

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

U.S. JOBLESS CLAIMS, BENEFITS PAYMENTS FALL TO PANDEMIC LOWS

Applications for unemployment benefits declined to 360,000 last week, as recovery accelerates and states end extra pandemic-related aid early



*Low-wage work is in high demand, and employers are now competing for applicants, offering incentives ranging from sign-on bonuses to free food. But with many still unemployed, are these offers working?
(Photo: Bloomberg)*

Applications for unemployment benefits fell to a new pandemic low, showing a healing labor market, and the number of people receiving jobless aid has also trended lower as many states end enhanced pandemic programs.

Jobless claims declined to 360,000 in the week ended July 10 from a seasonally adjusted 386,000 a week earlier. Last week's applications count marked the lowest level for claims since March 2020, the month the Covid-19 pandemic hit the U.S. economy.

The four-week moving average, which can smooth out volatility in the weekly figures, fell to 382,500, also a pandemic low.

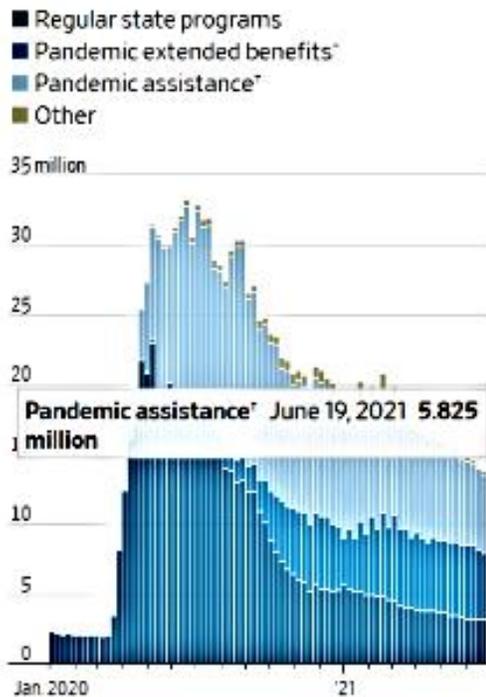
Continuing unemployment payments made through regular state programs—which provides an approximation of the number of people receiving benefits—declined by 126,000 to 3.24 million in the week ended July 3, also the lowest level since March 2020.

New claims and benefits payments have trended downward in recent months, largely reflecting a strengthening economy. Still, claims remain elevated compared with the pre-pandemic average of 218,000 in 2019.

“The economy is expanding rapidly now, as Covid infections go down and firms are given the OK to expand in-person activity,” said David Berson, chief economist at Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co. “To meet that demand, firms need to hire workers.”

382,500, also a pandemic low.

Number of people claiming unemployment benefits, by program



Note: * Reflects Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation for those who exhausted other programs. † Reflects Pandemic Unemployment Assistance for self-employed and others not typically eligible.
Source: Labor Department

The Federal Reserve separately on Thursday said that U.S. industrial production rose in June, but manufacturing output continued to be hindered by supply-chain disruptions, particularly in the automotive sector. Industrial production—which includes factory, mining and utility output—increased at a seasonally adjusted 0.4% in June compared with May.

Manufacturing—the biggest component of industrial production—declined 0.1% in June compared with the previous month, driven by a sharp 6.6% decline in motor vehicle and parts production amid the current shortage of semiconductors. Excluding motor vehicles and parts, factory output increased 0.4%, the Fed said.

Early cutoffs of extra pandemic-related unemployment benefits are contributing to the decline in benefits payments, Mr. Berson said.

Nearly half of states have announced that they will end the expanded benefits of \$300 a week before they are slated to end nationwide in early September. Twenty-two states had ended the benefits by the beginning of July, according to Morgan Stanley.

From mid-May through the week ended July 3, continuing claims were down 19.2% in states with June and July expiration dates for the \$300 enhanced payment. Over the same period, they were down 6.7% in the remaining states that are set to end

benefits in September, according to Jefferies LLC.

Even though benefit recipients in states halting the extra \$300 benefits are still eligible for regular state payments, many are leaving unemployment rolls.

“The fact that these people have stopped claiming those weekly payments means that they most likely found employment,” said Aneta Markowska, chief economist at Jefferies. Ms. Markowska said declining claims is one reason July job growth will likely be strong.

Thursday’s report showed unemployment payments through a federal program for gig-economy workers fell at the end of June. Continuing claims in this program declined to 5.69 million in the week ended June 26 from 5.82 million a week earlier, partially reflecting an early end to the benefits in some states.

The number of benefits recipients through the federal pandemic assistance program dropped sharply in states that cut off benefits in June, including Alabama, Idaho, Nebraska, New Hampshire and West Virginia.

Evans Distribution Systems, a Melvindale, Mich.-based company, provides warehousing and fulfillment services to companies in sectors such as autos and consumer products. Demand for Evans’s services has been strong since last summer, when “consumer goods basically started flying off the shelves of stores,” said Patrick Swaney, vice president of human resources.

To meet the demand, Evans is seeking forklift operators and warehousing workers to package goods and sort materials. But filling positions has been difficult, Mr. Swaney said. “We’re competing against the unemployment benefits that are out there right now,” he said.

He hopes to see more applicants once enhanced benefits end in Michigan in September. After a federal supplemental \$600 in unemployment benefits expired last summer, the firm saw an immediate increase in job seekers, he added.

To attract and retain workers, Evans has raised wages for many positions. Forklift operators now earn \$16 an hour, up from \$12 an hour before the pandemic. General laborers make \$14 an hour, up from a pre-pandemic hourly wage of \$10.50.

Some economists expect companies will have an easier time finding workers in September when expanded benefits expire in all states, and the reopening of schools frees up many parents to search for jobs.

Dave Gilbertson, vice president at workplace-software firm Ultimate Kronos Group, said the number of shifts worked by employees in manufacturing and healthcare has been slow to come back compared with other industries. Increased child-care responsibilities during the pandemic is a key impediment holding back manufacturing and healthcare, where workers tend to be of parenting age, Mr. Gilbertson said.

“They need a lot more certainty in their schedule to entice them back to work,” Mr. Gilbertson said, noting he expects school reopenings in the fall to ease the child-care constraints.

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	
	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021	June 2020	June 2021
Unemployed	776	437	675	375	101	62
Unemployment rate	8.6	4.8	8.5	4.7	9.6	5.5

The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent (May 2021). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 5.2 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 9.5 percent.

In June 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 4.8%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 5.9% in June.

TOPIC 2a: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS

On Monday, July 12, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a NLIHC National HoUSED call, the meeting was to show NLIHC's HoUSED campaign and how it is helping with the passing of the Congressional bills dealing with homelessness and infrastructure. The NLIHC is looking for support in these endeavors by local organizations and people reaching out to their jurisdiction's Congress men and women to help shine light on these bills still in progress. Some issues discussed were:

- Ending Homelessness Act
- HUD programs
- Housing is Infrastructure Act
- Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)

On Monday, July 12, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the National Association of State Approving Agency (NASAA) Legislative Director to discuss shared priorities with The American Legion and a new legislative agenda.

On Monday, July 12, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with RBS project manager to discuss continuing evaluation and report on the Risk Based- Survey pilot phase.

On Monday, July 12, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the staff office of the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss the current changes of the VA's acquisition program as the VA switch their MSPV program to DLA's MSPV program; Also, discuss VETS First program and how it is implemented by the VA and not implement by the DOD.

On Tuesday, July 13, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a meeting of the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE) subcommittee on Distance Education to discuss the Digital GI Bill and its future implementation.

On Tuesday, July 13, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with Justin Voght, lead House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) EO staffer on the Risk Based- Survey (RBS) status, needed changes or amendments for Roe Isakson, and plans for hearing next week.

On Tuesday, July 13, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Gordon Sund, LC for Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer to discuss small business operations. Some items considered were:

- Expanding the number of VBOCs around the country
- GI Bill being used for business start-ups
- Veteran in rural areas and U.S. territories access to capital

- Broadband access for veterans
- VA acquisition program transition to DLA acquisition program and VETS First

On Tuesday, July 13, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with the President of Wake Forest to discuss veteran outreach and success on campus.

On Wednesday, July 14, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a virtual conference with Universal Technical Institute Veterans Liaison to discuss new program and challenges in the post Covid era.

On Wednesday, July 14, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a virtual conference: VA on Veterans Benefits; the meeting inform veterans and relevant stakeholders about the many benefits that may be available to them. Some topics discussed were:

- TAP
- Outreach, Transition, and Economic Development (OTED)
- Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act
- Specially Adapted Housing
- VA Pension
- Reserve educational assistance program (REAP)
- VR&E Program
- VA Home Loan Guaranty
- SkillBridge Partnership

On Wednesday, July 14, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended Home-ARP and Project Homekey Webinar. The webinar discussed the HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) which touches on the resources people can find when they close to homelessness through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and how these resources are given with equity and reliability. The webinar also talked about Project Homekey where California worked to make this project cost-effective and timely, and what they thought about utilizing HOME-ARP dollars. Some topics reviewed were:

- HOME-ARP Qualifications
- HOME- American Rescue Plan Program
- California's Housing Response to COVID-19
- Department of Housing and Urban Development

On Friday, July 16, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with former National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) President and Washington State Approving Agency (SAA) Director on issues with implementation of Roe Isakson; Too many unfunded new requirements for SAAs to manage.

TOPIC 2b: Breaking News

LATEST SPECIAL EVENTS

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division hosted a roundtable discussion on Thursday, July 15, 2021, with the Employment Innovation Taskforce's industry partners on the impact of new technologies, demographic shifts and Covid-19 on their labor and talent markets. Everything from re- and up-skilling, talent redeployment, and meeting the expectations of new generations of workers were addressed in order to give veterans and all high-risk employees an ecosystem that ensures employability and productivity in the new world of work. To that effect, the Taskforce convened three experts who discussed scaling up in addressing these challenges and impact of their efforts representing financial institutions, cybersecurity, consumer services and products, and professional services.



GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

ACE: American Council on Education

ACP: American Corporate Partners, a veteran's support organization

ATLAS: Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations, a V.A. telehealth initiative

BLS: Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics

C&P: V.A.'s Compensation and Pension exam

CAVC: Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

CCME: Council of College and Military Educators

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment
CSAAVE: California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education
DIMO: Defense Security Cooperation Agency/Defense Institute for Medical Operations
DOD: Department of Defense
DOL-VETS: Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services
EdCounsel: Higher education consulting firm
EIDL program. SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans
EIDL: Economic Injury Disaster Loan
GAO: Government Accountability Office
GPD: V.A.'s Grant and Per Diem Program for homeless veterans
GWB: George W. Bush Higher Education Policy Work Group
HEROES ACT of 2003: Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003. Grants the Secretary of Education the authority to waive requirements that impede military borrowers' access to critical repayment protection during the war, military operation, or national emergency.
HVAC: House Veterans Affairs Committee
MCAI: American Legion's Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative
MSLP: The Federal Reserve's Main Street Lending Program
MSO: Military Support Organization
NAICU: National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities
NASAA: National Association of State Approving Agencies. Responsible for approving school funding for GI Bill
NAVPA: National Association of Veterans Program Administrators
NCA: V.A.'s National Cemetery Administration
NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act
NLD: American Legion's National Legislative Division
OPM: Office of Personnel Management
PPP: Paycheck Protection Program
RBS: Risk-Based Survey Model
RPIC: Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge
S2S: Service to School, a veteran's organization
SAA: State Approving Agency, responsible for approving school funding for GI Bill
SBA: Small Business Administration
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, Medical
SVA: Student Veterans of America, a veteran's organization
SVAC Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
TAPS: Transition Assistance Program for Survivors, a nonprofit for Gold Star Families
TEAM Act: Senate Bill 4393, to improve the provision of health care for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances from burn pits
TFA: American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance program
USAID: United States Agency for International Development
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
USERRA: Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
VA&R: American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division
VACO: Veterans Affairs Central Office
VBA: V.A.'s Veterans Benefits Administration
VE&E: Veterans Employment and Education Division
VES: Veterans Education Success, a veteran's organization
VSO: Veterans Service Organization

TOPIC 3a: TRACKING LEGISLATION

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

Status: Expected to be introduced within a month

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

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

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

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

Status: Currently on hold, has not been introduced

Homeless Veteran Coronavirus Response Act: The bill allows V.A. to use existing funds for a broader range of services; authorizes the Department to collaborate with outside organizations to facilitate shelters on its properties; loosens restrictions on Grant and Per Diem (GPD) payments and requires V.A. to ensure veterans participating in V.A. homeless programs have access to V.A. telehealth services.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Status: Did not pass by the end of the 116th Session.

HR 1196, Jobs for Veterans Act of 2019: This bill allows an increased work opportunity tax credit for employers who hire veterans who have been certified as discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and who begin working for the employer after

December 31, 2019, and before January 1, 2024. This increased credit is in addition to any work opportunity tax credit allowed to a veteran with a service-connected disability.

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

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

Status: Became Public Law No: 116-142.

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

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

Status: Became Public Law No: 116-315

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

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

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

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

TOPIC 3b: ACTION TAKEN ON LEGISLATION

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

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

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

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

Status: Letter of Support drafted

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

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

Status: Letter of Support submitted

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

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

Status: Pending Letter of Support

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

Status: Letter of Support submitted

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOPIC 4a: EMPLOYMENT

VETERAN-OWNED TRIAD FIRM WINS \$231M GOVERNMENT CONTRACT TO HELP VETS TRANSITION

Horizon Strategies, a Winston-Salem-based Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB), has been awarded a \$231.2 million firm-fixed-price contract by the U.S. Army to provide transition services to veterans via the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).



***TAP
services
for
veterans
entering
civilian
workforce.***

Founded in 2016, Horizon is a professional services company with core competency in strategy and strategic planning, leadership and executive education, and government services. Its principals and co-owners are Major Gen. (Ret.) Al Batschelet, and Col. (Ret.) Bill Harmon. All of the company's vice presidents and key leaders are retired military, most having 25 to 30 years of military service.

With the TAP contract, Horizon will provide counseling, resume writing, interview skills training and networking skills to help veterans find employment post-service.

"Soldiers sacrifice many years of their career to the Army, and in return, the Army is committed to reintegrating them into the next phase of their life," said Batschelet. "Horizon Strategies is excited to execute on that commitment and help soldiers apply the advanced skills they developed in the Army to their future success as civilians in communities across our nation."

TAP was created to provide transition and job assistance services to soldiers, civilian employees and their family members. Mandated by Congress and embedded in Army and Department of Defense policy, TAP is designed to help all eligible transitioning veterans acquire the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to be competitive and successful in the global workforce. It helps soldiers make informed career decisions through counseling and employment assistance, building upon lessons learned in the initial and service phases of the soldier life cycle. Counseling services included in TAP address benefits, education and financial preparation.

"Horizon Strategies is honored to have been selected to help fulfill the important work of helping soldiers transition out of the Army," said Harmon. "Many members of the Horizon Strategies team are veterans or military family members, which uniquely positions us to understand and address the challenges associated with transitioning from an Army career into the civilian workforce."

Horizon Strategies will add more than 200 employees with and additional 440 positions under five subcontractor companies. The workforce will include many veterans to help oversee the pre-separation and initial counseling of transitioning soldiers, assist them through the career skills program and help connect them with employers for open positions.

The Army received 24 bids for the contract and obligated \$773,453 at the time of award. Work will be performed globally with program management located in Fort Knox, Kentucky, with an estimated completion date of July 3, 2026.

In addition, services for transitioning soldiers, Horizon Strategies is a Department of Defense Military Spouse Employment Program organization, which seeks to employ military spouses and veterans. It employs highly educated individuals with applied experience in solving complex national security challenges, and also applies those strategies to corporate and academic sectors.

The American Legion supports pre-separation counseling and services to all transitioning servicemembers with Transition Assistance Program (TAP) as found in **Resolution No. 100: Accountability of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP)**

TOPIC 4b: EMPLOYMENT

FLA. WANTS VETERANS FOR GOV'T JOBS: LAW TWEAKED TO ENHANCE PREFERENCES

Uncle Sam wanted them for the armed forces. For decades, Florida has rewarded those who answered that call with preference for veterans in public employment. Now that boost is getting even bigger.

Uncle Sam wanted them for the armed forces. For decades, Florida has rewarded those who answered that call with preference for veterans in public employment. Now that boost is getting even bigger. Come July 1, the extra points and other advantages that veterans and their families get when they apply for a government job or a promotion if they're already employed will be enhanced.



*Denise M. Heekin
of Bryant Miller Olive P.A.*

Florida has long required the state and all political subdivisions to give preference in employment and retention and for promotion after reinstatement or reemployment for qualifying veterans. These preferences come in the form of extra points if a numerical system, like a written test, is used, or extra consideration during more subjective processes. An amendment to the law that increases the points to be given on numerically based hiring and promotional processes and waives certain educational requirements went into effect July 1. These changes give certain veterans and family members an even bigger advantage in the hiring process for government jobs than they already have.

For example, if a veteran can do a job, but just hasn't gotten the post-high school degree or other education it requires, a government employer will be allowed to overlook it and hire him anyway.

The amendments also increased the amount of points to be given for numerically based hiring and promotional processes. For certain disabled veterans and their spouses, the points were increased from 15 to 20 extra points. For certain wartime veterans, un-remarried widows or widowers of certain veterans and certain parents/legal guardians, the points were increased from 10 to 15. For certain veterans, reservists, and members of the national guard, the points were increased from five to 10.

The simplest example of a numerically based selection process is a written examination. An applicant's score on the written examination determines where they are in the hiring "line" or where they stand in moving to the next step in the process. An employer who uses a numerically based system for hiring must augment a Veterans' Preference eligible applicant's score by the amended amounts (i.e., 20, 15 and 10) if the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the position and the applicant achieves a passing score on any required examination. For example, a job has a minimum qualification of a high school diploma and a minimum score of 70% out of 100 is needed to pass a written examination. If an applicant does not have a degree or does not achieve a 70% on the test, they are not entitled to any points. If an applicant meets the minimum qualification and passes the test with a score of 80%, the applicant will get 20, 15 or 10 added—making their score 100, 95 or 90—and they are to be slotted into any hiring list as if they received a score of 100, 95 or 90. The veterans' preference points are added at every step of a hiring process where scores are used. If the total possible score is less or greater than 100, the score should then be augmented with 20%, 15% or 10% of the total possible score.

For hiring and promotional processes that are not numerically based, eligible veterans must be given a preference at every step of the process. An employer may hire the most qualified individual for the job, but if an eligible veteran and non-veteran are otherwise equally qualified, the eligible veteran gets the job. Certain disabled veterans and their spouses have priority in the preference over other eligible veterans.

The new law also puts some new requirements on employers. All written job announcements and audio and video advertisements must include a notice about the educational requirement waiver. It has to say: "Certain servicemembers and veterans, and the spouses and family members of such servicemembers and veterans, receive preference and priority, and that certain servicemembers may be eligible to receive waivers for postsecondary educational requirements, in the employment by the state and its political subdivisions and are encouraged to apply for the positions being filled."

Governments will also have to implement a written veterans' recruitment plan that establishes annual goals for ensuring the full use of veterans in the agency's or political subdivision's workforce. Each plan must be designed to meet the established goals. This requirement will ensure that government employers are actively engaged in analyzing the number of veterans in their workforce and establishing recruitment methods to increase those numbers.

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs can help employees and employers navigate application of the preferences. According to its website, Florida is home to more than 1.5 million veterans and their families and more than 173,000 returning veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq claim Florida as their home of record. Florida also has the second largest population of women veterans in the nation. For those looking for employment in the government, Florida's veterans' preference law can give them a step up for employment and promotional opportunities. For employers, recruiting from the ranks of the many veterans in Florida can be a productive source of talent.

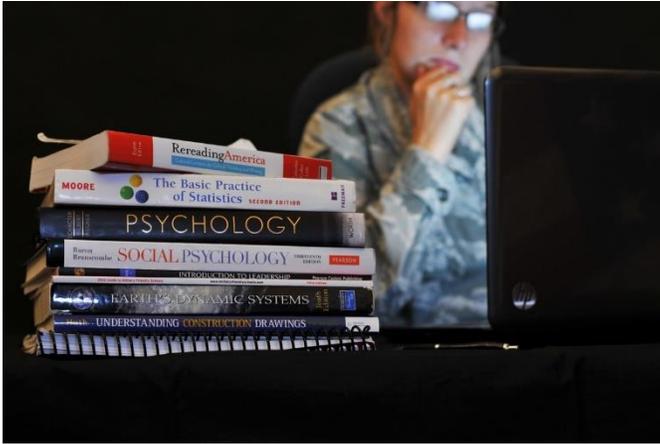
Denise M. Heekin is a member of Bryant Miller Olive's labor and employment practice group and serves as the managing shareholder for the Miami Office. Heekin is board-certified in labor and employment law by the Florida Bar. Her email is dheekin@bmolaw.com.

The American Legion supports development and passage of federal, state and local veteran business development legislation to provide assistance to all veterans, to ensure opportunities exist for veterans to start or grow a small business; this includes the expansion and improvement of all

entrepreneurship programs, loan programs and numerical goals for all veterans to compete in government procurement as stated in our **Resolution No. 21: Support Reasonable Set-Aside of Federal Procurements and Contracts**

TOPIC 5: EDUCATION

MILLIONS OF VETS MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR EXTRA GI BILL BENEFITS THANKS TO COURT RULING



Court ruling could give veterans an extra year of GI Bill benefits

Millions of veterans could be eligible for an additional year of education benefits starting next semester thanks to another federal court ruling rejecting the Department of Veterans Affairs prohibition on collecting both Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and Montgomery GI Bill payouts.

The decision, rendered by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit late last week, leaves federal officials with only a few long-shot options to support their arguments and overturn a pair of precedential decisions by judges.

In a statement, VA officials said they are still assessing the latest court decision but “remain committed to providing veterans the benefits they have earned and deserve.”

The case, *Rudsill vs. McDonough*, has been pending in federal courts for nearly six years. At its center is department officials’ assertion that veterans can use either the Post-9/11 GI Bill program or the Montgomery GI Bill program, but not both.

Jim Rudsill, an Army veteran wounded in a roadside bomb attack in Iraq in 2005, challenged that policy, saying it was based on a misreading of the law by department officials.

The federal circuit court was the latest in a series of courts to back his case, agreeing that Rudsill should not have been forced to give up eligibility in either program, and should be entitled to 48 months of education benefits (the existing cap on total government higher education payouts under federal statute.) The ruling leaves in place lower court decisions that say eligible veterans can start using the benefits as early as next semester.

“Congress doesn’t try to trip up veterans with their benefits. They want to protect them and take better care of them,” said Tim McHugh, an Army veteran and associate at the Hunton Andrews Kurth law firm who was the lead attorney on the case.

“To hear another federal appellate court agree with that is vindicating.”

Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits program, eligible veterans receive 36 months of tuition payouts, housing stipends and other financial assistance.

The Montgomery GI Bill benefits program offers far less money, but still has several thousands of dollars annually to offer veterans for tuition costs if they paid into the program at the start of their military service. It is expected to be completely phased out in the next decade.

Given the choice between the two programs, most veterans would opt for the more financially generous Post-9/11 GI Bill program. But the court decisions now open the door for the possibility of another year of lesser education stipend payouts for veterans who can't complete their degrees in 36 months.

Rudisill is attending seminary school using his additional education benefits, after a lower court order allowed him to start collecting the money even as the case was appealed.

The court ruling is focused just on his benefits, and was not a class action suit that would apply directly to all veterans in a similar situation. But judges on the federal circuit court opted to make their decision precedential, meaning it could be used by other veterans to support their own eligibility for additional payouts.

An estimated 1.7 million veterans who have already attended college classes have some Montgomery GI Bill eligibility left, according to Rudisill's lawyers. The department has not released any estimates on how much a change in policy may cost.

It's also unclear whether veterans need to have a break in service to qualify for the extra benefits.

Rudisill served from 2000 to 2002, left the service to take some college classes under the Montgomery GI Bill, then returned again in 2004 for a year and in 2007 for four more years. The judges said that constituted separate periods of service qualifying him for separate periods of benefits eligibility. But they also argued against the VA opt-out policy.

Officials from Student Veterans of America noted that VA officials also have not publicly announced how many of those may be eligible and whether they plan on informing veterans about how to petition for that money.

VA officials could still attempt to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, but such a bid is considered unlikely to succeed given the strong statements against their position from the lower court.

The Solicitor General could also petition the federal circuit to expand the panel hearing the case and re-examine the arguments, in hope of a different decision. That is also unlikely to produce a different reaction, although Circuit Judge Timothy Dyk did offer a partial dissent to the latest ruling.

Administration officials have until mid-August to start those moves, or allow the court orders to stay in place.

The American Legion supports the outcome of the *BO vs Wilkie* U.S Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims case. Given the possibility for increasing eligibility for GI Bill Benefits by overturning previous Department of Veterans Affairs prohibitions on collecting both from Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits and Montgomery GI Bill payouts. This falls in line with **Resolution No. 318: Ensuing the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education**. Specifically, any legislative or administrative proposal that improves, but not limited to, the GI Bill, Department of Defense Tuition Assistance (TA), Higher Education Title IV funding

(i.e., Pell Grants, student loans, etc.) and education benefits so servicemembers, veterans, and their families can maximize its usage.

TOPIC 6a: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

SELLERS ARE REJECTING OFFERS THAT COME WITH FHA AND VA FINANCING

Buying a home today is no easy feat. While mortgage rates are nice and competitive, there's a major shortage of property listings that's making today's housing market very tough to navigate. Not only are buyers being forced to compromise on home features, but they're also being forced to pay a premium to snag a place of their own.

As a general economic rule, whenever a commodity is in short supply and demand for it is high, its price tends to go up. Such is the case in the housing market today. Home prices have soared on a national level, and that alone is making it harder for buyers to qualify for high enough mortgages to make owning property possible.

But these aren't the only challenges buyers today are facing. Some buyers may have a harder time getting their offers accepted -- not because they aren't high enough, but because sellers aren't happy with the type of mortgage those offers are tied to.

Sellers are rejecting FHA and VA loans

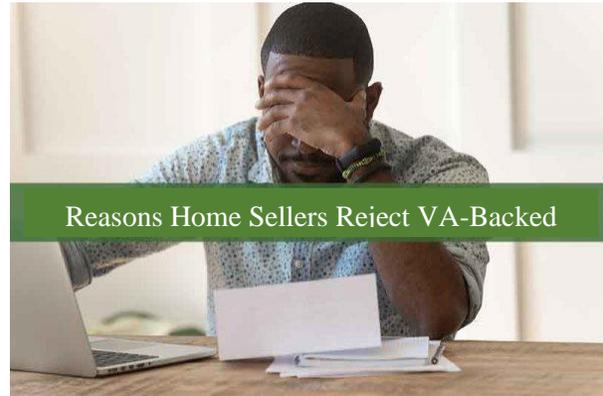
Many people who apply for a home loan take out a conventional mortgage. But many buyers turn to FHA and VA loans to purchase a place to live.

FHA loans allow buyers to purchase a home with as little as 3.5% down, whereas conventional mortgages generally require a higher down payment. Some conventional mortgage lenders will take as little as 5% down, but often, buyers will need to put down a minimum of 10%. VA loans, meanwhile, allow buyers to purchase a home with no money down at all.

Both FHA and VA loans have been around for years, and they're backed by solid guarantees from the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, respectively. Yet in a recent survey by the National Association of Realtors, only 30% of sellers say they'd likely accept an offer from a buyer who's planning to use an FHA or VA loan. By contrast, 89% of sellers would likely accept an offer from a buyer with a conventional mortgage.

This sentiment could put lower-income buyers at a severe disadvantage. It could also close off buying opportunities for a wide range of prospective homeowners, including some who may not necessarily be on the lower side of the income spectrum, but rather, be U.S. military members or veterans who want to take advantage of the VA loan program.

Why are sellers rejecting these loans? Data from the Urban Institute shows that sellers associate these loan products with stricter home inspection requirements and home appraisal contingencies. Of course, home appraisals are a requirement for any mortgage. But for FHA and VA loans, sellers



must reduce their homes' purchase prices to match their appraised values, so it's easy to see why some may be less than eager to work with buyers who are coming in with these types of financing.

Because it's a seller's market, those who put their properties up for sale can afford to be choosier than usual. But that could hurt a lot of buyers and make it even more difficult for them to enjoy the benefits of homeownership.

TOPIC 6b: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

VA RIDESHARE PROGRAM OFFERS HOMELESS VETERANS A LIFT

Veterans enrolled in VHA's Homeless Program may be eligible for transportation assistance getting to and from their place of employment, healthcare and home following their discharge from care.



It's a new Rideshare program.

Rideshare provides expanded transportation to eligible Veterans through a collaborative that uses Uber or Lyft transportation. Rideshare increases employment opportunities, improves access to housing resources and health care, and provides transportation to Veterans being discharged.

Referrals are required and transportation is coordinated on behalf of the Veteran by their VA provider

“Our country’s most sacred obligation is to prepare and equip the troops we send into harm’s way and then to care for them and their families when they come home,” VA Secretary Denis McDonough said during a speech at the annual National Coalition of Homeless Veterans conference. “Veterans homelessness is our nation’s single greatest point of failure in fulfilling that sacred obligation.”

What homeless Veterans or those at risk of homelessness should do

Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness can contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.

“I knew dedicated resources for transportation would help.”

If Veterans do not have access to a phone or the internet, they should visit their [closest VA medical center](#). A VHA Homeless Program coordinator will work with Veterans to assess all available resources to support each Veteran, including Rideshare. There is a coordinator at all VA medical centers.

Readers who know of homeless or at risk of homeless Veterans can help by getting this information to them.

Employment Coordinator: “I observed the barriers Veterans face”

Rideshare aims to provide a hand up to our most vulnerable at risk of and homeless Veterans. It creates greater access to more than health care.

The idea stemmed from VA New England Center of Innovation (NECIE), Innovation Specialist Charles Franklin, an Army Veteran and former Employment Coordinator for the Boston Healthcare System. Franklin is spearheading the national deployment of Rideshare and anticipates full deployment by Aug. 1, 2021, at all VA medical centers.

“As a former Community Employment Coordinator, I observed the barriers Veterans faced when it came to keeping appointments and securing housing,” Franklin said. “I knew additional dedicated resources for transportation would help.”

Innovation Center – public-private partnership to transform care for Veterans

Newly developed, the New England Center of Innovation is the first-of-its-kind Veteran Integrated System Network Center for VA. It is led by the VA New England Healthcare System.

Its virtual home and educational hub is the VA Manchester Healthcare System.

Ryan Lilly, NECIE and VA New England Healthcare System director, spoke to the center’s work and impact.

“Our Center for Innovation Excellence quickly proved its value since being established in November of 2020,” Lilly said. “The Rideshare program is specifically meaningful. It was envisioned by an employee Veteran to provide care to his fellow Veterans. The tagline, Showing ICARE with Rideshare, will reinforce to Veterans experiencing homelessness across the nation that they are not alone and their health care partners at VA are elevating ideas, products and services to address the challenges they are facing.”

NECIE furthers the opportunity for public-private partnerships to transform care and service for our nation’s Veterans. For information about VA public-private partnership opportunities, contact VISN1NECIE@va.gov.

TOPIC 6c: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

EXTREME HEAT ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

As America grapples with extreme heat, VA reminds Veterans and communities that various resources are available to those experiencing homelessness.

The [Community Resource and Referral Centers \(CRRCs\)](#) provide community-based, multiagency services in a single location, and it’s offered in more than 30 cities nationwide. It streamlines access to housing, physical and mental health care, career development, and VA and non-VA benefits.

Every VA medical center offers a range of housing solutions and wraparound supportive services for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

VA's [Grant and Per Diem \(GPD\)](#), [Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\)](#) and [Health Care for Homeless Veterans \(HCHV\)](#) are three transitional and permanent housing programs that offer immediate aid to Veterans facing housing crises during extreme weather.

“During the historic heat wave, Veterans experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of heat cramps, heat exhaustion, sunstroke, and other serious health problems, especially if they remain unsheltered,” said Monica Diaz, executive director, VHA Homeless Programs Office. “VA is closely monitoring the situation in the Pacific Northwest and other communities experiencing historic high temperatures, and we remain committed to making sure Veterans at risk of homeless receive the immediate help they need.”

If you are or know of a Veteran without stable housing during extreme heat or any other time, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for immediate assistance.

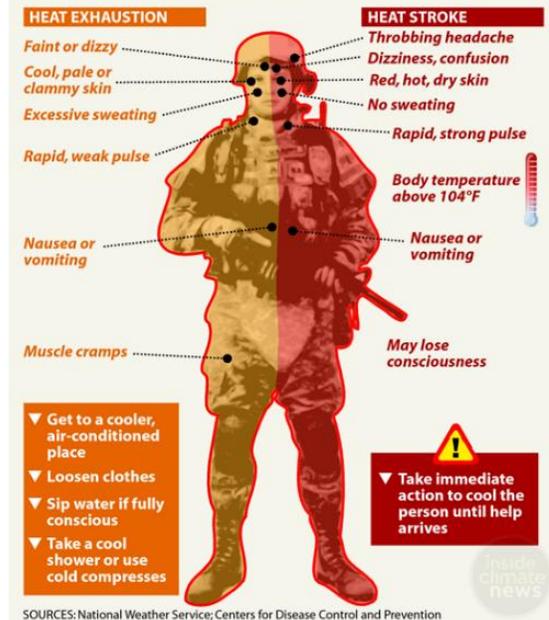
The Red Cross and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention each published helpful tips on staying safe during extreme heat.

- [Heat Wave Safety | Heat Exhaustion Safety | Red Cross](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) About Extreme Heat | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](#)
- [Warning Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](#)
- [Extreme Heat | Natural Disasters and Severe Weather | CDC](#)

Learn more about VA's mission to [end Veteran homelessness](#) and [how you can help](#).

Heat Exhaustion or Heat Stroke— A Guide

Heat-related illnesses can be life-threatening. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention describes the following differences between heat exhaustion and heat stroke and how to respond to each.



TOPIC 7a: SMALL BUSINESS

USE YOUR GI BILL BENEFITS TO START A BUSINESS? LAWMAKERS PUSH PILOT PROGRAM

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers are again pushing to allow some recently separated service members to use their GI Bill benefits to start a new business instead of attending college classes.

The proposal, which has failed to gain legislative traction in recent years, would establish a three-year pilot program for up to 250 veterans to pursue “educational entrepreneurial training” and receive their education payouts in the form of start-up capital instead of the traditional tuition payments.



“Higher education is essential for many [veterans], but some have a different calling,” said Rep Ben Cline, R-Va. and a sponsor of the measure. “Veterans are seeking more options and want the choice to use their GI Bill benefit to start their own business.

“It’s common sense to offer veterans a choice in accessing resources, training, and support to pursue the American dream to start a small business, create jobs, and generate growth in our economy.”

Under the current Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits program, eligible veterans receive 36 months of tuition payouts, housing stipends and other financial assistance. In certain cases, service members can also transfer that benefit to a spouse or dependents for their college classes.

According to 2019 U.S. Census Bureau data, more than 2.5 million businesses in America are veteran-owned, making up just under 10 percent of all American small businesses. Supporters of the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act say that individuals interested in pursuing that path after military service should not be shut out from using their earned benefits.

“By helping veterans start businesses, we are investing in America’s best and brightest,” co-sponsor Rep. Lou Correa, D-Calif., said in a statement.

“When our service members transition into civilian life, they bring considerable skills and experiences with them. Veterans know how to manage risk on the battlefield. And that’s what a successful entrepreneur does — manage risk.”

But the idea has faced resistance in the past in part because of already existing federal programs aimed at helping promote veteran entrepreneurship and employment, and in part because of concerns that misuse of the college benefit could result in long-term financial disadvantages for veterans.

Lawmakers behind the pilot program proposal countered that by saying all applicants could be required to complete an approved entrepreneurial training program, such as one run by the Small Business Administration or an accredited university.

Following that, participants would have to develop a business plan and submit it to program officials. Payouts would be made in the form of a grant “provided through installments determined by the milestones a veteran may be required to meet within their approved business plan.”

Versions of the idea have made some progress in both the House and Senate in recent years, but have not reached final approval from both chambers. No timeline has been set for a hearing or vote on the new proposal.

The American Legion support legislation to allow veterans who are eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits to convert those benefits into assistance in starting a business, purchasing a business or expanding a business as found in our **Resolution No. 150: Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Entrepreneurship**

TOPIC 7b: SMALL BUSINESS

WOMEN VETERAN BOOT CAMP ACCELERATOR' EMPOWERS ENTREPRENEURS

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the PenFed Foundation brought together 80 women Veteran entrepreneurs for a six-month accelerator program, July 13 that would prepare them for sustainability and growth in federal and commercial marketplaces.

Participants came from 29 states and are VA Center for Verification and Evaluation verified, have three to five years in business and have past performance as a prime or subcontractor.



*PenFed Foundation Launches Boot Camp to Empower Women
Veteran Entrepreneurs*

“It’s important we provide an environment where women entrepreneurs can receive strategic and deliberate education, empowerment, engagement and access to enhance their businesses,” said VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Executive Director Sharon Ridley. “Through entrepreneurship, women Veterans have an opportunity to leverage their military and leadership skills to increase and create economic opportunities.”

Classes are focused on relationship building, product/market analysis, business development and growth preparation. Participants meet in small groups and receive coaching from industry leaders such as AstraZeneca and Halfaker & Associates and OptumServe.

The program culminates with a pitch competition in October. The participant with the winning pitch will receive a PenFed Foundation grant to be used to grow their business.

“We have a shared goal: to empower women Veterans and create access to capital and system to support them,” said PenFed Foundation President and retired U.S. Army Gen. John W. Nicholson, Jr. “We believe in creating a business ecosystem that establishes service in the U.S. military as the most reliable pathway to successful entrepreneurship.”

Learn more about the Veteran Entrepreneur Investment Program. Learn more about VA’s mission to empower and educate Women Veteran entrepreneurs for success and economic opportunities at the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

TOPIC 8: CAREER FAIRS

Virtual Job Fair

July 22, 2021, 1pm - 3pm

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY

Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with financial services industry employers at this interactive virtual hiring event.

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.

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 7/16/2021**