

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY



The US economy plunged at an unprecedented rate this spring. Even with a record rebound expected in the just-ended third quarter, the US economy will likely shrink this year, the first time that has happened since the Great Recession.

The gross domestic product, the economy's total output of goods and services, fell at a 31.4% rate in the April-June quarter, only slightly changed from the 31.7% drop estimated one month ago, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.

The government's last look at the second quarter showed a decline that was more than three times larger than the fall of 10% in the first quarter of 1958 when Dwight Eisenhower was president, which had been the largest decline US history.

Economists believe the economy will expand at an annual rate of 30% in the current quarter as businesses have re-opened, and millions of people have gone back to work. That would shatter the old record for a quarterly GDP increase, a 16.7% surge in the first quarter of 1950 when Harry Truman was president.

The government will not release its July-September GDP report until Oct. 29, just five days before the presidential election.

Economists forecast that growth will slow significantly in the final three months of this year to a rate of around 4%. The US could topple back into a recession if Congress fails to pass another stimulus measure or if there is a resurgence of COVID-19. There are upticks in infections occurring right now in some regions of the country, including New York.

"There are a lot of potential pitfalls out there," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services. "We are still dealing with several significant reductions because of the pandemic."

In 2020, economists expect GDP to fall by around 4%, which would mark the first annual decline in GDP since a drop of 2.5% in 2009 during the recession triggered by the 2008 financial crisis.

"With economic momentum cooling, fiscal stimulus expiring, flu season approaching and election uncertainty rising, the main question is how strong the labor market will be going into the fourth quarter," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics.

"With the prospect of additional financial aid dwindling, consumers, businesses, and local governments will have to fend for themselves in the coming months," Daco said.

The Trump administration forecasts substantial growth in the coming quarters to restore all of the output lost to the pandemic. Yet, most economists believe it could take some time for all the lost

output to be restored, and they don't rule out a return to shrinking GDP if no further government support is forthcoming.

So far this year, the economy fell at a 5% rate in the first quarter, signaling an end to a nearly 11-year-long economic expansion, the longest in US history. That drop was followed by the second-quarter decline of 31.4%, which was initially estimated two months ago as a drop of 32.9%, and then revised to a decline of 31.7% last month.

This report's slight upward revision reflected less of a plunge in consumer spending than had been estimated. It was still a record fall at a 33.2% rate, but last month's projections were for a decline of 34.1%. This improvement was offset somewhat by downward revisions to exports and business investment.

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

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	
	Sep 2019	Sep 2020	Sep 2019	Sep 2020	Sep 2019	Sep 2020
Unemployed	282	568	238	496	45	72
Unemployment rate	3.1	6.4	2.9	6.4	4.0	6.5

The national unemployment rate is 7.9 percent (Sept 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 7.5 percent.ⁱ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 5.7 percent (Down from 6.9 percent in September).

In September 2020, the veteran unemployment rate is 6.4%, down from 6.6% last month and 7.9% two months ago. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 7.9% in September and 8.4% in August

TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

On Monday, September 28, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held conversations with Congressional staff on availability of spaces within Capitol Complex. Additions to and edits of final memorandum to Legislative Counsel and further review of documents returned from Leg Counsel.

On Monday, September 28, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with Meghan Woodall on RBS Report Form and work on designing same, along with pre-visit data requests and reporting information to the National Database. Also had conversation with lead SVAC staff on 4625.

On Tuesday, September 29, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division held conversations with VSOs, including SVA, VES, TAPS and TAL, on needed changes to HR 4625, Protect the GI Bill Act. Primary discussion about 3696 portion of the Bill and ways to ensure adequate protection of veterans while ensuring proper due process and not harming good actors.

On Tuesday, September 29, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a discussion with NASAA Executive Board of VA required Risk Based Surveys specifically SAAs from LA, SC, and VA. VA has not provided adequate direction or a template. SAAs may be templated developed years ago by NASAA.

On Tuesday, September 29, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division participated on Four Corners Congressional VSO Call. Majority reported no further hearings or roundtables prior to Election. Will move HR 7105 on Homelessness and also the jobs bill, HR 7111. Hopeful to move COVID Education Bill (Rep Lamb will introduce Apprenticeship par and Cumingham and Bilarakis will introduce the rest of bill.) Will be filed on Thursday.

On Tuesday, September 29, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended HillVets Panel on Transition with extended conversation with VSOs afterwards about the panel and HR 7111. May be a hearing during the Lame Duck Session of Congress. SVAC reported Benefits Package hotlined and moved out and HR 4625 is very close to being finished. There is money in the COVID package for VA IT needs. Also Estenders Language is passed.

On Wednesday, September 30, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Lane Dyer, State Director, Veterans Employment and Training Services for North Carolina. We discussed the collaborative effort needed to ensure that those servicemembers leaving the military and those veterans who were displaced have the means to find meaningful employment.

On Wednesday, September 30, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Edward Carr, Director of Military & Veterans Affairs, NBC-Comcast. We discussed the opportunity for them to assist with our upcoming career fair in North Carolina; additionally, they were inquiring about the upcoming “Ye Steivios” dinner that they sponsor. I directed them to the correct Legion Point of Contact.

On Wednesday, September 30, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Technology Modernization hearing entitled: “Examining VA’s Ongoing Efforts in the Electronic Health Record Modernization Program.” The American Legion has been tracking VA’s expenditures on EHR modernization as well as tangential expenditures on non-related platform compatibility issues. VA is under investigation expenditures for tech products beyond their authority.

On Wednesday, September 30, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division talked with HVAC and SVAC staff on place for commemoration and research on limitations imposed by COVID. Also conversation of COVID impact on higher education and challenges to same. Further Conversations with HVAC staff and also Senate staff on potential for ceremony and on 90/10 possibilities for this Congress. Research on oversight.

On Wednesday, September 30, the Government Accountability Office released a scathing report on VA acquisition management’s inability control their medical supply chain contracts. VA’s

Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor 2.0 contracts were supposed to fix existing supply chain contract issues. However, rather than taking a metric-based approach to streamline and harness VA's buying capacity effectively, VA has opted to accelerate an unproven pilot program and plans to rapidly migrate all MSPV 2.0 contracts over to Defense Logistics Agencies' MSPV.

On Thursday, October 1, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a discussion with the Veteran United a new branding platform for veteran manufacturers and sellers of personal protection equipment and sanitation supplies. The differentiator between this consortium compared to national resellers is their rapid response and national distribution capabilities from their 7 main distribution warehouses, 172 distribution hubs covering 500-mile radius with ability to ship on a 24-hour cycle. Veterans United was created in response to the product shortages and logistics challenges experienced during the early days of the pandemic.

On Thursday, October 1, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division held a joint discussion with Veterans Education Success, VFW, IAVA, and Student Veterans of America to discuss strategy for countering for-profit education lobbying messaging. A plan was developed to conduct outreach to members of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

On Thursday, October 1, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a discussion with RBS Project Manager on Pilot RBS project and needed meeting with VA. Conversation with VSOs and final tweaks to 4625 and other pending legislation.

On Thursday, October 1, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division discussed with EANGUS on pending legislation, as well as National Guard challenges and further work with the Reserve Officers Association. Discussion with VSOs, particularly NAVPA on the PII challenges/issues on VA's new CSV guidance. Also massive concerns with new 85/15 procedures guidance shared with SAAs and NAVPA.

On Friday, October 2, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had discussions with SVAC status of legislation. Conversation with VA leadership on the RBS project and challenges. Brief SVAC and HVAC on status of RVS project and ways to revolutionize Educational oversight.

TOPIC 3: TRACKING LEGISLATION

GI Bill of Rights Equity Commission Act: Establish the independent National Commission on GI Bill Equity to identify veterans of World War II who were denied the full effect of their GI Bill benefits because of contemporaneous local, State, and Federal Government policies that discriminated against African Americans.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

Resolution: None on file, presenting for review at Fall NEC.

Status: Currently on hold, has not been introduced

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

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

HR 7445: To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for home loans from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

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

[Resolution No. 329: Support Home Loan Guaranty 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.

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

Passed at the 2016 National Convention.

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

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

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

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

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

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

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus/John Kamin)

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

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

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

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

(Tracked by John Kamin)

Currently studying for appropriate resolution.

HR 4941 Veteran Employment Transition Act” or the “VET Act” was sponsored by Representative Andy Kim. The last action on the bill 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 to 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 for in the area.

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus) [A letter of Support was sent](#)

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

H.R.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 members of the National Guard, Reserves, and veterans of the Armed Forces. The last action on the bill was 05/22/2020 and referred to the Committee on Armed Services.

(Tracked by Raymond Lorminey/Ariel De Jesus)

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

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

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

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

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

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

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

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

(Tracked by Teresa Lewis)

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

HR 4920, Department of Veterans Affairs Contracting Preference Consistency Act of 2020: is a bill that would allow AbilityOne companies to keep their preferential treatment at the

Department of Veteran Affairs after 2016 with some compromises. The Senate initially sent it back to the House after it was passed for changes. Those changes have been reconciled and the bill cleared its last hurdle before it is sent to the White House.

Draft Bill: Home loan benefits for National Guard to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for home loans from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to certain members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

(Tracked by John Kamin)

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

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

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

(Tracked by Davy Leghorn)

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

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

(Tracked by Ariel De Jesus)

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

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

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

A letter of Support was Sent

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

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

At Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence and US Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia announced the launch of a new Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop for military spouses. TAP is administered by the Department's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS).

The Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses (TEAMS) effort will assist military spouses in their career endeavors with training on employment essentials, tailored to their unique circumstances.

“Military spouses make great sacrifices for our country. As a nation, we should lessen those burdens when we can, including in the workplace,” said Secretary of Labor Eugene



The Military's Transition Program for Separating Troops Will Soon Have Offerings for Spouses

Scalia. “The TEAMS initiative will equip military spouses with skills they can use to participate more fully in our nation’s economy even as they shoulder the challenges of life in a military family.”

“Military spouses sacrifice so much for the strength and readiness of our Armed Forces, and it is our duty to come alongside them and support them as they find meaningful employment opportunities,” said Second Lady Karen Pence. “TEAMS will directly assist military spouses as they find a rewarding job and fulfill their own career dreams.”

A recent VETS survey of military spouses found that 44 percent would choose to attend TAP if the program was offered conveniently, and its courses contained beneficial information for military spouses. Currently, only 7 percent of spouses reported attending any portion of TAP. In response, TEAMS will tailor information for spouses at times and make presentations convenient and specific to their employment situation.

Initiated by the President’s Budget for Fiscal Year 2020, VETS is developing the workshop’s four pilot TEAMS courses to address military spouses’ employment-related challenges. They will be presented in virtual and in-person classroom settings. The four initial offerings include:

- “Your Next Move”
- “Career Credentials: How Important Are They?”
- “Mastering Resume Essentials” and
- “Marketing Me: Job Search Tactics & Networking”

The four courses will also be piloted in classrooms at Ft. Gordon and Ft. Hood in October 2020, followed by 20 virtual presentations from Oct. 26, 2020, through Oct. 30, 2020.

Once completed, VETS will use feedback from military spouses who participate to refine the courses and make them available throughout the military spouse community in 2021.

VETS’ mission is to prepare America’s veterans, service members, and their spouses for meaningful careers, provide them with employment resources and expertise, protect their employment rights, and promote their employment opportunities.

The mission of the Department of Labor is to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners, job seekers, and retirees of the United States; improve working conditions; advance opportunities for profitable employment; and assure work-related benefits and rights.

The American Legion understands that today’s economy is a two-person income. Therefore, every effort needs to be made to assist veterans with seeking meaningful employment and ensure that their spouses are equally prepared for that same transition into their next chapter in life. It is encouraging to see these efforts from the Department of Labor and align with The American Legion’s resolutions.

Resolution No. 100: Accountability of the Department of Defense’s Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

On October 1, El Paso, TX, city officials released a Notice of Availability (NOFA) for non-profit organizations to operate a Veterans Permanent Supportive Housing Program. The NOFA's \$348,424 is available for non-profits to provide rental assistance, case management, and support services for homeless veterans residing in the City El Paso who are not eligible for VA benefits.

<https://elpasoheraldpost.com/city-offers-funding-for-non-profits-to-provide-services-for-homeless-veterans/>



Homeless Veteran waiting in line for Champaign County Homeless Shelters

Veterans in need in the Champaign, Illinois area will have a place to call home. The Salvation Army Red Shield Center on North Market Street will now be able to provide overnight accommodations for up to five female veterans who are either homeless or facing a housing crisis. This is thanks to a federal grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The veterans' stay will be short term while they transition to a pre-identified permanent housing destination.

<https://newschannel20.com/news/local/champaign-salvation-army-gives-veterans-temporary-home>

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will fund 129 transitional housing beds for veterans who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of doing so in the District. The agency will disburse grants to three nonprofits in the D.C. area beginning on Oct. 2. Transitional housing is a temporary type of supportive housing meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing.

The grants will go to Access Housing, Inc. in D.C.; the Chesapeake Health Program in Perry Point, Maryland; and the United States Veteran Initiative in D.C. Each works with the Washington D.C. VA Medical Center.

<https://www.streetsensemedia.org/article/va-to-fund-129-beds-for-homeless-vets/#.X3aAumhKhPY>

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS

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

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

The National staff is currently working with the Department of North Carolina to host its next virtual career fair.

Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 14,412, an increase of 889 from the prior week.

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



THE AMERICAN LEGION NORTH CAROLINA

VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Employment Opportunities are Waiting for You. Register Now and Connect with Local and Nationwide Employers Looking to Hire.

Tuesday, November 17, 2020 ★ 10:00am-2:00pm (Eastern Time)



[Job Seeker Registration](#)

[Employer Registration](#)

[Reported by Ariel De Jesus]

TOPIC 7: SMALL BUSINESS

The American Legion continues to track programmatic changes to the COVID-19 stimulus package passed in March of 2020. The Paycheck Protection Program was vital to veteran small businesses as well as many of our Legion Posts and Departments, who have taken advantage of the loan. The banking industry is pressuring the federal government to be more lenient and simplify the forgiveness process for small businesses and non-profits.

This week, the federal government is set to begin forgiving emergency loans made to small businesses under the Paycheck Protection Program. But the exact start time for application approvals and whether loans of a certain size would automatically qualify for forgiveness remain uncertain.

On October 1, 2020, a spokesperson for the Treasury Department confirmed by email that the Small Business Administration would start approving forgiveness applications for PPP loans this week or early next week. The department and the SBA oversee the program.



The news comes as bankers grow weary of waiting for the SBA — which opened its forgiveness portal on Aug. 10 — to sign off on forgiveness requests. To date, the SBA has not acted on tens of thousands of applications that have been submitted in the seven weeks since.

The \$659 billion program was designed to provide emergency funding for small businesses struggling to stay afloat during the early months of the coronavirus pandemic. By Aug. 8, when the program closed, the SBA had approved 5.2 million PPP loans totaling \$525 billion. More than \$133 billion remains unallocated.

More than 100 trade groups, including the American Bankers Association, the Independent Community Bankers of America and the Consumer Bankers Association, sent a letter to lawmakers on Sept. 17 urging automatic forgiveness for PPP loans of \$150,000 or less. The coalition estimated a streamlined process would eliminate \$7 billion in administrative costs. The ABA and 51 state banking associations sent a similar letter to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza the next day.

Lenders have been pressing lawmakers to resume and revamp PPP, saying they want the streamlined forgiveness process and permission to make new loans to PPP borrowers who show ongoing stress from the coronavirus pandemic.

Congress is considering several proposals that would restart the program, but for now it sits idle as lawmakers negotiate over a possible second stimulus package.

[Reported by Davy Leghorn]

TOPIC 7b: SMALL BUSINESS

On September 25, the Senate Ways and Means Committee hosted a hearing on Restaurants in America during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

According to Orlando, Florida, Mayor Buddy Dyer “Our restaurants are in trouble. And, they need your help immediately.” “Over the last several months to help provide restaurants with ways to stay afloat during this crisis. We expanded outdoor dining, turned City streets into restaurant “parklets,” and expanded carryout alcohol sales. We’ve done just about everything we can do from a local government perspective. At this moment, though, more than a third of our restaurant workforce has been laid off or furloughed and operators don’t know when, or if, they will be able to bring them back. And, our restaurants need federal help.”

Melvin Rodrigue President & CEO of Galatoire’s Restaurant New Orleans, Louisiana Chair, National Restaurant Association, testified “The restaurant industry is on track to lose \$240 billion this year. Here in New Orleans, our industry here has lost more than 31,000 jobs -- half of our pre-pandemic workforce.”

More information is available at:

<https://waysandmeans.house.gov/legislation/hearings/restaurants-america-during-covid-19-pandemic>



Impacts of COVID-19 on food systems

On September 30, the House Small Business Committee under Chairwoman Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY), gathered food producers and small business owners to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on America’s food systems and the small businesses that depend on them.

COVID-19 has put enormous stress on the food system and exposed numerous vulnerabilities. Since the

onset of the crisis, millions of food-insecure Americans have turned to food banks to help their families. At the same time, farmers have had to destroy crops and goods due to lost market opportunities, supply chain bottlenecks, and workforce challenges. These food system disruptions have harmed vulnerable populations and the small businesses and their employees that serve them.

During the hearing, witnesses testified on the impact of food system issues on small businesses across the supply chain and various industries. Lawmakers examined existing relief efforts by the Small Business Administration and Department of Agriculture and potential actions that could support small businesses amidst continued uncertainty in the food system.

<https://smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3460>

On October 1, House Small Business Subcommittee on Investigations, Oversight, and Regulations Chairwoman Judy Chu (D-CA) led a hearing probing internal controls against fraud and abuse in key loan programs at the Small Business Administration (SBA). During the hearing, government watchdog agencies testified on their efforts to prevent fraud and waste in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL).

<https://smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=3463>

The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering loans of up to \$2 million for businesses damaged during recent protests. As nationwide protests against the killing of Black Americans by police engulfed the country this summer, many small businesses found themselves in the crosshairs of conflict. Pockets of looting and destruction left behind shops with smashed windows and damaged merchandise, and owners wondering who would foot the bill.

Businesses that need to rebuild and are located in seven states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Minnesota, South Carolina, Illinois, California, and Washington) may now access two types of disaster loans through the SBA. The loans--which could be a Business Physical Disaster Loan or an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)--are capped at \$2 million and come with 30-year repayment terms and interest rates as low as 3 percent. The loans can be used for working capital and daily operating expenses and, especially in the case of civil unrest, to replace damaged property. <https://www.inc.com/brit-morse/civil-unrest-small-business-eidl-disater-loans.html>

[Reported by Teresa Lewis]

TOPIC 8: EDUCATION

The organization that represents the country's for-profit colleges is attempting to recruit support among "urban members of Congress" as a bulwark against the legislative reversal of policy gains the sector has made during the Trump administration amid fears of widespread Democratic victories in November.

The industry group Career Education Colleges and Universities outlined the strategy in internal documents that were shared with U.S. News. The group's effort seeks to court Black and Latino House Democrats, whose constituents disproportionately enroll in for-profit schools, to guard against the reimposition of federal protections for students that have been eroded in recent years – an effort career college officials see as key to keeping the sector alive should Republicans lose control of the White House and Senate in the upcoming election.



For-profit college advocates plan to focus on members of the Congressional Black Caucus, among others, in its outreach to congressional Democrats

"There would be a new wave of ideological opponents at the Department of Education seeking to reverse positive changes in policy over the past four years," Steve Gunderson, president and CEO of the career college group and former Republican member of Congress, wrote to the organization's 500 members in a letter shared with U.S. News dated Aug. 19. "We need approximately 20 reliable Democrats to join with Republicans in ways that can stop some of the most harmful proposals."

Gunderson outlines in the letter that the strategy will specifically focus on members of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Blue Dog Democrats – a group of fiscally conservative and moderate Democrats.

"Many of our schools are in urban areas and thus Democrat Congressional Districts," Gunderson wrote, noting that 51% of students enrolled in degree or certificate programs that are two years or less in length are Black or Hispanic.

"We see some evidence that as we communicate to these urban Members of Congress how some of these proposals would impact students in their district, we are seeing some evidence of emerging support," he continued. "For many, they see our sector as the bridge to reducing the current income inequality gaps in America today."

Data shows that students who enroll in for-profit colleges, which often cost more to attend than public colleges, are less likely to graduate than students at public and private non-profit schools, more likely to incur high student loan debt and default on their loans. For-profit colleges account for a third of all student loan defaults, for example, even though they make up only 9% of total postsecondary enrollment.

But the Trump administration has been a boon for for-profit colleges, shutting down efforts by Democrats to rein in the sector.

With the exception of the Trump administration and officials from the for-profit sector itself, the new rules have been almost universally criticized for giving operators of career colleges too much leeway, including by congressional Republicans who joined Democrats to pass a resolution to block the new rules from going into effect. President Trump ultimately vetoed the resolution.

The strategy also includes recruiting veterans to CECU's advocacy arms and ramping up social media to target veterans. The narrative that is being proposed to these members is that the for-profit college sector is a bridge of support to reducing the current income equality gaps in America. However, that narrative is the exact opposite of what data shows.

Data shows that students who enroll in for-profit colleges, which often cost more to attend than public colleges, are less likely to graduate than students at public and private non-profit schools. They are also more likely to incur high student loan debt and default on their loans. For-profit colleges account for a third of all student loan defaults even though they make up only 9% of total postsecondary enrollment.

Based on the discriminatory and predatory lobbying strategy by CECU, they appear to be admitting that for-profit colleges will not be able to prove that they are worthy of federal dollars if a Biden-Harris presidency would occur. The American Legion has an educational commitment to protect veterans and minority veterans and will continue to monitor this as it aligns with our **Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Learning.**

TOPIC 9: CREDENTIALING

To assist veterans with turning their military training and skills into civilian credentials to meet job requirements, Lone Star College (LSC), Utility Workers Union of America, Indiana Wesleyan University and the Kansas Board of Regents were announced as pilot sites for the Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative (MCAI).



Each pilot site will receive \$150,000 and \$200,000 in one-year grants from Rockefeller and Philanthropy Advisors, the Ascendum Education Group, Lumina Foundation, and Greater Texas Foundation.

Ascidium's Funding in particular will go towards evaluating MCAI's impact over the course of 18 months.

“This collaboration is to ensure the high-quality learning that is gained by service members can be fully recognized, counted toward a credential and scaled at a national level,” said Linda Leto Head, senior vice chancellor of external and employer relations at LSC.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics show that, of the roughly 200,000 veterans who enter the civilian workforce each year, only about 50,000 have the credentials they need to land good jobs with family-sustaining wages.

This is especially true for service members of color who make up 43 percent of the active-duty force. More than half of Black, Hispanic and Native American service members are clustered in four occupations that lack clear paths to civilian credentials and jobs.

The efforts of this Initiative have been spring boarded by The American Legion's advocacy on credentialing, and specifically the work of our Credentialing Ambassadors over the course of four separate meetings in 2019-2020. This is supported by **Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Learning.**

[Reported by John Kamin]

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 10/02/2020
