

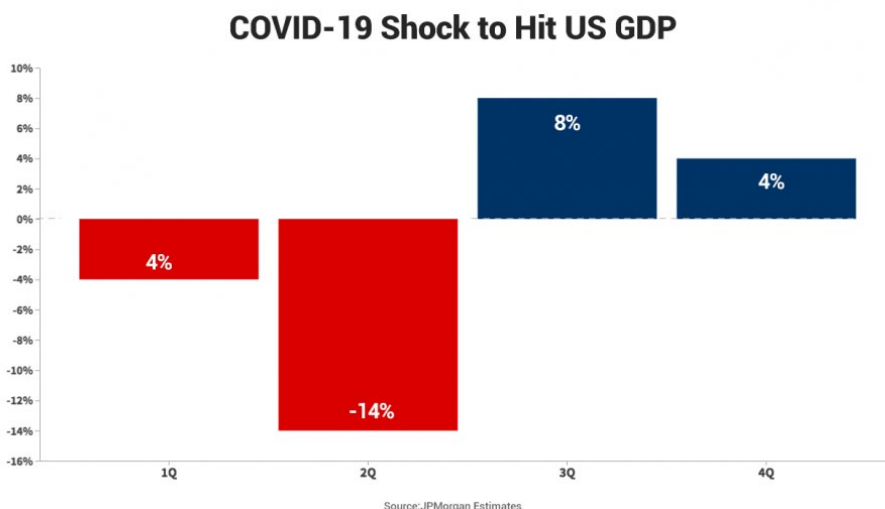
## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

J.P. Morgan is calling for a sharper U.S. [economic](#) contraction in the second quarter, due to the [COVID-19](#) pandemic, than the country experienced during the worst of the 2008 financial crisis.

The firm sees the U.S. economy shrinking by 5.3 percent from January through March and 14 percent during the following three months. By comparison, the U.S. economy contracted by 7.2 percent during the fourth quarter of 2008, its worst of the global financial crisis, according to the [St. Louis Fed](#).

Still, a sharp snap back to 6 percent growth in the third quarter of this year and 2.3 percent in the fourth leaves the long-term outlook less dire than both the worst year of the financial crisis and the earliest years for which data is available on the Great Depression.



For all of 2020, J.P. Morgan sees an economic contraction of 1.9 percent, compared with a slump of 2.5 percent in 2009 and a drop of 8.5 percent in 1930, the year after the 1929 stock market crash, when the country was reeling from drought and spiking unemployment.

The stall in economic activity in March will likely tip the U.S. economy into contraction this quarter, but “the shock’s impact is expected to be concentrated next quarter,” wrote Bruce Kasman, chief economist and head of global research at J.P. Morgan. COVID-19 has infected 9,415 people in the U.S. and killed 150, according to the latest numbers provided by Johns Hopkins University & Medicine. The pandemic has caused the issuance of “shelter in place” orders, a social distancing between people, the cancellation of non-essential travel, and the closure of many restaurants and bars, paralyzing the economy. “One of the consequences of the global financial crisis is that policymakers have experience in dealing with acute financial stress,” Kasman said. “As such, they are racing to attempt to ameliorate the threat to financial market functioning and are working to cushion the blow to corporates and households most impacted by the shock.”

The economic slowdown has caused the Federal Reserve to slash interest rates by a total of 150 basis points, in addition to launching a \$700 billion asset purchase program and taking additional action to ensure the financial markets are functioning correctly.

Lawmakers in Washington passed a second coronavirus measure on Wednesday evening that provides paid sick leave, unemployment help, and free testing to Americans. An earlier package provided \$8.3 billion to give the health-care system money to deal with the influx of patients. The Trump administration is also said to be working with Congress on a \$1 trillion stimulus package.

If activity normalizes from depressed levels midyear alongside building policy stimulus, “the depth of the current downturn can be seen as a springboard for a strong snapback in growth,” Kasman wrote. There is, however, a “significant risk that the virus outbreak persists and activity remains restricted for a longer time,” he warned. In that case, firms that had been struggling to survive before the pandemic “may not have sufficient equity to justify an even subsidized extension of credit and may close,” according to Kasman. The more prolonged economic activity remains depressed, “the deeper into the population of firms likely closures will occur, and the greater the feedback into consumer incomes and expectations,” he said.

While J.P. Morgan’s forecast is the most severe, the firm is not alone in calling for a sharp slowdown in the U.S. Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, sees zero growth in the first quarter and a sharp [contraction of 5 percent](#) during the following three months before a return to increase of 3 percent and 4 percent in the third and fourth quarters of the year, respectively. Bank of America's chief U.S. economist, Michelle Meyer, said Thursday that the U.S. has dropped into a recession along with the rest of the world and predicted the country's economy would shrink 12 percent in the three months through June after growing just 0.5 percent this quarter. "Although the would shrink only 0.8 percent in all of 2020.

In the meantime, " decline is severe, we believe it will be fairly short-lived," she added in a report. "We expect the economy to return to growth in the third quarter," Meyer said, suggesting the U.S. jobs will be lost, wealth will be destroyed, and confidence depressed," she said. "The salvation will come if there is a targeted and aggressive policy response to offset the loss of economic activity and ensure a sound financial system."

<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	
	FEB 2019	FEB 2020	FEB 2019	FEB 2020	FEB 2019	FEB 2020
<b>Unemployed</b>	118	155	97	140	21	16
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>

*The national unemployment rate is 3.6 percent (February, 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 4.5 percent.<sup>i</sup> Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 2.8 percent (up from 2.6 percent in February).*

## TOPIC 2: MEETINGS

***On Friday, March 11, 2020***, the Veterans Employment and Education Division cohosted a Small Business Policy Roundtable regarding V.A.'s medical supply chain modernization. Representatives from V.A.'s office of acquisitions and logistics, Veterans Health Administration, and DOD's Defense Logistics Agency were present as well as many manufacturers and distributors within the supply chain.

***On March 16 - 20, 2020***, the Veterans Employment and Education Division consultant, Dr. Wescott held multiple conversations with SVAC and HVAC staffers to discuss the Senate Bill 3503 to provide information and support passage of the bill to address the impact of the closure of institutions on GI Bill benefits. (If Congress had not acted, Veteran students would have seen their BAH cut in half when they moved to all on-line modality.) Legion continues to be engaged with Congress and other VSO's to address the COVID-19 crisis and it's impact on higher education. This includes that we continue to address payments for training in apprenticeship and on -the-job programs and also to support online certificate programs. Future legislation will also address payment for work study students who are unable to work on campus and other situations involving a change in training location or modality.

***On Thursday, March 19, 2020***, the Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Mark Toal, Outreach Director, Department of Labor – Veterans Employment and Training Services (DOL-VETS). We discussed the recent impacts of shortages in instructors during TAP. With the current coronavirus pandemic, DOL-VETS is reviewing procedures and will update us next week.

***On Friday, March 20, 2020***, the Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with staffers from the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee regarding the passage Senate Bill S. 3503. This bill would protect the current disbursements of the monthly GI Bill housing stipen for those veterans who are now required to attend classes online in response to the coronavirus. A quote was requested from The American Legion.

***On Sunday, March 22, 2020***, the Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the founder of V.A.'s Center for Business Acceleration to discuss the build-out of a veteran's central nonprofit to fulfill statutory requirements of veterans inclusion in AbilityOne programs that was passed in 2016.

## TOPIC 3: EMPLOYMENT

### **Impacts on the Transition Assistance Program:**

The rescheduling of TAP events due to COVID-19 are service-specific, at the discretion and decision of commanders, and based off of framework guidance issued by OUSD P&R.

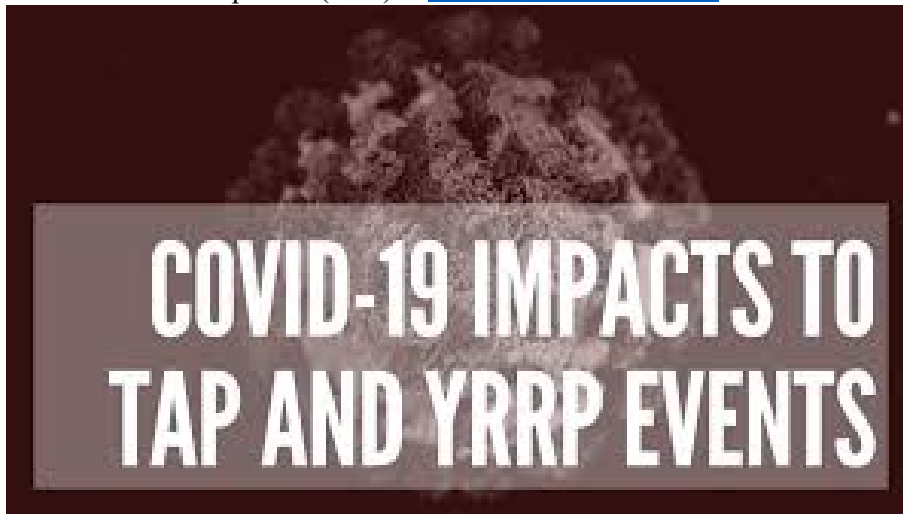
TAP is a service-executed program, and final decisions on TAP events are up to commanders. However, MCTO recommends the following:

- Reduce TAP class size and follow CDC guidance on large gatherings and social distancing.
- Move TAP events to a virtual platform, such as the Defense Collaboration Service, hosted the Defense Information Systems Agency.

“We understand the impact COVID-19 has on the community as a whole and the unique challenges it presents regarding TAP service delivery,” said Tamre Newton, director of MCTO. “The guidance issued by OUSD P&R gives commanders the flexibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of transitioning service members, their families, and caregivers while still ensuring they receive the resources and transition support they require for a successful transition to civilian life.”

### **Impacts on the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program:**

In replacement of in-person events, YRRP is working on releasing an online event tool, available to the Reserve Component (R.C.) at [www.YellowRibbon.mil](http://www.YellowRibbon.mil).



The tool is designed to provide deployment-cycle support to National Guard and Reserve service members and their families in situations in which they are unable to attend in-person events.

“While this tool is not a replacement

for in-person events, it is meant to be a fallback for situations when there is simply no other alternative,” said Peter Toelle, chief of YRRP.

Service members and their families, resource providers, and community partners who are registered to attend upcoming in-person YRRP events will receive status updates through their R.C. representative.

Registered attendees can also contact their event point of contact by accessing the confirmation link provided at the time of registration.

“YRRP’s mission doesn’t change if in-person events are temporarily restricted,” said Toelle. “National Guard and Reserve servicemembers continue to mobilize, so we will continue to provide support throughout the deployment-cycle regardless of the format.”

### **INFORMATION ON THE MILITARY-CIVILIAN TRANSITION OFFICE:**

The DoD Military-Civilian Transition Office formed as a result of a merger between two DoD programs under the Defense Human Resources Activity’s Defense Personnel and Family Support Center to provide streamlined services to members of the armed forces and their families.

The Office for Reintegration Programs (ORP) combined with the DoD’s Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO) to efficiently deliver resources to transitioning service members, members of the National Guard and Reserve, their families, and communities were worldwide in January 2020.

## TOPIC 4: CAREER FAIRS

ALL CAREER FAIRS SCHEDULED THROUGH APRIL HAVE BEEN CANCELLED, SUSPENDED, OR POSTPONED.

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

## TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

### COVID-19: A Potential Public Health Problem for Homeless Populations

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is infecting people throughout the world. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) will probably be transmitted to people experiencing homelessness, which will become a significant problem in particular in North America, where there are sizable populations of people experiencing homelessness in nearly every metropolitan city in the USA and Canada. In the USA, more than 500 000 people were reported to be experiencing homelessness on any given night over the past decade (2007–19).<sup>1</sup> The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016 report estimated 35,000 people are experiencing homelessness on any given night in Canada.

People experiencing homelessness live in environments that are conducive to a disease epidemic. Many people experiencing homelessness live in congregate living settings and might not have regular access to necessary hygiene supplies or showering facilities, all of which could facilitate virus transmission. People experiencing homelessness are a vulnerable group, and their potential exposure to COVID-19 might negatively affect their ability to be housed, and their mental and physical health. People experiencing homelessness aged younger than 65 years have all-cause mortality that is 5–10 times higher than that of the general population. COVID-19 infection might further increase this mortality disparity.



Many people experiencing homelessness have chronic mental and physical conditions, engage in high rates of substance abuse, and often have less access to health care. All of which could lead to potential problems with screening, quarantining, and treating people who might have COVID-19. Such issues had occurred as recently as last

year when outbreaks of typhus, hepatitis A, tuberculosis, trench fever, and *Shigella* bacteria were reported among people experiencing homelessness in U.S. cities with large homeless populations. There are some additional issues, which are unique to people experiencing homelessness to consider with regards to COVID-19. Homeless populations might be more transient and geographically mobile than individuals in the general community, making it difficult to track and prevent transmission and to treat those who need care. COVID-19 was recently found to be transmittable via the oral-fecal route. Some major US cities with large homeless populations, like San Francisco, have experienced issues with public defecation, which might pose an additional transmission risk for people experiencing homelessness and other individuals.

Together, the multitude of potential vulnerabilities and risks for people experiencing homelessness in becoming infected, needing care, and transmitting COVID-19 cannot be ignored and must be planned. Some lessons can be learned from the response to severe acute respiratory syndrome among homeless service providers nearly two decades ago. Testing kits and training on how to recognize COVID-19 should be widely disseminated to homeless service providers and deployed in shelters, encampments, and street outreach. Alternative spaces might be needed to quarantine and treat people experiencing homelessness. If cities impose a lockdown to prevent COVID-19 transmission, there are few emergency preparedness plans to transport and provide shelter for the large number of people experiencing homelessness. In lockdowns, public spaces are closed, movement outside homes are restricted, and significant transport roads might be closed, all of which might negatively affect people experiencing homelessness. It is unclear how and where unsheltered people experiencing homelessness will be moved to if quarantines and lockdowns are implemented. In such a scenario, closures of shelters and other high-density communal settings (e.g., drop-in centers and soup kitchens) are possible, which could increase the number of unsheltered people experiencing homelessness and reduce their access to needed services. Lockdowns and disease containment procedures might also be harmful to the mental health of people experiencing homelessness, many of whom have fears around involuntary hospitalization and incarceration.

In response to COVID-19, the State of Washington has declared a state of emergency, allowing cities to take extraordinary measures, which has included King County moving people infected with COVID-19 to housing units that were initially intended to provide housing for people experiencing homelessness. As other cities follow suit, these actions might further displace people experiencing homelessness and put them at higher risk of COVID-19. Another complicating matter is that in December 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case of *Martin v City of Boise*. They are upholding a ruling that cities cannot arrest or punish people for sleeping on public property unless cities have provided adequate and accessible indoor accommodations. This legal precedent prevents the criminalization of homelessness, but it is unclear if and how it will be applied during COVID-19 outbreaks. Cities with large homeless populations might face unique challenges while trying to contain COVID-19 and addressing homelessness, with the potential for both issues to exacerbate one another.

## TOPIC 6: SMALL BUSINESS

Small businesses that experience financial losses from the coronavirus pandemic may qualify for up to \$2 million in relief from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Companies can now apply for the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loans to cover the temporary loss of revenue and meet working capital needs, the SBA announced Wednesday.

SBA District Director Victoria Guerrero said the funds might be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other expenses that cannot be met due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, formally known as COVID-19.



Businesses with access to traditional bank loans do not qualify for economic injury disaster loans. Private companies – including hotels, restaurants, manufacturers, retailers, and travel agencies – can obtain a loan at a minimum rate of 3.75%, while the rate for nonprofits begins at 2.75%.

Repayment terms are up to 30 years. Loans over \$25,000 require collateral from the applicant, which is usually real estate. The SBA reports it will not decline a loan for lack of insurance, but said it would require borrowers to pledge whatever resources they might have available.

Guerrero expects it could take three weeks or longer for the SBA to approve or deny loan applications from small businesses. Companies in Florida in need of immediate financial assistance can apply for a Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan, which offers short-term interest-free loans of up to \$50,000 for small businesses undergoing losses due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Guerrero said SBA disaster loan applicants should prepare at least two years' worth of financials to demonstrate the extent to which the pandemic has depleted cash flow. To apply, business owners can log onto [www.SBA.gov/disaster](http://www.SBA.gov/disaster) to complete an online application.

## TOPIC 7: EDUCATION

While The American Legion National Headquarters has continued to push for Congress to close the 90-10 GI Bill loophole, the Department of Maryland boldly decided to take matters into its own hands: they helped to pass a state law to close the 90-10 loophole.



Maryland has become the first state in the nation to close the so-called 90-10 loophole, which, according to critics, has led for-profit colleges to target service members.

Under the federal rule, for-profit institutions are required to get at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources other than federal student aid. But education benefits from the Departments

of Defense and Veterans Affairs count toward the 10 percent minimum requirement, making those receiving the military benefits a target.

But under a measure passed by the Maryland House of Delegates Monday, military benefits would count toward the 90 percent federal funding maximum. It would also begin barring for-profits that receive more than 90 percent of their revenue from federal funds, including military benefits, from enrolling Maryland residents.

The measure passed the Maryland Senate in February and will now go to Republican governor Larry Hogan. A Hogan spokesman said only that the governor will consider signing the bill when it comes to him.

Leadership from The American Legion Department of Maryland testified in both the House of Delegates and State Senate to make the case for the law.

“This groundbreaking legislation makes Maryland the first in the nation to stand up for veterans and stop predatory schools from cheating them out of their hard-earned GI Bill,” said Ramond Curtis, state policy manager for Veterans Education Success. “Veterans had targets on our backs when we served in uniform; we shouldn’t have to come home and have targets on our backs again from predatory schools.”



There has been a push for a similar law in Oregon, New York, and California, with Legionnaires leading the way to enact change.

Finally, The American Legion is encouraged to see that Congress has approved an emergency legislative fix to ensure that students going to college on the G.I. Bill will continue to receive their monthly housing stipend, even as college courses transition online in an effort to limit

the spread of the coronavirus.

The bill passed the Senate on Monday which was approved by the House on Thursday. It's expected to be signed into law by President Donald Trump in the coming weeks.

Under the post-9/11 G.I. Bill, full-time students who are attending college on campus have their tuition covered, and also receive a housing stipend — based on the basic housing allowance of an E-5 with dependents for their zip code. For those students enrolled in online universities, their tuition is fully covered, but they only receive a portion of that housing stipend. This legislation will allow veterans to continue receiving their monthly housing stipend at the full-time, on campus rate.



*“No student veteran, dependent, or spouse should be worried about their GI Bill benefits being reduced or cut off because of actions their school is taking in response to COVID-19,” said Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., ranking member of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee and sponsor of the new House legislation.*

**Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director  
Veterans Employment & Education Division  
202.861.2700 ext. 2989  
Week Ending: 3/20/20**

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