

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY



The partial government shutdown is inflicting far more significant damage on the United States economy than previously estimated, the White House acknowledged on Tuesday, as President Trump's economists doubled projections of how much economic growth is being lost each week the standoff with Democrats continues. The revised estimates from the Council of Economic Advisers show that the shutdown, now in its fourth week, is beginning to have real economic consequences. The analysis and other projections from outside the White House suggest that the shutdown has already weighed significantly on growth and could ultimately push the United States economy into a contraction.

While Vice President Mike Pence previously played down the shutdown's effects amid a "roaring" economy, White House officials are now cautioning Mr. Trump about the toll it could take on a sustained economic expansion. Mr. Trump, who has hitched his political success to the economy, also faces other economic headwinds, including slowing global growth, a trade war with China and the waning effects of a \$1.5 trillion tax cut. To blunt the shutdown's results, the administration on Tuesday called tens of thousands of employees back to work, without pay, to process tax returns, ensure flight safety and inspect food and drugs.

However, some people involved in the shutdown discussions in the White House have privately said they anticipate that Mr. Trump will grow anxious about the economic impact in the coming days, accelerating an end to the stalemate. Others close to the president believe Mr. Trump has leverage and are encouraging him to stand by his demands.

For now, the White House shows no signs of being ready to relent, and Kevin Hassett, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, continued to blame Democrats for the economic damage. "Congress needs to look at the harms that we're talking about," Mr. Hassett said, "and address them." Mr. Hassett said on Tuesday that the administration now calculates that the shutdown reduces quarterly economic growth by 0.13 percentage points for every week that it lasts — the cumulative effect of lost work from contractors and furloughed federal employees who are not getting paid and who are investing and spending less as a result. That means that the economy has already lost nearly half a percentage point of growth from the four-week shutdown. (Last year, economic growth for the first quarter totaled 2.2 percent.) Mr. Hassett, attempting to illustrate the pain caused by the shutdown, said on Tuesday that one of his furloughed staff members had begun driving for Uber to make ends meet.

Mr. Trump has demanded that Democrats, who control the House of Representatives, include \$5.7 billion for a border wall in any measure to fund the government. Democrats have refused and, along with some Republicans, have tried to persuade the president to reopen the government and negotiate border security afterward. The House has passed several bills to fund parts of the government, including the Internal

Revenue Service, that are not related to border security. Senate Republicans have declined to schedule votes on those bills. On Tuesday, to try to splinter the Democrats' opposition, the White House invited several House Democrats from districts Mr. Trump won to discuss a path forward. None showed up. The impasse has left 800,000 federal employees furloughed or working without pay, along with throwing thousands of government contractors at least temporarily off the job.

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	
	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2017	Dec 2018	Dec 2017	Dec 2018
Gulf War-era II veterans						
Unemployed	113	124	97	110	16	15
Unemployment rate	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.0

National unemployment rate is 3.9 percent (December 2018). Gulf War II veterans unemployment rate is 3.6 percent.¹ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 3.0 percent (up from 2.7 percent in November).

TOPIC 2: MEETINGS

On Tuesday, January 22, the Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with Ely Ross, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office, District of Columbia. I have discussed participation with new initiatives and upcoming meetings within the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA). Invited MOVA to participate during the Washington Conference Career Fair.

On Wednesday, January 23, the Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO). During the meeting, The American Legion cast its vote on the final yearly report submitted to the Secretary of Labor. The report identifies issues and provides recommendations for improving the lives of transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses.

On Wednesday, January 23, The Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the National Veterans Small Business Coalition regarding participation in the Legion's Small Business Policy Roundtable.

On Wednesday, January 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with the Government Affairs Director for Veterans Education Success concerning recent updates from the Department of Education's negotiated rulemaking committee. VES and SVA are concerned that veterans aren't being adequately represented, and are considering letters to the Secretary of the Department of Education asking for redress.

On Wednesday, January 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with staff from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) about their draft grant agreement to support American Legion education advocacy. VE&E staff shared that TAL was interested in incorporating language about an American Legion Seal of Excellence program to inform student veterans in high performing universities better. However, LJAF staff stated they believed that this would be outside of the purview of the grant.

On Wednesday, January 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the annual Council of College and Military Educators (CCME). CCME staff presented new policies and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will restrict military installation access to all universities. The American Legion was asked to be part of the CCME Advisory Board. Texas States

On Thursday, January 24, the Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in a conference call hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Hiring Our Heroes (HOH.) HOH is requesting the legion’s participation in their upcoming events.

On Friday, January 25, the Veterans Employment & Education Division met with Command Sergeant Major Larson, Fort Hood, Post Command Sergeant Major. Discussed opportunities for collaboration during their MEGA Career Fairs. Also addressed the Quality of Life Services and the value that The American Legion can bring to its Soldiers and their families.

On Friday, January 25, the Veterans Employment & Education Division had an interview with the firm of Hayes Arnold Covington & Lee (HACL) who is writing a book on military transition that wanted perspectives on The American Legion and its programs that support transitioning veterans, as well as insight into longstanding issues that impede veterans from consideration for professional, managerial and executive jobs in the civilian sector.

TOPIC 3: EMPLOYMENT

Do’s and Don’ts At Veteran Job Fairs



The American Legion understands that just having a career fair is not enough for veterans to secure meaningful employment. We need to educate our veterans on the Do’s and Don’ts when attending career fairs. Job fairs, networking events and mixers are ideal opportunities for job seekers to meet live representatives of various companies, however, in my experience, many veterans are not taking full advantage of these occasions. Hiring managers, recruiters, and other corporate employees use these fairs to find potential candidates for their companies. Over the last ten years, I’ve attended hundreds of job fairs and similar networking events both as a corporate employee and a recruiter. Almost universally, I found that candidates will approach my booth, shake my hand, and then lapse

into an awkward silence. I’ll usually break the ice by going into my spiel about the company I’m representing, telling the candidate what we do and describing what I’m looking for in an ideal hire for the roles I am recruiting.

Once I'm finished with my spiel, I will toss the ball back in the candidate's court and ask, "So, tell me a little about your background." This is the candidate's chance to tell me what they've done and what they'll bring to the table for my company. It's an opportunity to brag a little bit about themselves and tell me why we should keep talking. However, based on my experience, most candidates who approach my booth will smile and give me some variation of, "Well... That's a long story," before launching into a disjointed, sometimes amusing story about how they started in retail, got into engineering, and somehow ended up living in their sister-in-law's basement. That approach would be great if we were meeting over a beer in a pub, but at a job fair, it screams "unprepared." As a candidate searching for a job, you can do yourself a HUGE favor by preparing a short statement on who you are and what value you'll bring to the company BEFORE you attend a job fair, interview, cocktail hour, or whatever kind of networking event it may be! It doesn't matter how many times you've changed jobs or even career paths; sum up the highlights into a 30-second "elevator pitch" BEFORE you need to think about it. This is good advice for any candidate with any background, but it's doubly important for a veteran.

In many cases, civilian hiring managers and recruiters aren't sure how the skills you picked up during your service career would translate into the private world. This is an excellent opportunity for you, as a veteran, to bridge the gap between service and the corporate sector by highlighting exactly how your experience in the military translates into skills that civilians can relate to. Be prepared to provide examples of the specific skills/traits that you picked up in the military that would make you a better, more robust, more experienced candidate than the civilian standing right behind you. You'll be competing with civilians who may have ten years of experience directly in the industry you want to be in – while you have ten years of military experience doing something "similar." Translating military experience into civilian terms can be difficult – and it's even more of a challenge to do it on the fly when you're put on the spot and trying to make a good first impression. Many of the potential candidates I meet haven't given this much, if any, thought ahead of time. The best time to prepare for this crucial conversation is BEFORE you head to the job fair or any other networking function.

Sit down with a pen and paper and make a list of all the skills you picked up in the military. Then make a corresponding list of the civilian skills that directly reflect what you've done – but in civilian speak. Be prepared to talk about projects you completed, initiatives you led, your achievements, awards you've received, and anything else that would make you stand out from the crowd. As a recruiter attending these events, I speak to dozens of people in a span of five or six hours. Your goal is to be the one candidate whom I remember when I drive home after the event.

Did you get your degree while working full time in the military? Awesome! Tell me about it. Did you win an outstanding customer service award at your last job? Fantastic! Tell me what you did to get it and how you can bring the same skills to the job I am recruiting for. Did you win Best in Show at the Westminster Dog Show? Probably irrelevant to many of the open positions out there, but that's cool too! An excellent place to start generating ideas for what your statement could look like is a military skills translator. Be careful to thoroughly research the civilian terms that come up in translators as they may not always directly relate to what you've done or what you're looking for.

You can't just view that as a copy and paste operation; you need to know what you're talking about when you get in front of a recruiter because there's a good chance the recruiter standing across from you does know what he or she is talking about when it comes to civilian terminology.

The 10% of candidates who even attempt to prepare a brief statement stand out from the crowd during networking events and job fairs, and I almost always want to know more about their background, experience, and skills. I will take the ball back in my court and dig deeper into what they've done, and it makes it easy for me to think about where they might fit into my company. When I'm recruiting, I'm always thinking about where someone could fit within my organization as a whole. Even if I don't have a position immediately available, I may know of an upcoming position that could be an excellent fit for you. A clear explanation of the value you would bring helps recruiters develop a clear picture of where you might fit within an organization. For the 90% who stand there for five minutes explaining the complicated arc of how they ended up living in their sister-in-law's basement, I do my best to probe, redirect, and learn more about them and their experience, but you have already lost your best chance at making a great first impression. The difference between the candidates who prepared and those who didn't is glaring, and it's never in favor of the latter.

The bottom line is, as a job seeker if you have any interest in immediately standing out from the pack, take some time to prepare and think through the story of YOU! Brag about the specific value you would bring – in civilian terms – to an organization. Highlight your unique skills and training. Tell me why hiring you, a veteran, will be better for me and my organization than hiring any one of the ten civilians I'll speak to after you. You are there to sell yourself, and as a recruiter, I want to know what I'm getting in a big, bold pitch up front. Being prepared will also give you more confidence while speaking at these events, and will put you a step ahead of your competition!

TOPIC 4: VETERAN HOMELESSNESS



The only thing brighter than Joshua Brathwaite's 100-watt smile was the gleam on his freshly shaven head. She got it exactly how I like it. To a T," he said, gliding his hand over his smooth and shiny scalp. "She worked and worked and worked. She went through I don't know how many razors.

Moreover, now I feel like a million dollars." Braithwaite was the first client of the day at Haircuts with Heart, a booth at a West Oakland community fair in October that offered free haircuts to the homeless. Staffed by volunteer Oakland stylists, Haircuts with Heart also provided manicures, makeup, and gift bags of shampoos, soap, and toothbrushes.

However, the most important thing clients got was that intangible thing that the best haircutters dispense every day: good conversation, a little personal attention, and an overall feeling of looking sharp. "Everyone likes to be pampered," said Natasha Ickes-Saman, owner of Shear Passion Salon in North Oakland, one of half a dozen stylists at the October event at the Willie Keyes Recreation Center. "We're taking time to talk, pay attention, help our clients look good, and feel refreshed. People tell us they haven't felt this good in a long time." Since it started two years ago, Haircuts with Heart has provided more than 1,000 free haircuts to Oakland's homeless, veterans, and women and children who've been trafficked or are escaping domestic abuse. Several times a month, shears and blow-dryers in hand, stylists descend on shelters and community fairs to comb out the tangles, trim the split ends, and make people beautiful.

October's event was part of a homeless service fair sponsored by Lava Mae, a San Francisco nonprofit that provides hygiene and other services to the homeless. After years in San Francisco, Lava Mae has now expanded to Oakland, making weekly visits to homeless camps with a transit bus that's been outfitted with showers and toilets. Showers are essential, but nothing cheers like a good haircut said Deborah Schneider of Lava Mae. "If you don't have a decent haircut, how are you going to get a job interview? Alternatively, keep a job?" she said. "A shower, a haircut, a style — that can be transformative." Haircuts with Heart started with Rebecca Beardsley, owner of Shine Forth salon on Piedmont Avenue. Like many Oaklanders, she was growing increasingly troubled by the plight of the burgeoning homeless population and wanted to help.

She'd been a stylist for more than 30 years, working everything from New York Fashion Week to magazine shoots. "I'd accomplished everything I'd set out for," she said. "But always there was this disconnect. I appreciated the industry, but I always knew something was missing. ... I knew there was more to cutting hair than just a haircut." Haircuts, she said, seemed like an obvious way she could help. So she contacted every stylist and salon she knew and started organizing visits to shelters and community fairs. In her outreach efforts, she met Teresa Delgado, owner of Touch salon in Montclair, who coincidentally was also giving free haircuts to the homeless, and the pair joined forces.

Delgado said she was inspired to help after seeing a woman root through trash near an overpass in search of clean paper. Delgado watched her for a while, eventually realizing the woman was looking for clean paper to tend to personal hygiene. "That did it for me," she said. "No one should have to do that." She started collecting hotel soap and shampoo from her clients and distributing them to the homeless and cutting hair at a shelter. More important than a fresh haircut, though, was "the human touch," she said. "Dignity, physical attention — everyone needs that." For Ickes-Saman, it was easy to say yes when Beardsley called. Ickes-Saman had been homeless herself when she was a teenager and knows what it's like to be hungry, cold, and scared on the streets. "Hair is the last thing you worry about," she said. With that in mind, she tends to give her women clients short, stylish haircuts that require little maintenance but are still flattering. But not always. Sometimes, she said, women want a little extra primping. After so much time struggling with survival, some women want a touch of glamor — at least for a while, she said.

"I'll do braids, curls, up-dos," she said. "Many people who are homeless are used to being ignored. This makes them feel special." Haircuts with Heart now works with 17 shelters and agencies that serve the homeless and has more than 65 volunteers. The group is saving money for a van so stylists can offer shampoo service as well. The clients are as varied as the homeless population as a whole. Some live on the streets, but many live in their cars or couch-surf, the so-called "invisible homeless." Some even have full-time jobs, but the high cost of housing in Oakland has left them without a permanent address. Braithwaite

falls into that category. He said he's a full-time employee at the Tesla plant in Fremont, working the graveyard shift on the assembly line, but can't save enough for a deposit on an apartment. So until things change, he's living in his Suburban in West Oakland. He usually cuts his hair, but there's nothing like a professional cut, he said. "I like my mustache and goatee not connected, and she did it just right. I like that attention to detail," he said. "She brought me from scruffy to perfect."

TOPIC 5: CAREER FAIRS & YELLOW RIBBON EVENTS

This week, work continued on The American Legion's upcoming hiring events to be staged in Carlisle (PA), Fredericksburg (VA), Herndon (VA), Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (DC), Joint Base Andrews (MD), Lexington Park (MD), Oklahoma City (OK), The American Legion, Austin (TX).

The American Legion understands the importance of Career Fairs, effective networking, and bringing in companies that are looking to hire veterans. On Wednesday, January 23rd, 2019, the Department of Texas in collaboration with the Texas Veterans Commission and Texas Workforce Commission hosted a veteran career fair. This combined efforts brought in 125 veteran job seekers, 55 employers, seven on the spot hires, 14 follow up interviews and 12 new American Legion members.



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 6: SMALL BUSINESS

A bipartisan bill cosponsored by U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-IN) would incentivize United States military veterans to become franchise owners. This bipartisan legislation will not only lift up our local small business community, it will help service members return to civilian life and give them a better chance to achieve the American Dream they fought to protect

The Veteran Entrepreneurs Act of 2019, H.R. 446, sponsored on Jan. 10 by U.S. Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA), would reduce up-front costs for veterans who want to start a franchise. Specifically, the bill calls for creating a tax credit to cover 25 percent of initial franchisee fees for eligible veterans or businesses owned by eligible veterans. The amount of qualified franchise fee shall not exceed \$400,000, according to the text of the bill. The term 'qualified franchise fee' means any one-time fee required by the franchisor when entering into a franchise agreement with a veteran as the franchisee.

Veterans are leaders and innovators in their own right, so who better to start businesses, create jobs, and grow our economy than those who bravely served our country? Lawmakers have a duty to ensure that U.S. veterans are able to succeed in the American job market once they've transitioned back to civilian life. For many former service members, their training and leadership skills mean they would make excellent small business owners, but they sometimes lack the initial capital needed to get started.

H.R. 446 has been referred for consideration to the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee.

TOPIC 7: EDUCATION

Students and faculty of the nation's military educational institutions generally have been unaffected by the partial government shutdown since the Defense Department is funded, but at least two major military schools are taking big hits. At the Coast Guard Academy, 160 civilian employees are furloughed, and none of the cadets received their latest scheduled stipend. The Coast Guard is funded through the Department of Homeland Security, which is one of the shut-down agencies.



The National War College in Washington had 31 students and five faculties on furlough but received word Tuesday that 28 of those students and four professors were able to return since they were employees of the State Department. The department announced Jan. 18 that it had freed up funds to allow employees to return to work and school. The National War College students were notified that they would be allowed to attend the school for at least two weeks with the hope that the shutdown will end by then, according to National War College Dean Cynthia Watson.

Only three students and one professor, all of whom work for Homeland Security, remain furloughed until the partial government shutdown ends. The National War College offers courses on national security strategy and has 208 students. If the furloughed students can't attend class and meet the required academic hours because of the partial shutdown, Watson said they might not be able to meet graduation requirements. "If they continue to miss school because we are under accreditation, we would have to address it," said Watson. "Students have to attend school for a certain amount of hours. We have in place mitigation plans to address this, but in February, the students may not fulfill their graduation requirements and probably will face uncertainty in their programs."

The student and faculty absences have hurt the quality of the education at the institution itself, Watson added. "We are trying to educate the military about itself and government agencies and vice versa. If the Homeland Security students are not here, then they are not bringing that perspective into the seminar room. This is a major loss when students and faculty are trying to create a national security strategy." At the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, cadets did not receive their latest stipend. Seniors receive between \$600 to \$650 while freshman earns \$300 to \$350 in stipends, which they receive on the 1st and 15th of the month, according to Petty Officer 2nd Class Lauren Laughlin, public affairs specialist for the Coast Guard Academy.

Class size has increased at the academy, and some classes have been postponed because of the 160 furloughed employees, but the school is operating somewhat normally as classes remain in session, said spokeswoman Lt. j.g. Alexis Davis. “Many people are stepping up.” The Coast Guard’s status as the only armed service branch operating without funding has attracted widespread military and political attention. Last week, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz posted an online video message to service members: “Your Coast Guard leadership team recognizes the anxiety and concern across our mission-ready workforce. We remain a ready, relevant and responsive Coast Guard.”

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ⁱ <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t05.htm>