

## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

Worker applications for unemployment benefits rose sharply last week; an indication layoff remains at a high level nearly nine months into the coronavirus pandemic. Weekly initial claims for jobless benefits, a proxy for layoffs, rose by 137,000 to a seasonally adjusted 853,000 in the week ended Dec. 5, the Labor Department said Thursday. That marked the highest level of applications since September but was still well down from a peak of nearly seven million in late March.

Jobless claims had mostly trended down since the Spring when the pandemic caused widespread business shutdowns. That matches other measures showing the economy is recovering, but at a slower pace in recent months. Jobless claims data has been viewed as a bellwether for economists and policymakers for a half-century. However, the Government Accountability Office, a federal watchdog, last month said jobless claims have contained inconsistent data because of the pandemic-related surge in applications and attempted fraud. The Labor Department said it doesn't plan to change its methodology. Economists also caution the claims figures can be volatile from week to week, especially around holiday periods. "Job destruction has not come to an end," Andy Challenger, senior vice president at outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc., said before Thursday's data. "We might be gaining jobs overall, but thousands of people are losing their jobs every week because demand has not returned."



The broader labor-market recovery is continuing but showed signs of slowing in November. Employers added 245,000 jobs last month, and the Labor Department said last week. While it was the seventh consecutive month of gains, hiring has cooled. At November's rate of job growth, employment wouldn't return to pre-pandemic levels until 2024. Mr. Challenger said recent layoffs have occurred in the entertainment and leisure industry, including at restaurants and retailers and in the transportation sector, at employers including airlines and transit authorities. Many workers laid off this Spring expected to return to their jobs fairly quickly. In recent weeks, those laid off are more likely to have seen their position eliminated, Mr. Challenger said. "When someone is let go today, that means the company doesn't see that job existing for a while," he said.

Overall, the US economy has recovered much of the ground lost earlier this year, but the expansion's momentum has eased since the summer's swift gains. According to the Commerce Department, consumer spending rose in October for the sixth straight month, though slower. The manufacturing and services sectors expanded in November, according to the Institute for Supply Management.

There are ample job openings in several industries, including in the finance, accounting, and technology sectors, said Paul McDonald, senior executive director at professional staffing firm Robert Half International Inc. "We still see strong demand," he said. "But those with jobs

are reluctant to leave.” He said some fear they will lose seniority and be at greater risk for a layoff if the economy weakens. While total job loss this year was much higher than in the 2007-2009 recession, the finance sector has been less affected, and many firms are hiring, Mr. McDonald said, to keep up with the demand for mortgage refinancing and home auto loans. Just more than 20 million workers were receiving unemployment benefits in mid-November, according to the Labor Department. That includes those paid through regular state programs, which provide unemployment insurance covering the vast majority of workers, and two pandemic programs created earlier this year.

Those programs—one for gig workers and others not typically eligible for jobless benefits and another for those who have exhausted eligibility for other programs—are set to expire at the end of the year. People in the pandemic programs accounted for most of those receiving benefits last month. Grace Keros last month laid off all but four staff members from American Coney Island. This downtown Detroit diner employed more than 20 workers before the pandemic after Michigan imposed new in-person dining restrictions. Ms. Keros, the owner, is now limited to carryout orders and closes the former 24-hour joint as early as 4 p.m. “In March, I had to call the locksmith to help me lock up because I couldn’t find the key,” she said. When spring restrictions were lifted, Ms. Keros said she could bring back about half her staff, but sales were down with fewer office workers in the area and no crowds from baseball games or events. With winter approaching and unable to serve diners inside, she said she is worried about her future and that of her employees, mostly because they won’t receive an extra \$600 a week in unemployment benefits. Those enhanced benefits ended in July, and other federal programs are set to expire this month. “If we’re going to be told we can’t operate, the government needs to get its act together and help these workers,” she said.

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus ]*

<b>HOUSEHOLD</b>		<b>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	
	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	Oct 2019	Oct 2020
<b>Unemployed</b>	307	552	252	492	55	60
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.3</b>

*The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (November 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 6.9 percent. Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 5.7 percent (up from 3.6 percent in October).*

In November 2020, the veteran unemployment rate was 6.3%, up from 5.9% last month. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.6% in November.

## TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

*On Monday, December 7*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Glowforge, a company that manufactures laser printers for small business applications. The company is interested in offering its product to veteran entrepreneurs by working with the Small Business Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, and nonprofits. They were referred to VA's vocational rehabilitation program. VA's Education and Career Counseling program includes an entrepreneurship track that provides equipment and training for severely disabled veterans who cannot otherwise maintain regular employment. This is closely aligned with the company's vision for its veteran's program.

*On Monday, December 7*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held conversations with the National Association of Veterans Program Administrators (NAVPA0 on the 85/15 issue and potential solutions.

*On Monday, December 7*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) and Education Counsel (EdCounsel) on the Risk-Based Survey (RBS) pilot project.

*On Monday, December 7*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the meeting of the George W. Bush Institute COVID 19 working group, which discussed the impacts of the pandemic on higher education.

*On Tuesday, December 8*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held a teleconference with CACI, BAE Systems, and Lockheed Martin. The discussion focused on their abilities to fill positions that require an "Active Security Clearance." One recommendation proposed would have had DoD renew security clearance for servicemembers transitioning out of the military.

*On Tuesday, December 8*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division testified in front of the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity about identifying congressional and administration priorities for the next Congress. VE&E staff expressed concern over rising veteran unemployment numbers and the expectation of a harsh winter. Specifically, staff expressed the need to pass the Protect VETS Act immediately and then shift focus to passing veterans workforce bills.

*On Tuesday, December 8*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Attended and presented at the George W. Bush Virtual Stand To. As Chairman of the Policy working group for the GWB National Higher Education Task Force I discussed challenges in such areas as education modality, veteran well being and the need for better oversight of GI Bill approved institutions. Conversations with SVAC and HVAC on new VA Omibus and potential COVID package

*On Wednesday, December 9*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with several companies interested in attending the upcoming Career Fair, February 9, 2021, with the Department of Texas and Texas Veterans/Workforce Commission.

***On Wednesday, December 9***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Lumina Foundation and Friday LLC to discuss the Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative's progress. VE&E staff expressed satisfaction with progress and have completed edits on three out of five sections.

***On Wednesday, December 9***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Attended the Veterans Administration Committee on Education (VACOE) meeting on veterans' education and training Presentations by VBA on program approval, technology, and VA processes and challenges.

***On Wednesday, December 9***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended Senate Veterans Affairs /Committee on the impact of COVID 19 VA and veterans education. Dr. Stone and Dr. Paul Lawrence discussed their challenges and actions. Dr. Lawrence is seeking \$250 to upgrade VA education processing systems, a request supported by VSOs during their testimony the previous day.

***On Wednesday, December 9***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Conversations with AL VE&E leadership and NAVPA on the VA rollback of egregious 85/15 requirements (big win for veterans and GI Bill approved schools).

***On Wednesday, December 9***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division Senate passed HR 7501 in the evening, the VA Omnibus bill. (Another big win for Veterans in which the AL played a key role, particularly in the education and training provisions therein.)

***On Thursday, December 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Teresa Watts from Montana's employment services. Ms. Watts heard about the successful job fair we hosted in Texas (September 15) and hoped to host a Montana career fair. A conference call with the Department of Montana will be scheduled in the next couple of days.

***On Thursday, December 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the annual Institute for Veteran and Military Families' (IVMF) National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs Funders Roundtable to discuss the preliminary findings of the National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs. This survey is one of the most extensive and in-depth sets of data that has been created around Veteran Small Business. The parties discussed tabulation and presentation of the most meaningful portions of the data for release.

***On Thursday, December 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the SBA's internal transition team to discuss the landscape of veteran entrepreneurship programming and financial product utilization. The transition team's main interest was finding out what programmatic issues they face when they assume office, from an external stakeholder's perspective.

***On Thursday, December 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with RBS Project manager Woodall on communication on the RBS project and how best to proceed with the RBS pilot rollout.

***On Thursday, December 10***, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division discussed VA Omnibus with HVAC staff and other VSOs. Discussion with HE leaders in NC (particularly Wake Forest University and NC State University on how they will move forward in the Spring with safeguards for all students, including student veterans, as the pandemic continues.

*On Friday, December 11*, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division counseled a Georgia-based small business in federal veterans small business certification. Small Business counseling is part of the program the VE&E Division provides for servicemembers, veteran, and their spouses interested in entrepreneurship.

## **GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS**

ACE: American Council on Education  
ACP: American Corporate Partners, a veterans support organization  
ATLAS: Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations, a VA telehealth initiative  
BLS: Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics  
C&P: VA's Compensation and Pension exam  
CAVC: Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims  
COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment  
CSAAVE: California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education  
DIMO: Defense Security Cooperation Agency/Defense Institute for Medical Operations  
DOD: Department of Defense  
DOL-VETS: Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services  
EdCounsel: Higher education consulting firm  
EIDL program. SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans  
EIDL: Economic Injury Disaster Loan  
GAO: Government Accountability Office  
GPD: VA'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: VA's National Cemetery Administration  
NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act  
NLD: American Legion's National Legislative Division  
OPM: Office of Personnel Management  
PPP: Paycheck Protection Program  
RBS: Risk-Based Survey Model  
RPIC: Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge  
S2S: Service to School, a veterans organization  
SAA: State Approving Agency, responsible for approving school funding for GI Bill  
SBA: Small Business Administration  
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Medical  
SVA: Student Veterans of America, a veterans organization  
SVAC Senate Veterans Affairs Committee  
TAPS: Transition Assistance Program for Survivors, a nonprofit for Gold Star Families

TEAM Act: Senate Bill 4393, to improve the provision of health care for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances from burn pits  
TFA: American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program  
USAID: United States Agency for International Development  
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture  
USERRA: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act  
VA&R: American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division  
VACO: Veterans Affairs Central Office  
VBA: VA's Veterans Benefits Administration  
VE&E: Veterans Employment and Education Division  
VES: Veterans Education Success, a veterans organization  
VSO: Veterans Service Organization

### TOPIC 3a: TRACKING LEGISLATION

**GI Bill Repair Act of 2020:** To extend to black veterans of World War II, their surviving spouses, and direct descendants eligibility for specific housing and educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[Resolution No.: None on file](#)

**Status: Currently on hold, has not been introduced**

**Homeless Veteran Coronavirus Response Act:** The bill allows VA 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 VA to ensure veterans participating in VA homeless programs have access to VA telehealth services.

(Tracked by Teresa Lewis)

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

**HR 6800, the Heroes Act:** Allows VA to provide transport and purchase food, shelter, phones, clothing, blankets, and toiletry items for homeless veterans; Authorizes VA to set up temporary encampments on the grounds of VA Medical Centers to allow homeless veterans to shelter on VA parking lots temporarily; Allows VA to provide reimbursements to social service providers receiving grants for the costs of services for minor children.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

[Resolution No. 324: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

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

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

[Resolution No. 155: Support Verification Improvements for Veterans' Business](#)

**Status: Passed at the 2016 National Convention.**

**HR 2224:** To direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize services to homeless veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless veterans' reintegration programs and for other purposes.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

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

**HR 1196, Jobs for Veterans Act of 2019:** This bill allows an increased work opportunity tax credit for employers who hire veterans who have been certified as discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and who begin working for the employer after December 31, 2019, and before January 1, 2024. This increased credit is in addition to any work opportunity tax credit allowed to a veteran with a service-connected disability.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

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

**HR 7010, Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020:** This bill significantly changes the PPP loans' terms to be more advantageous to small businesses. Including more flexibility in applying the loan to other expenses besides payroll and benefits and extending the time frame for expending the loan.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

**HR 4625:** To require education programs to be approved by the VA to abide by the Principles of Excellence to include a ban on deceptive or misleading recruiting, clear information about total costs and program requirements, accommodation for deployments, ensuring a point of contact for veterans, and not being under a punitive action by an accreditor.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

**HR 6957:** To direct the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs to treat a period of full-time National Guard duty, performed in response to the national emergency declared on March 13, 2020, by the President concerning COVID-19, as not shorter than 90 days.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[Resolution No.: Currently studying for appropriate resolution.](#)

**HR 4920 Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020:** is a bill that would allow AbilityOne companies to keep their preferential treatment at the Department of Veteran Affairs after 2016 with some compromises. The Senate initially sent it back to the House after it was passed for changes. Those changes have been reconciled, and the bill cleared its last hurdle before it is sent to the White House.

**S. 2594:** To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify specific requirements concerning service and retirement for veterans' Preference for federal hiring.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

[Resolution No. 317: Enforcing Veterans' Preference Hiring Practices in Federal Civil Service](#)

**S. 3745, Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act:** to require the Department of Education to grant full student loan discharges to three specific emergency categories of defrauded borrowers—specifically borrowers covered by:

- (1) Department of Education findings against Corinthian.
- (2) Department of Education findings against ITT Tech; and
- (3) State attorneys general group discharge applications made before the date of enactment.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

## TOPIC 3b: ACTION TAKEN ON LEGISLATION

**Building Credit Access for Veterans Act:** A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to establish an automated process for obtaining alternative credit rating information and other purposes.

(Tracked by Ariel)

**Status: Draft Bill / Letter of Support submitted on October 13**

**HR 8426: Protecting Apprenticeship Training for Veterans Act:** Currently, veterans must meet a minimum number of apprenticeship hours to receive their Housing Allowance. Due to pandemic work shortages, veterans in those programs now face a reduction or suspension in their stipend. This would allow veteran apprentices who were laid off to roll over excess hours from a previous month to meet the hourly requirement.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

**Status: Letter of Support drafted**

**HR 4941: Veteran Employment Transition Act” or the “VET Act”** was sponsored by Representative Andy Kim. The bill's last action was in the House on 12/02/2019; it was referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The bill's goal is to improve the Transition Assistance Program. The bill would allow certain veterans' service organizations to contact veterans regarding benefits and better inform veterans of employment opportunities. The Service groups would inform veterans of the benefits and employment opportunities with the Federal, State, and local governments. The groups inform veterans of events in the area.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

[Resolution No. 70: Improve Transition Assistance Program](#)

**Status: Letter of Support submitted**

**HR 7003:** is a bill sponsored by Rep. Takano, Mark D-CA-41, and was introduced 05/22/2020. The bill would authorize a pilot program in the Department of Defense to enhance efforts to provide job placement assistance and related employment services directly to the National Guard, Reserves, and veterans of the Armed Forces. The last action on the bill was 05/22/2020 and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(Tracked by Ariel/Raymond)

[Resolution No. 81: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members](#)

**Status: Pending Letter of Support**

**Draft Bill:** Veterans Educational Assistance Transparency and Accountability Improvement Act, improve the GI. Bill Comparison Tool ensures veterans, servicemembers, and their families are better informed when choosing what educational institution is best for them.

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

**Status: Letter of Support submitted**

**Draft Bill:** JSF - To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the scope of procedural rights of members of the uniformed services concerning their employment and reemployment rights, and for other purposes.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

**Status:** We submitted written testimony for the July 23, 2020 hearing.

**Draft Bill:** USERRA Protections for State Active Duty - To amend title 38, United States Code, extend particular employment and reemployment rights to members of the National Guard who perform State active duty. Submitted written testimony to the Legislative Division.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

[Resolution No. 315: Support Employment and Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment](#)

**Status:** We submitted written testimony for the July 23, 2020 hearing.

**HR 7111: Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020:** Require the Secretary of VA to carry out a rapid retraining program that provides eligible veterans up to 12 months of retraining assistance for in-demand occupations. These 12 months of benefits would be equivalent to students' and schools' payments through the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

[Resolution No. 316: Support Employment of Veterans in the Public and Private Workforce](#)

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

**HR 7445:** To expand eligibility for home loans from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to individual members of the Armed Forces reserve components.

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

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

#### TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

By 2021, Amazon has pledged to hire 25,000 US military veterans across all of its operations. More than that, they are also dedicated to hiring veterans reservists, spouses, and family members – regardless of rank or military specialty. These “Amazon Warriors,” as the company calls them, come to Amazon through several programs, each focused on different aspect of veterans’ lives. This



*Amazon is still committed to hiring 25,000 veterans*

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includes wounded warriors, active and transitioning veterans, student vets, and more.

You can catch Amazon and its employees active in all veteran culture areas, from the Old Glory Relay to RED Fridays, and even doing 22 pushups every day. Amazon even partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs to create certification programs for vets with no costs.

One of Amazon’s best programs is an employment plan for wounded vets designed to fill skill gaps due to service-related wounds, injuries, and illnesses. Through education, advocacy, and training for wounded warriors, this one-of-a-kind program seeks America’s wounded vets to show the world the possibilities, and potential these prior-service workers still have. Amazon also launched the Amazon Military Leaders Program to find innovative, experienced talent to transition from military service to Amazon's senior leadership. It just makes sense –to fill the most critical roles at the top of one of the world’s biggest and most profitable companies,

Amazon wants to look for those people who volunteered for some of the most dangerous and critical jobs out there.

This company goes above and beyond for National Guardsmen and Reservists who are activated or called away to training. Not only does the company ensure the member has a job when they come back, as required by law, but Amazon also seeks to place the employee in a role they would have worked if they had never left their Amazon job at all. What's more, if the pay the military member receives from serving is significantly less than their Amazon pay, Amazon will make up the difference. "There are veterans and active duty service members from the Guard and Reserve at every level of the company," says Ardine Williams, Amazon Web Services' Vice-President of Talent Acquisition, who also happens to be a former Army officer. "That population, that community, makes it easy for us to not only do the right thing but also do what we say we will do."

When Amazon isn't hiring veterans and preparing service members for their post-military careers, they support other organizations with the same intent, mission, and drive. Amazon's Military Influencer Conference sponsor, three-day business development and networking event that brings together nonprofit startup accelerators geared toward vet-owned businesses, successful veteran entrepreneurs, and like-minded veterans who are looking to change their lives by starting their enterprises.

Since March, we have seen the veteran unemployment rate double. The American Legion is encouraged to see that Amazon has relaunched its initiative to hire 25,000 veterans by the end of 2021. Additionally, Amazon is part of The American Legion's Employment Innovation Taskforce. However, Amazon is just one company; more needs to be done to encourage more employers to hire veterans.

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

*[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

## **TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS**

### **Singleton-Corrado Bill To Assist Homeless Veterans Passes Committee**

The current pilot program, established by the "New Jersey Housing Assistance for Veterans Act," authorizes grants to eligible nonprofit organizations to rehabilitate existing primary residences of disabled or low-income veterans. The bill, S-1746, would amend the Act to expand the pilot program to include the purchase and rehabilitation of abandoned homes for homeless veterans.



*Every effort needs to be made to eradicate the homeless veteran population*

"It is unacceptable to allow our veterans to go from serving our country to living on the streets. They have sacrificed time away from their families, friends, and work to defend our country and our freedom. We must do everything possible to assist them during trying times in their lives, such as now during the pandemic and economic downturn," said Senator Singleton (D-Burlington), Chair of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee. "By restoring abandoned properties and

making them into livable homes, we can provide these men and women with safe and secure housing. The benefits of this legislation are twofold – we are not only providing housing for otherwise homeless veterans but also helping to rehabilitate communities one House at a time.”

“It is our duty to ensure the safety and well-being of our veterans, especially those who have fallen on hard times,” said Senator Corrado (R-Bergen/Essex/Morris/Passaic). “These grants will allow numerous nonprofit organizations to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned properties for New Jersey’s homeless veterans. These brave men and women have sacrificed so much in service to our nation, and they should not have to spend one single night without a roof over their head.”

Under the bill, a nonprofit veterans' organization would be eligible to receive a grant to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes for homeless veterans with experience in rehabilitating homeless veterans' housing. The bill would prioritize nonprofit organizations that serve communities in the greatest need of homeless services.

The bill was released from the committee by a vote of 5-0.

**Resolution No. 332: Support Funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Homeless Program**

*[Reported by Ariel A De Jesus]*

**TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS**

ALL IN-PERSON CAREER FAIRS SCHEDULED THROUGH DECEMBER HAVE BEEN CANCELLED, SUSPENDED, OR POSTPONED.

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

Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 9,143, a decrease of 2,011 from the prior week.

*The Mission of The American Legion's National Veterans Employment & Education Commission is to take actions that affect veterans' economic well-being, including issues relating to veterans' education, employment, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, homelessness, and small business.*

*Reported by Ariel De Jesus]*

### TOPIC 7a: SMALL BUSINESS



The American Legion's Veterans Employment and Education Division continues to track the progress of a new



THE AMERICAN LEGION  
DEPARTMENT of TEXAS  
**VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR**  
Employment Opportunities are Waiting for You. Register Now and Connect with Local and Nationwide Employers Looking to Hire.  
Tuesday, February 9, 2021 ★ 10:00am-2:00pm (Central Time)



Job Seeker Registration

Employer Registration

COVID-19 relief package. Bilateral talks resumed over the possibility of a second draw on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and forgiveness. This is important for many American Legion Posts and Departments that have taken advantage of the PPP before August 1<sup>st</sup>, who may become eligible for a second draw going into the winter. This is extremely timely as many state governors began to enforce a second round of lockdowns to curb the COVID-19 infection rate.

Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) expressed optimism this week that a new coronavirus relief package will be secured before Congress leaves Washington for recess and admitted to stalling previous stimulus package proposals.

Addressing reporters in the Capitol, the Speaker said party negotiators still have several disagreements to iron out to win such an agreement, but indicated the sides are making steady progress and all but guaranteed that a bipartisan deal will be sealed in the coming days. "We'll take the time we need, and we must get it done," Pelosi said. "We cannot leave without it."

Pelosi had spoken Thursday with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), seeking a strategy for passing both an emergency COVID-19 bill and legislation to fund the government and prevent a shutdown. Both sides emerged that discussion in agreement that the two bills should be lumped together for the sake of expediency.

"We want to have it on the omnibus, ... and we're hoping that that will accelerate the discussions on the omnibus," she said, referring to legislation combining all 12 appropriations bills in one package. "We are going to keep the government open — we are not going to have a continuing resolution — but we need to take the time to do that."

The comments arrive as the nation is experiencing yet another surge in coronavirus cases, hospitalizations, and deaths, forcing some state and local leaders to implement new rounds of lockdowns and intensifying the pressure on congressional leaders to secure another coronavirus-relief package before year's end.

For months leading up to last month's elections, Pelosi refused to compromise on another round of emergency aid, which was then in the range of \$2 trillion. After the election, Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) announced this week that they're prepared to dramatically lower their funding demand, agreeing to use a recently released bipartisan framework — in the range of \$900 billion — as the baseline of the talks.

Pelosi defended that change of position on Friday, saying it reflected two dramatic shifts in the post-election landscape: Joe Biden's presidential victory and the emergence of several promising vaccines. "That is a total game-changer: a new president and a vaccine," she said, noting that Biden has vowed to enact more COVID-19 relief next year as needs arise. That new dynamic, she added, has freed Democratic leaders to accept a smaller level of funding this month, knowing more may be on the way. "It's for a shorter time, but that's OK now because we have a new president," she said.

There are still several outstanding sticking points preventing an agreement on coronavirus relief. For instance, McConnell has insisted that any new aid package must include language shielding schools and businesses from lawsuits brought by workers and students who develop COVID-19 - a provision rejected by Democrats. Still, both parties face increasing pressure from rank-and-file lawmakers to bridge their differences and win a deal this month. And President Trump has said he'll sign the legislation if it reaches his desk.

*[Reported by Davy Leghorn]*

## **TOPIC 7b: SMALL BUSINESS**

On Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, convened a hearing titled, “Small Business in Crisis: The 2020 Paycheck Protection Program and its Future.” Senator Rubio stated, “Today’s hearing provides us an opportunity to evaluate the first round of PPP and to discuss the future of the program, with this goal in mind. I look forward to hearing from Today’s expert panel on their experiences with PPP.” A live-stream of the hearing can be found on the committee’s website [here](#).

On Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the House passed four bipartisan bills to make critical changes to the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) 504 and 7(a) lending programs and to improve the appeals process in the HUBZone federal contracting program. These fixes will put more capital in entrepreneurs' hands and make it easier for small firms to participate in federal procurement." <https://smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3477>

[\*\*HR 7903, “To amend the Small Business Act to establish the Community Advantage Loan Program”\*\*](#)

[\*\*HR 8211, “504 Modernization and Small Manufacturer Enhancement Act of 2020”\*\*](#)

[\*\*HR 8199, “504 Credit Risk Management Improvement Act of 2020”\*\*](#)

[\*\*HR 8229, the “Parity for HUBZone Appeals Act of 2020”\*\*](#)

On Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, House Small Business Committee Chairwoman Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) issued the following statement after the Labor Department released its November jobs report:

“Today’s big miss on employment numbers is a flashing warning sign about the state of our economy. Job growth has slowed sharply, and permanent job loss continues to rise. We’ve still yet to regain 9.8 million jobs that we lost since February, and at the current rate of growth, Americans won’t have those back for years.

<https://smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3479>

## **RURAL BROADBAND**

On Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, the Trump Administration announced that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing approximately \$12 million to provide broadband service in Louisiana's unserved and underserved rural areas. This investment is part of the \$550 million Congress allocated to the second round of the ReConnect Program. <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/12/09/trump-administration-invests-12-million-high-speed-broadband-rural>

*[Reported by Teresa Lewis]*

## **TOPIC 8: EDUCATION**

A measure passed by the Senate Wednesday night would, among other things, include the provisions of the “Protect VETS Act”, requiring a review of whether colleges should be eligible to accept GI Bill funds if federal or state authorities have penalized them.

The measure – rolled into the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, MD. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020” - is expected to pass the House and be signed by President Donald Trump, and applies to all types of colleges and universities.

The legislative language was featured prominently in The American Legion’s recent testimony to the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.



“Numerous stakeholders have provided input on these provisions: state approving agencies, universities, VA, and numerous training providers. No recent veteran’s education legislation – to include the Forever GI Bill – has undergone screening processes as rigorous as, and there is no excuse for further delay”, testified Veteran Employment & Education Division’s John Kamin.

Colleges had been able to continue to receive GI Bill funds even after being penalized for acts like misrepresenting to prospective students their ability to get jobs after graduation. Under the bill, part of a package of veterans' measures passed unanimously, legal penalties imposed by state and federal governments, among several other things, would now trigger a review by the Veterans Affairs Department of whether the institution should still be eligible to receive GI Bill funds.

Among several other protections, the bill also extends a provision restoring the GI Bill benefit a veteran uses for tuition if they had to withdraw from college because of a reason associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This landmark legislation will significantly weed out predatory colleges that seek to take advantage of veterans,” Carrie Wofford, president of the advocacy group Veterans Education Success, said in a statement.

Among the many provisions of the bill affecting education, this will:

- Require risk-based reviews of schools
- Stop deceptive and misleading advertising by strengthening the ban on deceptive recruiting and misrepresentation practices
- Restore full GI Bill to students whose schools closed or were disapproved
- Requires law schools to be accredited by the American Bar Association
- Protects students from VA debt collection for overpaid tuition
- Extends COVID-19 emergency relief authority to allow withdrawals due to COVID closures not to count against entitlement.

The American Legion advocacy for this bill was predicated on Resolution No. 304: Support Accountability for Institutions of Higher Learning.

*[Reported by John Kamin]*

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director  
Veterans Employment & Education Division**

**202.861.2700 ext. 2989**  
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