

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY



President Joe Biden drew a red line on his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan Wednesday, saying he is open to compromise on how to pay for the package but inaction is unacceptable.

The president turned fiery in an afternoon speech, saying that the United States is failing to build, invest and research for the future and adding that failure to do so amounts to giving up on “leading the world.”

“Compromise is inevitable,” Biden said. “We’ll be open to good ideas in good faith negotiations. But here’s what we won’t be open to: We will not be open to doing nothing. Inaction, simply, is not an option.”

Biden challenged the idea that low tax rates would do more for growth than investing in care workers, roads, bridges, clean water, broadband, school buildings, the power grid, electric vehicles and veterans hospitals.

The president has taken heat from Republican lawmakers and business groups for proposing that corporate tax increases should finance an infrastructure package that goes far beyond the traditional focus on roads and bridges.

“What the president proposed this week is not an infrastructure bill,” Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” one of many quotes that Republican congressional aides emailed to reporters before Biden’s speech. “It’s a huge tax increase, for one thing. And it’s a tax increase on small businesses, on job creators in the United States of America.”

Biden last week proposed funding his \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan largely through an increase in the corporate tax rate to 28% and an expanded global minimum tax set at 21%. But he said Wednesday he was willing to accept a rate below 28% so long as the projects are financed and taxes are not increased on people making less than \$400,000.

"I'm willing to listen to that," Biden said. "But we gotta pay for this. We gotta pay for this. There's many other ways we can do it. But I am willing to negotiate. I've come forward with the best, most rational way, in my view the fairest way, to pay for it, but there are many other ways as well. And I'm open."

He stressed that he had been open to compromise on his \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan, but Republicans never budged beyond their \$600 billion counteroffer.

"If they'd come forward with a plan that did the bulk of it and it was \$1.3 billion or four ... that allowed me to have pieces of all that was in there, I would have been prepared to compromise," Biden said. "But they didn't. They didn't move an inch. Not an inch."

The president added that America's position in the world was incumbent on taking aggressive action on modern infrastructure that serves a computerized age. Otherwise, the country would lose out to China in what he believes is a fundamental test of democracy. Republican lawmakers counter that higher taxes would make the country less competitive globally.

"You think China is waiting around to invest in this digital infrastructure or on research and development? I promise you. They are not waiting. But they're counting on American democracy, to be too slow, too limited and too divided to keep pace."

His administration on Wednesday was pressing the case for tax increases. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said it was "self-defeating" for then-President Donald Trump to assume that cutting the corporate tax rate to 21% from 35% in 2017 would make the economy more competitive and unleash growth. Yellen said that competing on tax rates came at the expense of investing in workers.

"Tax reform is not a zero-sum game," she told reporters on a call. "Win-win is an overused phrase, but we have a win-win in front of us now."

Yellen said the tax increases would produce roughly \$2.5 trillion in revenues over 15 years, enough to cover the eight years' worth of infrastructure investments being proposed.

The roughly \$200 billion gap between how much the taxes would raise and how much the administration wants to spend suggests there is space to address critics, such as West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin, a key Democratic vote, who would prefer a 25% rate.

Manchin also came out Wednesday against the budget reconciliation process that would allow Democrats to push the bill through the Senate with just a 51-vote majority, rather than the 60 votes that would be required to overcome a GOP filibuster.

"Senate Democrats must avoid the temptation to abandon our Republican colleagues on important national issues," Manchin wrote in a Washington Post op-ed essay. "Republicans, however, have a responsibility to stop saying no, and participate in finding real compromise with Democrats."

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said businesses and lawmakers should come to the bargaining table, noting that there could be room to negotiate on the rate and timeline.

“There is room for compromise,” Raimondo said at a White House briefing. “What we cannot do, and what I am imploring the business community not to do, is to say, ‘We don’t like 28. We’re walking away. We’re not discussing.’”

Key to the Biden administration's pitch is bringing corporate tax revenues closer to their historic levels, rather than raising them to new highs that could make U.S. businesses less competitive globally.

Trump's 2017 tax cuts halved corporate tax revenues to 1% of gross domestic product, which is a measure of the total income in the economy. Revenues had previously equaled 2% of GDP. That higher figure is still below the 3% average of peer nations in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Treasury Department said in its summary of the plan.

Still, some say the administration's claim is misleading.

“The administration should use statistics that directly measure the burden on the corporate sector,” said Kyle Pomerleau, a fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. “In fact, many measures of effective tax rates show that the U.S.’s burden is pretty close to middle of the road. Biden’s plan would certainly push up to the high end among our major trading partners.”

Business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable argue that higher taxes would hurt U.S. companies operating worldwide and the wider economy.

The Penn-Wharton Budget Model issued a report Wednesday saying the combined spending and taxes would cause government debt to rise by 2031 and then decrease by 2050. But following the plan, GDP would be lower by 0.8% in 2050.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

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	
	March 2020	March 2021	March 2020	March 2021	March 2020	March 2021
Unemployed	368	452	321	417	47	35
Unemployment rate	4.1	5.0	4.0	5.3	4.3	2.9

The national unemployment rate is 6.2 percent (February 2021). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 6.1 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 3.8 percent (no change from February).

In March 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 4.6%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.0% in March.

TOPIC 2: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS

On Tuesday, April 13, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) team DC to discuss the Houston visit and what adjustments need to be made as a result of the onsite survey. DOD remains interested and plans are to set up another RBS visit in Virginia that both the Department of Defense could attend as well as American Legion personnel. NASAA personnel will also plan to be a part of an RBS in each of the remaining 5 pilot states, most of those visits to be virtual.

On Tuesday April 13 through Thursday, April 15, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division conducted calls with Troops to Teachers state program leaders from Virginia, Colorado, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia to discuss the impact of DoD's termination of the Troops to Teachers program.

On Wednesday, April 14, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division conducted a zoom meeting with DoD's Office of Personnel Readiness (P&R) to discuss agenda items for a roundtable on spotlighting DoD's SkillBridge initiative. P&R staff identified relevant points of contact to present on SkillBridge progress from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. A tentative date of June 8th has been set for the webinar.

On Thursday, April 15, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the NASAA Legislative committee to discuss shared priorities with the Legion. These include support of appeals to 90/10, need to address 85/15 challenges in the new VA methods of calculation and beginning work on new legislative agenda. Conversations also had on HR 147, which would establish a shared VA/DOD website on apprenticeships to include descriptions and costs of the programs.

On Friday, April 16, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Arnold Ventures (formerly the Lauren and John Arnold Foundation) and Legion Leadership to discuss grant progress. Weekly Meeting with EdCounsel/Lumina Risk Based Survey Executive Team to discuss Risk Based Survey next steps. Reach out to VSOs (VES and SVA) on issues with student veterans and the need for support by the SAAs and NASAA where appropriate.

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

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: 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.

S. 3745, Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act: to require the Department of Education to grant total 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.

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

Status: Did not pass 116th Session.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

The U.S. economy created the most jobs in seven months in March as more Americans got vaccinated and the government doled out additional pandemic relief money, marking the start of what could be the strongest economic performance this year in nearly four decades.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday also showed job gains in February were larger than initially estimated. The best first two months of employment growth of any administration in history suggested the labor market has finally turned the corner.

All industries added jobs and many people rejoined the labor force. A measure of the economy's ability to create employment also improved. But the road to full recovery remains long. The jobs deficit is still huge and more than four million Americans have been unemployed for over six months.

President Joe Biden welcomed the job growth spurt.

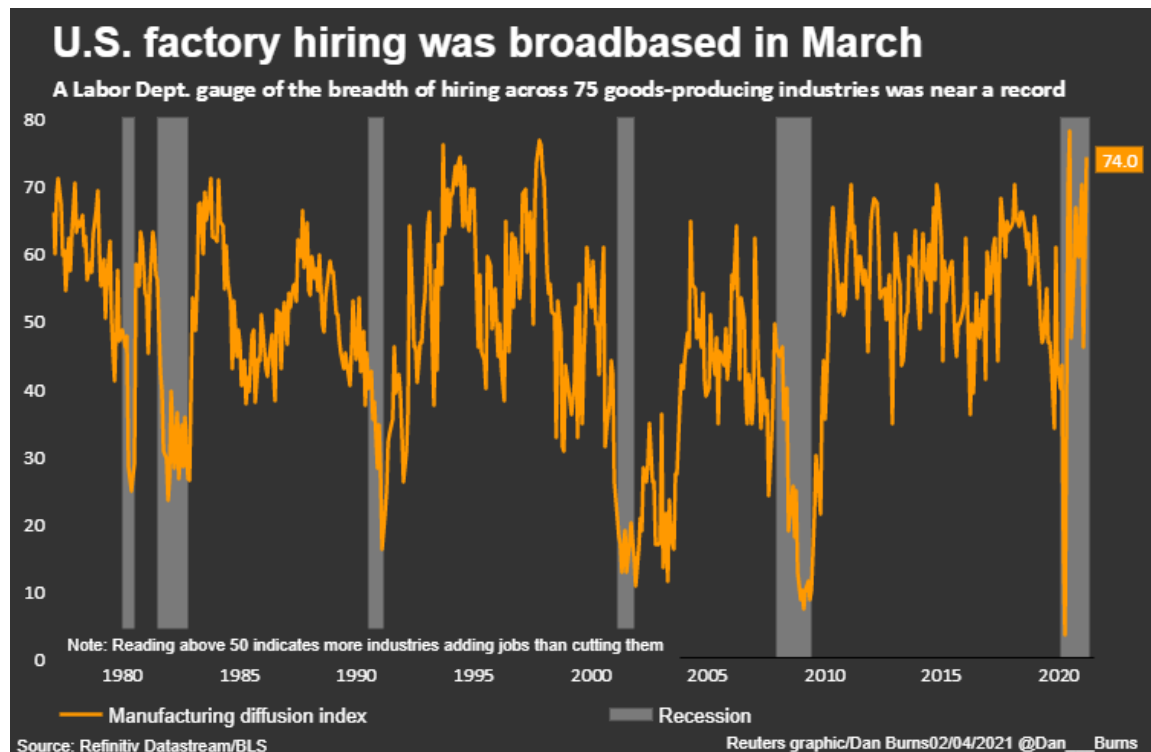
“The first two months of our administration has seen more new jobs created than the first two months of any administration in history,” Biden told reporters. “It’s a reflection of two things going on here, a new economic strategy focused on building from the bottom to the middle up, and one that puts government on the side of working people.” Nonfarm payrolls surged by 916,000 jobs last month, the biggest gain since last August. Data for February was revised higher to show 468,000 jobs created instead of the previously reported 379,000. Still, employment remains 8.4 million jobs below its peak in February 2020.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls increasing by 647,000 jobs in March. At the current pace, many believe the more than 22 million jobs lost during the pandemic could be recouped by the end of next year.

The economy added 1.6 million jobs in the first quarter.

The strong gains could play into fears of the economy over heating, even as ample slack remains. The Federal Reserve has signaled it would maintain its ultra easy monetary policy stance for a while to allow complete healing.

“The economy is booming,” said Chris Low, chief economist at FHN Financial in New York. “If vaccines result in low enough COVID numbers to allow significant further service-sector reopening, the Fed will have to start discussing a taper, and update its guidance, before the end of this year.”



Employment growth last month was led by the leisure and hospitality sector, where employers hired 280,000 workers. Restaurants and bars accounted for nearly two-thirds of the industry's employment gains. Construction employment rebounded by 110,000 after being depressed by harsh weather in February. Manufacturers hired 53,000 employees -Public and private. Education payrolls

also rose as more schools resumed in-person learning and other school-related activities. Retailers also added jobs, while mining employment increased by the most since 1981.

As of Friday morning, the United States had administered 157.6 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines in the country and distributed 204.7 million doses, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. On Friday, the CDC said fully vaccinated people could safely travel at “low risk,” which could help accelerate the services industry recovery.

The Biden administration’s massive \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package approved in March is sending additional \$1,400 checks to qualified households and fresh funding for businesses.

Economists expect job growth will average about 700,000 per month in the second and third quarters. That, combined with the fiscal stimulus and about \$19 trillion in excess savings accumulated by households during the pandemic, is expected to unleash a powerful wave of pent-up demand.

First-quarter gross domestic product estimates are as high as an annualized rate of 10.0%. Growth this year could top 7%, which would be the fastest since 1984. The economy contracted 3.5% in 2020, the worst performance in 74 years.

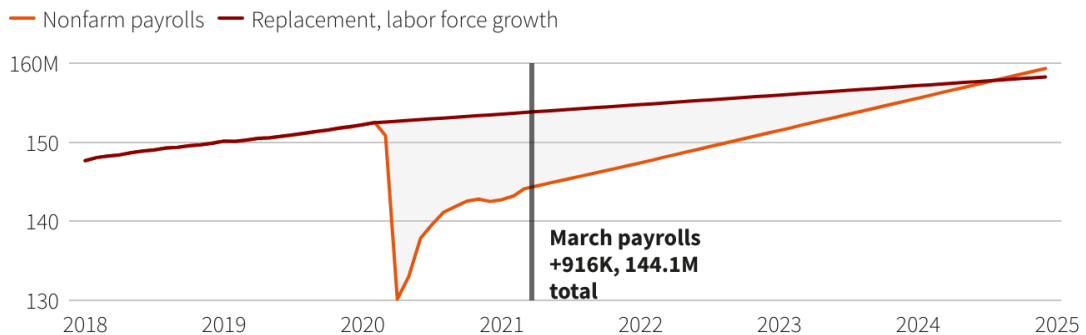
The dollar rose versus a basket of currencies. U.S. Treasury prices were mixed. Wall Street is closed for Good Friday.

First-quarter growth prospects got a boost from workers putting in longer hours in March as temperatures rose. The average workweek rose to 34.9 hours from 34.6 hours. That, together with robust hiring lifted aggregate hours 1.5%.

Though average hourly earnings slipped 0.1% as the lower-wage leisure and hospitality industry dominated payroll growth, a proxy for take home pay increased 1.4%.

The jobs hole facing Biden and the Fed

The administration hopes vaccinations will boost job growth, and the Fed has tied monetary policy to labor market repair. But allowing for roughly 100,000 new jobs needed monthly to account for population growth, it may be mid 2024 before jobs reach their pre-pandemic trend.



Note: Projected growth in nonfarm payrolls uses Moody's Analytics estimate of 326,000 jobs per month for 2021 and 341,000 from there. Replacement and labor force growth assumes 100K additional jobs needed per month.

Bureau of Labor Statistics

“The powerful tailwind of the reopening of economic activity appears to be gathering force,” said Michael Feroli, chief U.S. economist at JPMorgan in New York.

The unemployment rate fell to 6.0% last month from 6.2% in February. The unemployment rate has been understated by people misclassifying themselves as being “employed but absent from work.” Without the misclassification, the unemployment rate would have been 6.4% in March.

Even so, a broader measure of unemployment, which includes people who want to work but have given up searching and those working part-time because they cannot find full-time employment, dropped to a one-year low of 10.7% after holding at 11.1% for two straight months.

About 347,000 people, mostly women, re-entered the labor force in March. The labor force participation rate, or the proportion of working-age Americans who have a job or are looking for one, rose to 61.5% from 61.4% in February.

The employment-to-population ratio, viewed as a measure of an economy’s ability to create employment, increased to 57.8% from 57.6% in the prior month. But about 4.218 million people have been out of work for more than 27 weeks, accounting for 43.4% of the 9.7 million people classified as unemployed last month. That was up from 41.5% in February.

“Overall, the aggressive policy support and speed of this cycle should limit labor market scarring,” said Sarah House, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

TOPIC 5: EDUCATION

The owner of a for-profit trade school has been convicted of bilking the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs of \$72 million and of misleading student veterans, announced Acting U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Prerak Shah.

After approximately seven hours of deliberation, a federal jury on Thursday found Jonathan Dean Davis, the 43 year-old owner of Retail Ready Career Center, guilty of seven counts of wire fraud and four counts of money laundering.

“Mr. Davis lied to multiple government agencies in order to swindle veterans out of their hard-won GI Bill benefits. While graduates of Retail Ready were just scraping by, Mr. Davis was living the high life,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Prerak Shah. “We are grateful to the jury for their time in helping us bring this defendant to justice. To undermine the VA is to insult the incredible sacrifices made by U.S. military veterans.”

“Owners of schools that are entrusted with the education of our nation’s veterans will be held accountable if they defraud the post-911 GI Bill program or veteran students,” stated VA OIG Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey Breen. “Today’s guilty verdict was reached under the leadership of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and as a result of the extensive work of special agents of the VA Office of Inspector General, the FBI, and the United States Postal Inspection Service.”

According to evidence presented at trial, Mr. Davis marketed Retail Ready’s six-week HVAC training course to veterans whose tuition and fees would be covered by the Veteran’s Educational Assistance Act of 2008, also known as the [post-9/11 GI Bill](#). The defendant, who was essentially

broke at the time of the crime, realized that he could charge \$18,000 to \$21,000 per student for the six-week course, if only he could get approval from the VA to accept GI Bill payments for tuition – which required prior approvals from the Texas Workforce Commission ([TWC](#)) and the Texas Veterans Commission ([TVC](#)).

These agencies required applicants to certify that they were not personally facing any criminal or civil actions, and to prove that their schools were established educational institutions in stable financial condition. Knowing he could not meet these requirements, Mr. Davis repeatedly lied and concealed information from these agencies.

“Several decisions lie ahead that will ultimately make the difference if I succeed or if I fail. More gut-wrenching conversations, more humiliating experiences, more lying is in order,” Mr. Davis wrote in an electronic journal he kept on his computer, which was recovered by federal agents during a search of Retail Ready. The journal became a key piece of evidence at trial.

Mr. Davis assured the TWC that he was not subject to any civil actions, when, in fact, he was facing numerous civil judgments over unpaid debts. He also told the TWC that he was not facing any criminal charges, when, in fact, he had a pending felony charge for theft of services.

Chronicling his arrest in his journal, Mr. Davis wrote, “I was arrested on December 20th, last Friday night (a week ago) for a warrant that had been hanging around since April apparently. I didn’t know that I had one but it was for Theft of services for a bad check I had written in June or July of 2012 to the Doubletree for \$25,000.00, which makes the charge a felony ... The more complicated and damaging aspect is that having a felony arrest doesn’t do well with trying to apply for a school certificate.”

Mr. Davis told the TVC that Retail Ready had been operating as a school for two years, when, in fact, the company had only existed for a few months and had never trained any students. He claimed that Retail Ready was fully prepared to train veterans, when, in fact, the company lacked a building and basic supplies. He even lied to an independent accountant about the school’s financial condition, and then submitted false financial statements to both the TWC and the TVC.

“I lied to the accountant that I am using for my audit service, I told him that I don’t have anything in the company name other than a lease and I left out having Jay being an employee and that I’ve had a bank account with expenses out of it because it is a disaster and wouldn’t project a very good picture,” Mr. Davis wrote in his journal.

Eventually, based upon Mr. Davis’ lies to the TWC and TVC, the VA accepted Retail Ready’s application, allowing Mr. Davis to charge veterans’ tuition and fees to the VA under the GI Bill. In 2014, he began recruiting student veterans, promising to prepare them for lucrative careers in the heating and air conditioning industry. Upon entering the workforce, however, many of these veterans discovered that Retail Ready had failed to teach them many of the basic skills necessary for entry-level technician jobs.

Several veterans testified at trial that they had relied on the Retail Ready’s fraudulently obtained VA endorsement and were sorely disappointed about their post- Retail Ready career prospects and pay. They were also shocked to learn of the rate at which Retail Ready’s six-week course had drained their GI Bill benefits, testifying that they felt “used,” “taken advantage of,” “deceived,” and “bamboozled.”

Even as his veteran graduates struggled to make ends meet, Retail Ready collected more than \$72 million in GI Bill benefits from the VA. Using the proceeds of his fraud, Mr. Davis purchased a \$2.2 million home in Dallas, a \$428,000 Lamborghini, a \$280,000 Ferrari, and a \$260,000 Bentley, among other things.

He now faces up to 180 years in federal prison.

The VA's Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Dallas Field Office and the United States Postal Inspection Service's Fort Worth Field Office. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Douglas Brasher and Fabio Leonardi are prosecuting the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Dimitri Rocha is handling forfeiture. U.S. District Judge Brantley Starr presided over the trial.

[Reported by John Kamin]

TOPIC 6: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS



VA Secretary Denis McDonough and HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge released a joint statement on ending veteran homelessness:

“The Department of Housing and Urban Development’s 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress found that on a single night in January 2020, there were 37,252 Veterans experiencing homelessness in America, an increase of 0.4% over 2019.

“This number does not account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added to the nation’s housing challenges, including among Veterans.

“AHAR showed investments from Congress along with strong collaboration between the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) brought about a 47% reduction in Veteran homelessness between 2010 and 2016. However, a GAO report found that, since 2016, progress towards ending Veteran homelessness has stalled. We find this pattern deeply concerning. No Veteran who has served this country — let alone more than 37,000 on a given night — should experience homelessness.

“We, the secretaries of VA and HUD, are aligning efforts and joining forces to work towards ending Veteran homelessness. We are mobilizing the strength of our two departments to do everything in our power to ensure every Veteran has access to safe and stable housing.

“We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tackle this crisis. The American Rescue Plan included more than \$10 billion in funding for individuals who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The American Jobs Plan would invest \$213 billion to produce, preserve, and retrofit more than two million affordable homes.

READ: [HUD Announces \\$5 Billion to Increase Affordable Housing to Address Homelessness](#)

“Our collaboration is the first step of a multi-phased whole-of-government effort that will ultimately help us end Veteran homelessness. We will evaluate existing strategies, implement new approaches when necessary, and execute a plan to ensure we achieve tangible results that incorporate best practices, feedback, and lessons learned from Veterans, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders.

“To fulfill this mission, we will:

- **Make ending Veteran homelessness a top priority** – VA and HUD will prioritize this effort at the highest levels. Staff in both agencies will collaboratively develop a strategy to significantly reduce the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness, as well as a strategy to ensure that no Veteran experiences homelessness in the future. The secretaries will participate in listening sessions with stakeholder groups, including Veterans with lived expertise. Information and materials gathered will be analyzed for use during quarterly meetings with homeless program staff from both departments to inform decisions about changes to policies and programs. We will develop targets, assess progress, and hold our agencies accountable.
- **Lead with an evidence-based Housing First approach** – Evidence and past progress on reducing Veteran homelessness demonstrate a Housing First approach works. Together, our agencies will ensure targeted interventions (such as HUD-VA Supportive Housing, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, and Grant and Per Diem) help Veterans obtain stable housing as quickly as possible without barriers or preconditions.
- **Reach underserved Veterans** – Reducing Veteran homelessness will require new approaches to serving Veterans for whom prior efforts may have fallen short. These include Veterans with less than honorable discharge status, as well as Veterans who are women, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, transgender and gender non-conforming, aging, and/or living in rural areas. We will ensure our interagency effort identifies and removes barriers to VA care and services, so benefits are equitably available among underserved Veteran communities.

- **Ensure the delivery of quality supportive services** – Supportive services are critical to helping Veterans find and retain housing, and to use it as a platform for achieving health, recovery, and economic success. Working diligently with federal and community stakeholders, we commit to identifying ways to ensure Veterans have access to quality supportive health, mental health, and medical legal services alongside employment and housing assistance, whether provided by VA or community partners.
- **Increase the supply of and access to affordable housing** – A significant obstacle to ending Veteran homelessness is the lack of affordable housing, especially in many urban centers. We will work jointly, including examining opportunities through the American Rescue Plan and the American Jobs Plan, to increase the supply of affordable housing and ensure Veterans have access. Our agencies will do this by engaging landlords, and affordable housing developers, supporting the use of federal programs to create and subsidize affordable housing, identifying ways to improve Veteran access to these housing units, and supporting state and local collaboration to finance and create affordable housing.

READ: [VA Research Reveals Link Between Financial Strains and Risk of Homelessness](#)

“Working to end Veteran homelessness requires a multi-agency effort, coordinated through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. Together, we can enhance how we deliver services and provide opportunities to Veterans to ensure we bring the full force of the federal government to end Veteran homelessness.”

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

TOPIC 8: CAREER FAIRS

Lexington Park, MD

April 20, 2021, 3pm - 7pm

Bay District Volunteer Fire Department Social Hall
46900 S. Shangri-La Drive
Lexington Park, MD 20653

PATUXENT RIVER JOB FAIR

3-5pm: Reserved for military, family and/or candidates who have an active security clearance
5-7pm: Open to all job seekers.

Presented by [JobZone](#)

[More information](#)

Virtual Job Fair

April 22, 2021, 1pm - 3pm

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: REMOTE & PART-TIME WORK

Presented by [*Hiring Our Heroes*](#)

[More information](#)

Joint Base Andrews, MD

April 22, 2021, 10am - 2pm

The Club at Andrews
1889 Arnold Avenue
Joint Base Andrews, MD 20762

JOINT BASE ANDREWS JOB FAIR

10am-2pm: Hiring fair, including resume seminars.

Presented by [*JobZone*](#)

[More information](#)

Atlantic City, NJ

April 22, 2021, 10am - 1pm

Casino Control Commission
1325 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

VETERANS CASINO CAREER FAIR

Active duty, National Guard, reservists, veterans, and military spouses are encouraged to pre-register, but walk-ins are also welcome.

Presented by [*New Jersey Casino Control Commission*](#) and [*The American Legion Department of New Jersey*](#)

[More information](#)

Hurlburt Field, FL

April 29, 2021, 8am - 4pm

The Soundside Club
107 Kissam Street
Hurlburt Field, FL 32544

HURLBURT FIELD CAREER SUMMIT

Presented by [Hiring Our Heroes](#)

[More information](#)

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.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 4/16/2021