the Department of Veterans Affairs to migrate away from a Veterans First centered acquisition platform, but strongly advocates for the expansion of VETs First to the Department of Defense's procurement system. Doing so would have an immeasurable impact on veteran-owned businesses across the country. Accounting for over half of annual discretionary spending, the Department of Defense would offer abundant opportunities for veteran small businesses in nearly every imaginable industry under a VETs First acquisition framework.



The first **American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Commission** award was established in 1947 and honored employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, disabled veterans, and older workers. The Veterans Employment & Education Commission is striving to award all possible pending awards. We implore all departments to submit nominations for the awards with the hope that we receive all 400+ possible nominations. Each department is encouraged to participate in this program. We are striving to reach 100% participation in this program.

All entries must be accompanied by an official nomination form (Nomination forms for each award are available through American Legion department headquarters or [by clicking here](#)), Departments/posts are advised to verify nominees meet the criteria stated in the nomination forms. Each entry should be accompanied by a cover letter stating that it is the

department's choice for that award. **The deadline for submission to the Veterans Employment & Education Commission in Washington, D.C., is January 15.** It is important that the Department nominations are submitted by this time to ensure that they are considered for the national award to be delivered at the annual National Convention. Please submit written correspondence and/or an electronic scanned copy in the form of an e-mail to Washington, D.C. National Headquarters office.



For more information contact:

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CAREER FAIRS

VIRTUAL JOB FAIR

October 14, 2021

1-4pm ET

VIRTUAL CAREER SUMMIT

The Hiring Our Heroes Virtual Career Summit is a specialized event designed to educate, inform, inspire, and connect service members, veterans, military spouses and caregivers with military-ready employers.

Presented by [Hiring Our Heroes](#)

[More information](#)

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

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.



LEGISLATION TRACKING

EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIO

Responsible Education Mitigating Options and Technical Extensions (REMOTE) Act: This draft bill would extend an expiring provision of law established for student veterans using educational entitlements during the pandemic. Many higher education classes remain online due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. At the initial onset of the pandemic most classes adapted to online learning formats which left student veterans were at risk of financial instability from decreased monthly housing allowances (MHA). Congress passed legislation to set MHA at the full residential rate regardless of class format. This measure is set to expire in December of this year. This draft bill would extend that looming deadline to June 2022. American legion supports this bill because it protects student veterans from unnecessary financial burdens, thereby, allowing them to continue their education using VA educational entitlements.

Status: [Drafting Letter of Support](#)

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

S. 1480 - Recognizing Military Service in PSLF Act: This bill 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: [4/29/2021 - Referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions](#)

[Resolution No. 101 Support for Continuation of Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program](#)

H.R. 1836 - Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021: This bill 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.

Status: 6/16/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

[Resolution No. 349: Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill](#)

S. 1607 - Student Veterans Transparency and Protection Act of 2021: This bill 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.

Status: 05/13/2021 - Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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

H.R. 2587 - SERVE Act: This bill would improve the ability of veterans with medical training to assist the United States in response to national emergencies by implementing programs to certify and credential veterans.

Status: 4/15/2021 - Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

[Resolution No. 338: Support Licensure and Certification of Servicemembers, Veterans and Spouses](#)

H.R. 3586 - Veteran Education Empowerment Act: This bill would reauthorize and improve a grant program to assist institutions of higher education in establishing, maintaining, improving, and operating Student Veteran Centers

Status: 5/28/2021 - Referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor

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

H.R. 2327 - This bill would eliminate the time period for eligibility under Survivors' And Dependents' Educational Assistance Program of Department of Veterans Affairs

Status: 4/28/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

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

H.R. 4233 - Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act: This bill would award grants to community-based Veteran Centers to provide counseling and mental health services to veterans using VA higher education benefits.

Status: 6/29/2021 - Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

S. 94 - Hire Student Veterans Act: This bill allows a work opportunity tax credit for hiring a veteran attending an educational institution using educational assistance provided under certain programs administered by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Status: 1/28/2021 - Referred to the Committee on Finance

[Resolution No. 354: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program](#)

H.R.447 - National Apprenticeship Act of 2021: To amend the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly referred to as the "National Apprenticeship Act") and expand the national apprenticeship system to include

apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and pre-apprenticeship registered under such Act, to promote the furtherance of labor standards necessary to safeguard the welfare of apprentices, and for other purposes.

Status: 02/25/2021 - Received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

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

H.R.3582 - Veteran Employment Recovery Act: This bill increases the work opportunity tax credit in 2021 for the hiring of certain disabled or unemployed veterans.

Status: 05/28/2021 – Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means

[Resolution No. 354: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program](#)

S.2274 - Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Expansion Act: To authorize the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to establish an apprenticeship program and to establish a pilot program on cybersecurity training for veterans and members of the Armed Forces transitioning to civilian life, and for other purposes.

Status: 06/24/2021 – Read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

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

H.R.4552 - Veterans' Agricultural Apprenticeship Act of 2021: To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify specific requirements concerning service and retirement for veterans' Preference for federal hiring.

Status: 09/08/2021 – Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

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

H.R.143 - HERO Transition from Battlespace to Workplace Act of 2021: To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a tax credit to encourage private employers to hire veterans, to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the reasonable efforts an employer may make under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act with respect to hiring veterans, and for other purposes.

Status: 03/08/2021 – Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

[Resolution No. 354: Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program](#)

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

H.R. 2190 - Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2021: This bill permanently establishes existing programs that assist homeless veterans and other veterans with special needs.

Status: 6/16/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

H.R. 4515 - Small Business Development Center Cyber Training Act of 2021: This bill would amend the Small Business Act to require cyber certification for small business development center counselors.

Status: 7/19/2021 - Referred to the House Committee on Small Business

Resolution: *Pending Draft Resolution*

H.R.1687 - Small Business Cyber Training Act of 2021: This bill requires the Small Business Administration to establish a program for certifying at least 5 or 10% of the total number of employees of a small business development center to provide cybersecurity planning assistance to small businesses.

Status: 5/18/2021 – Introduced in the Senate

Resolution: *Pending Draft Resolution*

H.R.5354 - Veterans Jobs Opportunity Act: This bill would establish a small startup tax credit for veterans, military spouses, army reservists and national guard members seeking to start small businesses.

Status: 9/27/2021 – Introduced in the House Committee on Ways and Means

Resolution: *Pending Draft Resolution*

ACTION TAKEN ON LEGISLATION

EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIO

Draft Legislation on Work Study for Half-Time Students: To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend eligibility for a certain work-study allowance paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain individuals who pursue programs of rehabilitation, education, or training on at least a half-time basis.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Repay MGIB: To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Death GI Bill Transfer: To amend title 38, United States Code to provide for the transfer of entitlement to educational assistance under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program of Department of Veterans Affairs when an eligible individual dies after approval of transfer and before transferring all of the individual's entitlement, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Extend FRY After Discharge: To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship to include spouses and children of

individuals who die from a service-connected disability within 120 days of serving in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft legislation on Extend VRE Time: To extend the delimiting period for certain individuals to use educational assistance benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on SCRA for Education: "To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to establish protections under that Act for a member of the Armed Forces who leaves a course of education, paid for with certain educational assistance, to perform certain service."

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Student Childcare Voucher: "To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay to certain veterans, who receive certain educational assistance furnished by the Secretary, a weekly stipend for child care services."

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Prohibit CH. 35 for HS: To amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the use of entitlement to educational assistance under the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program for secondary school education.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

Draft Legislation on WARTAC Report: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course of the Veterans Benefit Administration.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 105: Support and Expand Warrior Transition Advancement Course \(WARTAC\)](#)

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

Draft Legislation on Homeless Grant Elimination of Matching: Adjustment of Grants Awarded by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs for Comprehensive Service Programs to serve homeless veterans.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Draft Legislation on Eliminate Loan Limitations: To amend title 38, United States Code, to eliminate the Freddie Mac conforming loan limitation for loans made to veterans with remaining guaranty or insurance loan entitlement under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 314: Support Elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding Fee](#)

Draft Legislation on SSVF Report Requirement: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the shallow subsidy program under the supportive services for veteran families program, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

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

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Substance Abuse Pilot: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on substance use and alcohol use disorder recovery for homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

Resolution: *Pending Draft Resolution*

Draft Legislation on Increase Homelessness Per Diem: To amend title 38, United States Code, to adjust the rate of per diem payments provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grantees that provide services to homeless veterans.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 24: Support Funding and Changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Program](#)

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Elderly Pilot: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on grants for care for elderly homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Tech Assistance: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide technical assistance to recipients of grants for supportive services for very low-income families in permanent housing and comprehensive service programs, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

Resolution: *Pending Draft Resolution*

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Extend HVRP: To amend title 38, United States Code, to increase and extend the authorization of appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration programs.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

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

Support: 4/21/2021 - This bill was submitted for testimony

Status: 6/16/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 331: Support Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

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.

Support: 4/21/2021 - This bill was submitted for testimony

Status: 6/23/2021 - Became Public Law No: 117-18

What's Next:

S. 2172 - Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act: This bill improves grants, payments, and technical assistance provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to serve homeless veterans.

Support: 6/23/2021 - This bill was submitted for testimony

Status: 6/23/2021 - Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

What's Next:

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

H.R. 2082 - VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act: This bill would make certain improvements relating to the supply chain of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Support: 4/21/2021 - This bill was submitted for testimony

Status: 5/4/2021 - Voted 22 - 6 by House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

What's Next:

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

Acronym	Definition
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	SBA's 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

RESOURCE PAGE



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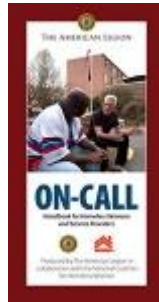
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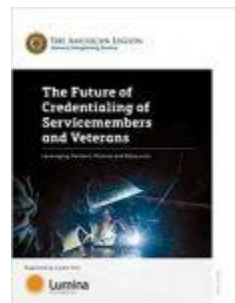
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[VE&E Commission Awards Programs](#)



[The State of Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans](#)



[The Future of Credentialing of Servicemembers and Veterans](#)

Awards Program

The first American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Commission award was established in 1947 and honored employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, disabled veterans, and older workers.

- Learn how to apply for these Awards at: <https://www.legion.org/careers/awards>

Services That Really Help

Career fairs and workshops, guidance on education, homeless services, small business resources and more:



- **CAREER/EMPLOYMENT CENTER:**

- <http://legion.monster.com/?scmdlCmsec=1>
- <https://www.legion.org/careers/resources>

- **HOMELESS VETERANS FIND HELP:**

- <https://www.legion.org/careers/homelesstaskforce>
- <https://www.legion.org/homelessveterans/resources>

- **VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS:**

- <https://www.legion.org/education/statebenefits>
- <https://www.legion.org/education/federalbenefits>

- **VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS TOOLS:**

- <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USSBA/bulletins/2eba258>

MORE STORIES...

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM, WILL PUT OVER 550,000 PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS CLOSER TO LOAN FORGIVENESS

“The U.S. Department of Education announced an overhaul of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program that it will implement over the next year to make the program live up to its promise.” [Continue reading the article](#)

VETERANS, INTERNEES SOUGHT FOR RETROACTIVE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM

“Between the 1940s and 1970s, thousands of students left high school to serve in the United States Armed Forces.” [Continue reading the article](#)

**READY TO SERVE:
WHY MILITARY SPOUSES ARE AN OVERLOOKED TALENT POOL**

“After a decade as a stay-at-home mom, Charlene Wilde, like so many mothers, had a hard time finding her way back to the workforce.” [Continue reading the article](#)

KATKO HEADS TO SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY TO CELEBRATE PASSAGE OF BILL TO HELP MILITARY FAMILIES

“U.S. Rep. John Katko is one step closer to expanding workforce development programs for military families.” [Continue reading the article](#)

BIPARTISAN GROUP ADVANCES LEGISLATION TO BENEFIT VETERANS IN PA

“A bipartisan group of five legislators is advancing efforts to remove obstacles for military members transitioning to civilian work under a bill approved unanimously by the House Professional Licensure Committee.” [Continue reading the article](#)

RICE ANNOUNCES OVER \$100K FOR HOFSTRA, NYU PROGRAM SUPPORTING VETERANS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES

“U.S. Representative Kathleen Rice (NY-04) announced that the U.S. Economic Development Agency (EDA) has awarded \$101,923 to fund the first year of the Downstate New York University Center program.” [Continue reading the article](#)

DOZENS OF HOMELESS VETERANS LIVE IN TENTS OUTSIDE BRENTWOOD-AREA VA

“Just outside the West L.A. Veterans Affairs facility near Brentwood, dozens of tents line San Vicente Boulevard. Many of them have wheelchairs parked outside. They’re draped with American flags — each representing a homeless U.S. veteran who lives inside” [Continue reading the article](#)

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