

## NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

### TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday projected the U.S. economy will grow 6.5 percent this year, the fastest pace in four decades, fueled by growing vaccination rates and nearly \$2 trillion in new federal spending.

Central bank officials upgraded their growth forecast from a 4.2 percent estimate in December, adding that they now expect the unemployment rate to drop to 4.5 percent by the end of 2021.



Fed officials are also predicting a short-term burst in inflation this year, but only slightly above the central bank's long-run goal of 2 percent, estimating that it could rise to 2.4 percent.

“The economic fallout has been real and widespread, but with the benefit of perspective, we can say that some of the very worst economic outcomes have been avoided by swift and forceful action — from Congress, from across the government, and in cities and towns across the country,” Fed Chair Jerome Powell said at a press conference after the announcement.

All of this is welcome news for President Joe Biden, who signed a \$1.9 trillion economic-relief package last week as part of his push to help the economy fully recover from the deep, pandemic-induced slump. Critics of the spending package have warned that it could overheat the economy and spark inflation.

But despite the surge in growth, the Fed isn't in any hurry to raise borrowing costs, projecting no interest rate increases through 2023 — a stance that sent the stock market soaring. Powell has rejected fears that more direct checks to Americans from the federal government — part of Biden's economic-rescue package — will lead to troubling price spikes, doubling down on the Fed's pledge to keep interest rates low to allow as many people back into the labor force as possible.

“No one should be complacent,” he said. “At the Fed, we will continue to provide the economy the support that it needs for as long as it takes.”

Inflation has remained muted for years, despite warnings that it was bound to accelerate because of the Fed's low-rate policy and, more recently, the trillions of dollars the federal government has poured into the economy over the last year.

Even as Fed officials expect unemployment to drop to 3.5 percent in 2023, they still see inflation hovering at around 2 percent for the next couple of years. The central bank is now trying to get inflation slightly above its 2 percent target, to offset the fact that it has undershot that target for so long.

Powell emphasized that the Fed would be setting policy based on actual data on inflation and unemployment, not just forecasts.

“Talking about inflation is one thing. Actually, having inflation run above 2 percent is the real thing,” he said. “Over the years we’ve talked about 2 percent inflation as a goal, but we haven’t achieved it. So, I would say we’d like to perform.”

Some policymakers think the central bank could hike rates as early as next year, but they’re a minority on the 18-member rate-setting committee. The Fed chief said the job market would take time to heal, even with the improved forecast, and the central bank is aiming to get to full employment — across all demographics — before it hikes rates.

“There are in the range of 10 million people who need to get back to work, and it’s going to take some time for that to happen,” Powell said. “It’s going to take some time, no matter how well the economy performs.”

*[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	
	Feb 2020	Feb 2021	Feb 2020	Feb 2021	Feb 2020	Feb 2021
Unemployed	329	497	286	427	43	70
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>6.1</b>

*The national unemployment rate is 6.7 percent (February 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 6.3 percent. Currently, Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 3.8 percent (down from 5.0 percent in November).*

In February 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 5.5%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 6.5% in February.

## TOPIC 2: VIRTUAL MEETINGS & CONFERENCE CALLS

*On Monday, March 15*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversation with NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs on support for Veterans in NC and opportunities for collaborate on state and national issues.

*On Monday, March 15*, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconference with RBS Project Manager Woodall on the forms for pilot rollout. Most issues around marketing and site visit reports. Conversation with Senate Veterans Affairs Committee staff on the same.

***On Monday, March 15,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with NASAA/EDCounsel/pilot SAAs on rollout and update on how things are proceeding in the field.

***On Tuesday, March 16,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) President E. Silva on CCME about trip to Houston along with DOD for an RBS at a American Intercontinental Campus in Houston and RBS requirements.

***On Tuesday, March 16,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conversation with LA SAA on the K-9 school and decision to continue them on probation due to supervisor pressure. Larger conversation references the independence and integrity of SAAs with VSOs.

***On Wednesday, March 17,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversation with Legion Leadership to discuss next steps in areas of Credentialing and Risk Based Surveys as well as Distance Learning.

***On Wednesday, March 17,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a meeting of the George W. Bush Institute National Task Force. Discussion focused on how to release and use the reports of the policy working group Joseph Wescott chairs. Also, future areas of interest include more work on credentialing and veteran's mental health.

***On Wednesday, March 17,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with VA Committee on Education subcommittee on Distance Learning which Joseph Wescott chairs. Concerns with the quality of distance learning and how we measure outcomes with that modality. Also, discuss updates on changes on campuses and veterans' preferences on modality. Most veterans according to the University of Maryland Global Campus Leadership desires to return to campus.

***On Wednesday, March 17,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with the Friday marketing team about rollout plans for the "Future of Credentialing Report." Friday is developing a marketing tool kit for social media promotion and has drafted two articles for the Legion to edit and publish about best practices featured in the report.

***On Thursday, March 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a weekly meeting with RBS Project Manager M. Woodall on status of pilot project and issues ahead around communication with SAAs and institutions being audited.

***On Thursday, March 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had conversations with National Association of State Approving Agencies senior leadership on legislative issues and needed actions. Concerns about flight training inequities between vocational and IHL affiliated schools as well as needs in the OJT/APP areas. Also, concerns about needs of veterans at community colleges and importance of reaching out to and supporting them.

***On Thursday, March 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended VA Education Services monthly GI Bill stakeholder meeting. VA staff provided updates on the Digital GI Bill's implementation and responded to concerns from schools over new debt-collecting provisions.

***On Thursday, March 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with the Executive Director of Credential Engine. The Executive Director reached out to express thanks

for Credential Engine being featured in the Legion’s “Future of Credentialing” report and offered suggestions for potential credentialing roundtable topics.

***On Thursday, March 18,*** the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with the Department of Defense office of Personnel and Readiness (P&R). P&R staff shared their recommendations for future credentialing roundtable topics and expressed concern over present 2021 funding levels for credentialing and skill bridge programs.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with VSOs and Senate staff on Carper-Cassidy Bill and plans for introduction.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division continued review of credentialing report and communication with Indianapolis on higher education work and plans.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a discussion with NC General Assembly staffers on veterans’ needs in NC and path forward on 90/10.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with VA Education Service leadership on veteran needs and SAA challenges.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconferenced with Montana SAA and issues surrounding its support and placement in the State.

***On Friday, March 19,*** the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had conversations with TAL on opportunities to further engage members, especially youth and minorities. Also, met with NASAA and EdCounsel on RBS project.

## **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 116<sup>th</sup> 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 116<sup>th</sup> 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 116<sup>th</sup> 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



*Randy Kenny, left, and Rich Horan made successful transitions to the civilian workforce and employment at Draper with the help of Edge4Vets. (Draper)*

While on a 2010 passenger flight from Seattle to Los Angeles, Edge4Vets founder Tom Murphy was seated next to a U.S. Army soldier in uniform. Before the gate closed, the young man started drinking to mask his anxieties and anything else he might have been struggling with.

His behavior alarmed the flight crew, who had him escorted off the flight. The soldier's behavior didn't bother Murphy, but the underlying cause did. While still on the flight, he penned an op-ed for the New York Post about what Americans could do for returning U.S. troops.

Murphy never served, but he wanted to do something himself. So he created a training method to teach veterans to translate the skills they acquired in their military service to the language spoken by the civilian workforce.

“They sometimes have difficulty selling themselves,” Murphy told an Edge4Vets conference in South Carolina. “People serving in the military learn to work as a team, and they sometimes don't think in terms of their individual accomplishments and skill sets.”

Murphy is the founder of Fordham University's Human Resiliency Institute, which conducts research and offers training to help aviation workers cope with the pressures of one of the world's most demanding career fields.



In 2011, he founded Edge4Vets in conjunction with the HRI to offer similar help to military veterans. The program combines workshop training with online instruction to teach veterans how to turn their military experience into skills for the business workforce and then connects them with jobs. Often, the program offers mentorship in the fields veterans are trying to enter.

“Edge4Vets gives veterans and other military personnel the support business leaders say they need most; that is, we teach them how to translate their military strengths, including values and skills, into tools for success in the civilian workplace, then we connect them to jobs that can lead to careers,” Murphy said in a statement.

Murphy estimates that eight out of 10 veterans who attend the Edge4Vets workshops have secured sustainable employment after the training. In all, the group has helped more than 2,000 veterans in seven states find work.

Rich Horan, a U.S. Army veteran who served as an infantry team leader in Afghanistan, is one of those veterans. The infantry is one of the most difficult career fields for veterans when trying to apply their military training to the civilian workforce.

“Edge4Vets helped me identify the value of that skill -- my ability to form teams -- and present it in a way that companies could see the value I could bring,” Horan said in a news release.

Like many other nonprofit organizations and programs, Edge4Vets has shifted some of its training opportunities to online formats. The next online training workshop is scheduled for April 15, 2021, at 1 p.m. Eastern time. A follow-up session is set for April 30.

During the two-week interval between the sessions, participants can access the Edge4Vets online course through a series of videos and exercises. Interested veterans [register for the Zoom-based workshop on the Edge4Vets website](#).

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## **TOPIC 5: SMALL BUSINESS**

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) began on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, as part of the CARES Act as a temporary source of liquidity for small businesses, authorizing \$349 billion in forgivable loans to help small businesses pay their employees and additional fixed expenses during the COVID 19 PANDEMIC. Firms applied for support through banks, and the Small Business Administration (SBA) was responsible for overseeing the program and processing loan guarantees and forgiveness. A motivation for using the banking system as a conduit for providing liquidity to firms is that, because nearly all small businesses have pre-existing relationships with banks, this connection could be used to ensure timely transmission of funds.

The lending program was generally targeted toward small businesses with 5000 or fewer employees. Although the initial round of funding was exhausted on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the second round of \$310 billion in PPP funding was passed by Congress as part of the fourth COVID-19 aid bill. Small businesses were eligible as of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and independent contractors and self-employed workers were eligible for April 10<sup>th</sup>. The initial deadline for firms to apply to the program was June 30, but this was eventually extended to August 8.

## **VETERANS EXCELLED UNDER THE PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM**

Small businesses have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Compared with larger businesses, especially those publicly traded, small businesses cannot often borrow funds to continue operations.

Moreover, many small businesses are clustered in the wholesale and retail trade and food and hospitality sectors, which were hit hard by state lockdowns.

With Veterans declining in entrepreneurship and increasingly residing in cities with lower-wage, employment, and productivity growth, one might think that they are more adversely affected by the Pandemic than their counterparts.

However, our recent work at VA's National Artificial Intelligence Institute (NAII) offers a new perspective. In our newly-released working paper, we used publicly available data on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to study how the PPP affected Veterans and their access to financing over the Pandemic.



### **VETERANS RECEIVED MORE LOANS THAN NON-VETERANS**

We focused on recipients of loans under \$150,000. Doing so, we found that Veterans received 3.5% more loans and 6.8% larger loans than their non-Veteran counterparts. We ensured as careful statistical comparisons as possible. We compared Veterans and non-Veterans in the same ZIP code between April and June following PPP funds' release.

*The high quality of VA medical centers is one of the most predictive factors for PPP loan receipt.*

The study also compared individuals across ZIP codes, controlling for a wide array of ZIP code characteristics. These characteristics include differences in the elderly population and industry composition. This way, we ensure that we did not pick up spurious correlates.

We found even more positive results among Veterans in the information and professional services sectors.

### **WHAT CAN EXPLAIN THESE REMARKABLE RESULTS?**

We used artificial intelligence (AI) techniques to predict receipt of PPP loans among Veterans. The loans were based on local socio-economic and VA medical center characteristics. Those characteristics include how patients have rated the medical center along various dimensions.

Not surprisingly, we found that industrial and occupational employment differences were most predictive of PPP receipt among Veterans, reflecting that specific industries and jobs were more adversely affected by the Pandemic due to the lockdowns.

We also found evidence Veteran entrepreneurs in information services and health care jobs were more likely to receive larger loans. This suggests those who rely more on data science and professional skills fared better than others.

But what is especially interesting is that VA facility characteristics mattered almost as much as the industry and occupational characteristics. It mattered almost twice as much as educational attainment, age, race, gender, the poverty rate and even the number of Veterans in a ZIP code.

### **QUALITY OF MEDICAL CENTERS A FACTOR IN LOANS**

The high quality of VA medical centers emerged as one of the most predictive factors for PPP loan receipt.

Such results could be due to higher quality medical centers being located in areas with more resources. Yet, we conducted several exercises that suggest otherwise.

For example, we re-ran our predictive models after adding information about the strength of social capital in an area, motivated by the results from the Joint Economic Commission Social Capital Project. However, the inclusion of these variables did not change the predictive power of our VA medical characteristics.

The results suggest that VA medical centers are doing more than just bringing physical healing and recovery to Veterans. Its possible medical centers are serving as hubs for information. This allows Veterans to gather to learn about resources during the Pandemic.

While more work is needed to understand the implications for how to build upon the successes of individual medical centers, there is much potential to drive forward based on this initial analysis.

### **MANY SMALL BUSINESSES NOT AWARE OF PROGRAM**

One recently published study by Professors John Eric Humphries, Christopher Nielson and Gabriel Ulyssea suggests that many small businesses were not aware of government programs, like the PPP, that could help them stay afloat during the Pandemic.

VA medical centers behaved as an arena for Veterans to come together and share information. It is possible they allowed for the informal sharing of news about the PPP and how to submit applications.

NAII is focused on piloting new ways to build and leverage capacity to improve the health and well-being of Veterans. Our work shows how to use AI with publicly available data to understand the factors that led to relatively favorable credit conditions for Veterans over the Pandemic.

More data, coupled with sophisticated AI techniques, has the potential to significantly improve the way we serve Veterans in achieving not only greater physical health, but also social and financial health, which ultimately feed back into physical health.

While our results provide an optimistic characterization of how Veterans fared, we recognize that there was still a lot of hardship. We welcome continued feedback to ensure quality improvements are implemented.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Get more information on the PPP ([sba.gov](https://sba.gov)).

PPP provides loans to help businesses keep their workforce employed during the coronavirus crisis. Borrowers may be eligible for PPP loan forgiveness.

**SBA is offering PPP loans until March 31, 2021.** President Biden announced program changes to make access to PPP loans more equitable.

### **DID THE PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM HIT THE TARGET?**

From the National Bureau of Economic Research, research follows that they did not find evidence that the PPP had a substantial effect on local economic outcomes or business shutdowns during the first round of the program and found modest effects on hours worked in May and June. Consistent with modest employment effects, they also find minor effects of the program on small business revenues in May and June.

This Research Bureau also discovered that PPP funds flowed to areas around the country that the Pandemic less hard-hit them. The funds' intended use was to go to depressed areas where the economic shock was the greatest.

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

## **TOPIC 6: EDUCATION**

A new report from The American Legion aims to help ensure that servicemembers' skills during their time in the military are considered when they seek credentials in the civilian world.



“The Future of Credentialing of Servicemembers and Veterans” includes suggestions and recommendations for key groups, such as public-private partnerships with the Department of Defense, legislators, and policymakers, and employers, to “ensure that servicemembers’ high-quality learning can receive full recognition, counted toward a credential and scaled at a national level.”

The report, published in association with the Military Credentialing Advancement Initiative (MCAI), was supported by a Lumina Foundation grant.

[A virtual webinar on March 10](#), in conjunction with the report’s release, included comments from MCAI ambassadors who met in person and virtually to compile recommendations “to support the recognition of military-based learning toward high-quality credential pathways” for the report.

Among the immediate and future opportunities for action highlighted in the report:

- Convene a White House Forum on Military Credentialing and Licensing to recognize military public-private partnerships, academic recognition of military learning, translation tools, state policy, and emerging research trends.
- Higher education should holistically review military-based education, training, and experience and determine how that can be implemented into core degree requirements.

- Industry partners and employers should continue to expand their recognition of all forms of military-based training, experience, and non-traditional learning to streamline and expedite servicemember career and education pathways and reduce administrators' burden governing agencies.

The full report [is available for download here](#).

*[Reported by John Kamin]*

## **TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS**

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

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

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

*[Reported by Edwin Cruz]*

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Week Ending: 3/19/2021**