

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1a: ECONOMY



Employers are stepping up hiring as vaccination totals increase and the economy is more fully reopened.

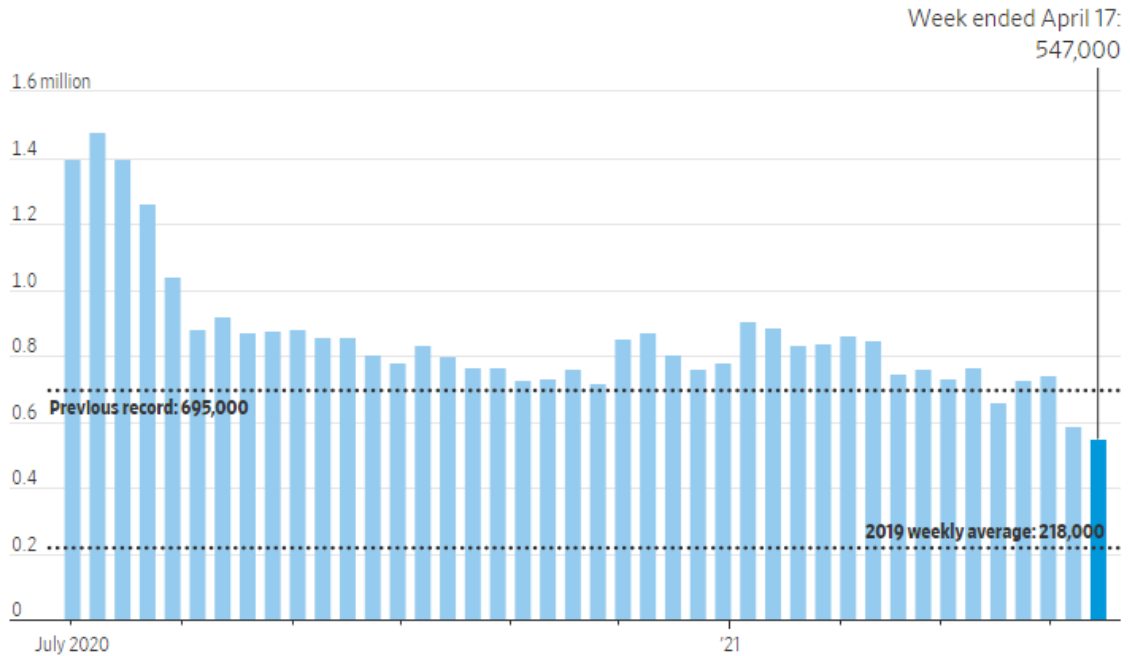
Worker filings for jobless benefits declined to 547,000 last week, a new pandemic low that adds to evidence of a strengthening labor market and overall economic recovery.

Initial unemployment claims, a proxy for layoffs, fell 39,000 last week from an upwardly revised 586,000 the prior week, the Labor Department said on Thursday. That put new claims on a seasonally adjusted basis below 600,000 for two consecutive weeks in mid-April, their lowest levels since early 2020. The four-week moving average, which smooths out volatility in the weekly figures, was 651,000, also a pandemic low.

The median sales price for previously owned homes climbed to a record high in March as a shortage of homes during the pandemic limited transactions, the National Association of Realtors said separately. Existing-home sales dropped 3.7% in March from February to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.01 million, marking the second straight month of sales declines.

Jobless claims remain higher than their pre-pandemic levels—the weekly average in 2019 was about 218,000—but last week's drop extended a downward trend since the start of this year and raised expectations for further declines in coming weeks.

Filings for jobless benefits



Note: Seasonally adjusted.

Source: U.S. Employment and Training Administration via St. Louis Fed

“This dip in jobless claims looks good in isolation but what really matters is that it confirms that last week’s unexpected plunge was no fluke,” said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, in a note to clients. The claims report indicates that layoffs are falling quickly, he added.

Initial jobless claims since last fall hadn’t declined below a range of roughly 700,000 to 900,000, despite other data that pointed to a pickup in the labor market. The unemployment rate in March, for example, fell to 6.0%, a pandemic low.

Claims levels “didn’t match up with the improvements we’ve seen in the labor market,” said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group. “We have been waiting to see an improvement,” he added.

A confluence of factors has offered signals that the economic recovery is accelerating, including a surge last month in retail sales and jobs added as Covid-19 vaccination totals increased and the economy more fully reopened. Economists surveyed by The Wall Street Journal in April forecast on average that U.S. gross domestic product grew at a 5.59% annual rate during the first quarter of 2021. That was up from an average forecast of 2.21% growth from the January survey.

Recent federal stimulus aid has sent many households direct cash payments. Meanwhile, about a third of U.S. adults age 18 or over have been fully vaccinated, and more than half have received at least one dose, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The country's seven-day moving average of reported Covid-19 cases increased during March and into April, but remains below recent peaks reached at the start of the year. In turn, many state and local governments have eased restrictions on business activity.

Continuing jobless claims—a proxy for the number of people receiving benefits through regular state programs—fell to 3.67 million in the week ended April 10, a decline of 34,000 from the prior week. The four-week moving average in continuing claims also fell.

“I do think that we are seeing real improvement in the labor market, and claims will continue to gradually move lower probably through the rest of this year,” said Gus Faucher, chief economist at PNC Financial Services Group.

He added that the pace of vaccinations and business reopenings bode especially well for activity at services businesses, such as dining as well as leisure and hospitality. Consumer spending during the pandemic trended away from services and toward goods, and job losses were acute for services businesses as Americans stayed home to avoid contracting the virus.

“As people feel more comfortable with face-to-face, close-contact behavior, we’ll see people spending in those services and we’ll see those industries rebounding,” Mr. Faucher said. “That will bring more jobs and higher incomes, and that in turn is going to support consumer spending as well.”

Consumer spending is the driving factor for U.S. economic growth, accounting for roughly two-thirds of output.

Peggy Shell, chief executive and founder at Creative Alignments, a Boulder, Colo.-based staffing firm, said she recently added three new staffers to the company, bringing the total to 26 part- and full-time workers. Two more workers are scheduled to start.

Ms. Shell's company specializes in staffing for technology and natural-products companies, and she said she is adding workers as demand for her firm's services increases. She said business for many of her clients started to rebound last year and has gained momentum in 2021, prompting them to look to expand.

Ms. Shell said vaccines are helping drive the optimism she is hearing among clients.

“I do think that this hope of the country opening even more has allowed people to feel even more comfortable in their growth plans,” she said.

Still, the U.S. economy as of March had roughly 8.4 million fewer jobs than before the pandemic started. Overall, about 17.4 million Americans were collecting unemployment benefits through state, federal and pandemic-related programs in the week ended April 3, up from 16.9 million the prior week.

Daniel Zhao, senior economist at jobs website Glassdoor, said enhanced unemployment benefits could be a factor for people in applying for claims, contributing to the continued high levels. States during the pandemic, meanwhile, have struggled with fraudulent unemployment claims.

Lack of adequate child care for some workers and lingering fears of contracting the virus were among other factors likely constraining current job gains, Mr. Zhao added.

“That’s something that’s not going to go away until the pandemic is more close to being over,” he said.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

TOPIC 1b: ECONOMY



Traders worked on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday.

Stocks dropped on news reports that President Biden is considering nearly doubling capital-gains taxes on the wealthy.

Mr. Biden plans a capital-gains tax increase to as high as 39.6% on the wealthiest Americans, an increase from the current 20%, [Bloomberg News reported](#) Thursday.

Major indexes wavered between small gains and losses for much of the session before tumbling on the headlines. The S&P 500 fell 38.44 points, or 0.9%, to 4134.98. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 321.41 points, or 0.9%, to 33815.90. The Nasdaq Composite slid 131.81 points, or 0.9%, to 13818.41.

All 11 sectors of the S&P 500 traded lower on the report. Technology and other growth stocks were some of the biggest losers. Shares of [Micron Technology](#), [Twitter](#) and [Western Digital](#) dropped more than 4%.

The planned tax increase is far from a surprise, but the fall in stocks was a knee-jerk reaction, said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial.

“Even though this is not a surprise—the expectation that capital gains would be taxed at a higher rate—it becomes more immediate and there’s a hitch in the market,” she said. “This isn’t new. It has not been a question of if or when, it has just been, ‘How much?’”

Elsewhere, investors continued to parse through another batch of earnings reports and data on the labor market. Many investors remain upbeat about the outlook for stocks but are growing concerned that a [surge in coronavirus cases globally](#) could delay plans to reopen economic activity. India on Thursday reported the world’s biggest one-day rise in new infections.

“It wouldn’t take much news for [investors] to start ripping up their reopening playbook,” said Christopher Jeffery, head of inflation and rates strategy at Legal & General Investment Management. “The market has gone from a world of not questioning it to starting to question it,” he said, adding that his team is following the [rise in cases in Michigan](#) closely.

Earnings season continues apace.

Shares of [Equifax](#) jumped \$28.78, or 15%, to \$221.41 after the credit-reporting firm late Wednesday raised financial projections for the year and said it expects to buy back more than \$100 million in stock.

[Blackstone Group](#) shares climbed \$2.65, or 3.3%, to \$82.96 after the private-equity firm swung to a record profit of \$1.75 billion in the first quarter.

[Snap](#) and [Intel](#) were among the companies to report earning results after markets closed.

Snap reported a jump in sales and a narrower quarterly loss as the social-media platform gained more users, helping shares jump nearly 5% after hours.

Conversely, Intel reported lower quarterly sales and revenue. The tech company’s stock fell 2% in after-hours trading despite raising its outlook for the year.

Some investors are wary of the results to come later this year. “We’re just going to have to see [what happens] when you take away the stimulus and the cash payments,” said Kimberly Woody, a senior portfolio manager at Globalt Investments. “We’re kind of on a sugar high.”

On the economic front, [worker filings for jobless claims reached another Covid-19 low of 547,000 last week](#). The decline is a sign the labor market is strengthening.

Jason Borbora-Sheen, multiasset portfolio manager at Ninety One, expects the broad stock market to trend sideways or decline over the next few months. “Things have become quite overbought,” he said.

One of the two funds Mr. Borbora-Sheen manages has bought put options to protect against downward moves in stocks. Puts are contracts that pay out if the underlying asset falls below a certain price.

In the bond market, the 10-year U.S. Treasury yield ticked down to 1.554% from 1.566% Wednesday. Yields, which move in the opposite direction to bond prices, have fallen from a high of 1.749% in late March.

Overseas, shares of tech and utility companies led the Stoxx Europe 600 up 0.7%.

Shares of [Credit Suisse Group](#) fell 2.1% after the Swiss lender said [it would issue new shares](#) after losses from Archegos Capital Management wiped out a strong first quarter.

[Renault](#) shares dropped 1.3% after the French car maker said revenue fell in the first quarter.

[The European Central Bank left its key interest rates and bond-buying programs unchanged](#), seeking to maintain support for governments and companies through a new round of coronavirus infections and restrictions.

In Asia, chemical and pharmaceutical stocks helped Japan's Nikkei 225 climb 2.4%. China's Shanghai Composite Index ticked down 0.2%.

[Reported by Joseph Sharpe]

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 Monday, April 19, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had conversations with Amy Bernard, Military Initiative Lead with the George W. Bush Institute on

the future work of the national task force on higher education. Joseph Wescott will remain as work group lead for the policy work group, and we will continue to work on policy positions as well as keep the other work groups abreast of policy challenges and opportunities.

On Monday, April 19, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the risk-based survey project pilot states to discuss further the first on-site survey at American Intercontinental University in Houston, Texas as well as other scheduled RBS visits. We plan to do one more in person survey with the Virginia State Approving Agency, (RBS is critical to provide proper oversight of approved programs offering quality programs that lead to meaningful employment), and we will invite Director Joseph Sharpe and DOD to observe.

On Monday, April 19, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Troops to Teachers staff from Florida on DoD's upcoming cancellation of the program. Florida staff shared that the program's closure would have an adverse impact on teacher placements as veterans had been counted as the highest quality incoming teachers.

On Monday, April 19, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division is working on further refinement of Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) forms and procedures. Brief and conversation with Project Coordinator Woodall on further virtual visits and needed changes to RBS pilot.

On Tuesday, April 20, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a Conversation with CECU Director on vocational/technical programs potentially impacted by the 90/10 rule.

On Tuesday, April 20, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had conversations with House Veterans Affairs committee on future path, to include a bill impacting approval requirements for higher education. Discussion of Risk Based Survey work and potential round table/hearing to discuss oversight of higher education were led.

On Tuesday, April 20, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had discussions of Apprenticeship / On-The-Job (OJT) pending legislation. Also, worked on Distance Learning Research paper.

On Tuesday, April 20, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division spoke with Veterans Education Success on progress on a 90-10 legislative amendment to create a waivers and appeals process for schools at risk of violating 90-10. VES adamantly opposes this provision but shared that they are waiting the results of bipartisan negotiations.

On Wednesday, April 21, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a chaired meeting of the Department of Veterans Affairs Committee on Education Subcommittee on Distance Learning. Keith Hauk, Director of Military Affairs for University of Maryland Global Campus discussed data that they have been gathering on veterans and military students. The Committee discussed the persistence of military affiliated students and their success in on-line classes versus face-to-face instruction. It appears veterans and military students prefer residential learning or some hybrid online learning to just online. However, they do well in online environment where that is all that is available. (deployed individuals for instance)

On Wednesday, April 21, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division discussed with the Department of Veterans Affairs Committee the impact of COVID. Both Spillman and

Embry Riddle are going back full time in the fall and indeed have offered in residence to their campus enrolled students this past semester.

On Wednesday, April 21, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the George W. Bush National Task Force in Higher Education meeting. I gave a policy update to include pending legislation and recently passed legislation. The four work groups will be Policy work group (I chair), Professional Playbook work group, STEM workgroup and the Return-on-Investment Workgroup.

On Wednesday, April 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division spoke with VA's education service to discuss a revocation of GI Bill benefits for a veteran who contacted the Legion's DC office. The veteran was not issued a DD-214, but had active-duty orders declaring his 100% disability status.

On Wednesday, April 21, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Committee on Veterans' Affairs on H.R. 711 – "West Los Angeles VA Campus Improvement Act of 2021" (This legislation would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) West Los Angeles Medical Center campus to use revenues from leases and easements as a dedicated funding source to build additional housing for homeless veterans, offset the high costs of housing construction, and help fund the provision of supportive services for veterans in the community). and H.R. 2082 – "VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act" (To make certain improvements relating to the supply chain of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes). VA opposes legislations.

On Thursday, April 22, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a Conversation NAVPA President and Legislative Director on 85/15 controversy. VA still insists on counting students on payment plans as veterans. Will probably require Congressional intervention at some point.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division continued risk-based survey work and report on Risk-Based Survey Model (RBS) to Congressional staffers. Also, made final refinement of distance learning paper.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a discussion with Marketing Director, Dean Kessel regarding donation for veterans and children foundation.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the Veterans Education Project, a non-profit focused on parity between for-profit and non-profit schools. VE&E staff shared the Legion's latest research on military credentialing and discussed efforts to credential National Guard servicemembers.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division is discussing education priorities of Special Operations Association of America and of American Military University.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division is finalizing dates/recruiting speakers for Education Webinar and Skillbridge Credentialing webinar.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Marketing division team and Premier Virtual. Representatives from Premier Virtual made recommendations on how we could use job events for fundraising. One suggestion was to ask

companies for sponsorships so the money could be used to pay one-year memberships for those who registered. Premier Virtual may have other suggestions for additional fundraising opportunities.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with new administrator from SBA, Isabella Guzman to discuss the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), a \$28.6 billion grant program, to provide funding to help restaurants and other eligible businesses keep their doors open. This program will provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location. Recipients are not required to repay the funding as long as funds are used for eligible uses no later than March 11, 2023.

On Friday, April 23, the National Veterans Employment and Education Division is preparing for a second global virtual career fair on June 10th, 2021 with the Department of Texas Commission; its focus will be on women veterans. VA&R division has been invited to do a webinar on VA Healthcare for women prior to the job fair.

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



Hair salons and other service businesses are uncertain about when revenue will bounce back and so might delay hiring.

U.S. employers might have trouble hiring workers fast enough in coming months to keep up with the projected burst of economic growth.

Consumer [spending at restaurants, hotels and salons](#) is already starting to take off as the grip of [the Covid-19 pandemic](#) eases and more people get vaccinated and draw on their stimulus checks and savings.

But many economists expect economic activity to pick up faster than payrolls, at least initially, for several reasons, causing bottlenecks and wage pressures.

This happened last year for many manufacturers that experienced labor shortages as Americans working from home ordered more furniture, exercise equipment and other goods than before the pandemic. This year, it is likely to be the case particularly for providers of services requiring

proximity to people, since they saw the biggest drops in business and employment during the pandemic and are poised to see the biggest rebound in demand this year.

Economists surveyed by The Wall Street Journal project U.S. gross domestic product—the value of all goods and services produced—will grow 6.4% this year, measured from the fourth quarter of last year to the same period of this year. That would lift output to nearly 4% above its pre-pandemic level measured in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Meanwhile, the economists expect employers to add 7.1 million jobs in the 12 months ending in December 2021, a gain of 5%. That would leave employment 1.6% lower than in the fourth quarter of 2019.

Job growth will trail GDP for two key reasons, economists say. First, many companies will be reluctant to hire workers until they are convinced the pickup in consumer demand will endure. Second, millions of workers dropped out of the labor force during the pandemic and might take time to return.

Economists point to several forces behind employers' hesitancy to hire. For one, it's unclear when the pandemic will end. Though vaccination rates are rising, so too are the daily totals of Covid-19 cases in many parts of the country as variants of the virus spread and business restrictions ease

Further, many companies face uncertainties over whether they will see permanently weaker demand due to the pandemic's effects. For instance, business travel might never fully return to its previous levels. A long-lasting shift to remote work could dampen business at cafes and shops near offices.

"They're very happy to see this surge as everything reopens, but they still have tremendous uncertainty over what their revenue stream is going to look like," said Steven Blitz, chief U.S. economist at TS Lombard.

Even after an employer posts a job opening, the hiring process can take weeks or months. Meanwhile, the labor pool changed and shrank during the pandemic.

The share of Americans ages 25 to 54 who are holding or seeking jobs—called the prime-age labor-force participation rate—was 81.3% in March, down from 82.9% in February 2020, a loss of 1.9 million workers. Many of those people dropped out of the labor force to care for children while schools are closed. Others have stopped looking for work out of fear of contracting or spreading the coronavirus. The \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill enacted in March also sent new stimulus checks to many Americans and extended a \$300-a-week jobless-aid supplement, which could also be deterring some people from seeking work.

"It's just a lot of people who need to get back to work, and it's not going to happen overnight," Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said at a press conference last month.

The sharp fall in workforce participation shows no signs of quickly reversing. Even though job openings exceed pre-pandemic levels, Google Trends data show worker searches for jobs online declining. Daniel Zhao, senior economist at Glassdoor, said this recent drop "raises concerns that labor-force participation may not recover quickly even after the pandemic is over."

Long-term unemployment poses another hurdle. There were 4.2 million Americans in March facing jobless spells of at least 27 weeks, up from 1.1 million in February 2020.

“The longer people remain unemployed, the more those skills do start to atrophy and then it’s harder for them to get back into the labor force,” said Jay Bryson, chief economist at Wells Fargo’s Corporate and Investment Bank.

The result could be bottlenecks that discomfort consumers, at least temporarily, until labor demand and supply are brought into balance. For instance, lines at airport security checkpoints this summer could grow long as workers attempt to serve an influx of travelers. Salons might require hairdressers to log longer hours so they can serve the many customers who went a year without a haircut. Restaurants could raise wages to attract workers, and as a result, pass on the costs through higher menu prices.

“Over the next few months you could see really strong demand, and you could get some of these pressures...in terms of wages, etc.,” said Mr. Bryson. But he added, “our sense is it’s not like this is an upward spiral that’s going to last for years.”

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

TOPIC 5: EDUCATION

For decades, the Department of Defense has struggled to document the outcomes of our military’s high-quality training and education system for our service members in a transparent way. Service members have had no simple transcript that has adequately captured and validated their training and educational experiences.

The lack of such a transcript often limited the ability of military members to access their personal record of accomplishments, experience, and credentials — and to better plan for their military and post-military careers.

This is now finally changing, thanks to the game-changing development of a new online DoD platform called MilGears. This department-wide tool is expected to be fully released this summer, based on the input and collaborative support of all the services, as well as other key partners, working with the Office of the Secretary of Defense. A preliminary beta version is available at <https://milgears.osd.mil/>.

The MilGears tool was initially developed by the Navy Education and Training Command to assist sailors with obtaining personalized records and assessments of their military training and experience, including education and skills credentialing. The Navy’s proof of concept has been remarkably successful, demonstrating its ability to capture and support the service member’s entire military career lifecycle, and potentially beyond.

What makes MilGears so powerful?

MilGears, for the first time, aggregates a service member’s entire unique record of training and education accomplishments into a single, secure, centralized, and accessible location. It then provides an individualized assessment of recommended professional growth opportunities and future career pathways tailored to each service member based on their military education, training, credentialing, and experience.

Even after leaving the military, if veterans want to add further civilian accomplishments to their service record, they can include these accomplishments, as well.



Air Force Nonrated Technical Training

The U.S. Coast Guard command master chief, Edward Lewis, last month wrote in an article about the importance of MilGears that he was convinced that it will “revolutionize military HR

MilGears uses industry and open-data standards that are fully transparent and privacy-protected — making military data useful not just within DoD but beyond DoD.

The outcomes of our military’s high-quality education and training system can now get recognized within our nation’s private academic, professional, and industry sectors. Being able to include military outcomes from an accredited DoD college into this database, for instance, removes a key barrier for militarily trained personnel. MilGears allows transitioning service members the ability to easily share records with potential civilian employers and educational institutions — and to better compete in the civilian world.

Having these irrefutable outcomes identified and documented also greatly reduces the time and cost of service members receiving an education degree and non-degree skills credential for voluntary and required education and training.

There will be no need to take redundant courses to complete a certificate or degree; the information is now all there. That saves significant amounts of education benefit and time, translating into improved force readiness, faster promotion, and better retention and morale. MilGears — which will, of course, continue to be refined and built out over time — makes it possible for our service members to realize their full potential in the military and well beyond service.

[Reported by John Kamin]

TOPIC 6: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS



An airman with the New Jersey Air National Guard checks the blood pressure of a homeless veteran.

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 percent 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 percent 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.

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.

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.

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 7: SMALL BUSINESS

U.S. READIES SMALL-BUSINESS GRANTS AS P.P.P. NEARS END



On March 30, President Biden extended the Paycheck Protection Program deadline. Two new relief programs are expected to open within weeks.

New programs for restaurants and live-event businesses will soon start taking applications as the Paycheck Protection Program winds down.

The federal government is preparing to open two new industry-specific small-business relief programs, one of them months in the works, as its signature pandemic aid effort, the Paycheck Protection Program, nears its end.

The Small Business Administration said it hopes to start taking applications by the end of this week for a \$16 billion grant fund for live-event businesses like theaters and music clubs. The program, the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, was supposed to begin nearly two weeks ago, but its application system malfunctioned and collapsed, stymieing thousands of desperate businesses that have been waiting months for the promised aid.

On Saturday, the agency posted additional details on its forthcoming Restaurant Revitalization Fund, a \$28.6 billion support program for bars, restaurants and food trucks whose sales were devastated by the shutdowns that states imposed in response to the pandemic. The fund was created as part of last month's \$1.9 trillion economic support package. Within the next two weeks, it will begin a seven-day test intended to help the agency avoid the kind of technical fiasco that plagued the venue program.

The agency has not announced a specific start date for either grant program.

“Help is here,” Isabella Casillas Guzman, the agency’s administrator, said of the restaurant program. “We’re rolling out this program to make sure that these businesses can meet payroll, purchase supplies and get what they need in place to transition to today’s Covid-restricted marketplace.”

Both programs offer recipients grants of up to \$10 million to replace a portion of their lost sales. But both programs — which will distribute money on a first-come-first-served basis, subject to some priority rules — are expected to run out of money quickly. The money in the restaurant fund, in particular, falls far short of its needs, agency officials have acknowledged.

“Everyone should apply on Day 1,” Patrick Kelley, the head of the agency’s Office of Capital Access, told attendees at a webinar last week organized by the Independent Restaurant Coalition. Lawmakers projected at least \$120 billion in demand for the restaurant fund, Mr. Kelley said, but provided money for less than a quarter of that amount.

The law creating the restaurant fund required a 21-day exclusive period for businesses that are majority-owned by women, veterans or socially disadvantaged individuals. The S.B.A. said that group includes those who are Black and Hispanic, as well as Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans and South Asian Americans.

That period alone will almost certainly exhaust the restaurant fund. Applicants will be asked to self-certify their eligibility for the priority period, the Small Business Administration said.

Participants in the fund’s seven-day pilot period will be picked randomly from current Paycheck Protection Program borrowers who meet the priority period criteria, the agency said. They will help test the system but will not receive grant money until the application system opens publicly.

The S.B.A. has offered few details on the technical meltdown that demolished its application system for the live-events grant program. On the day it was supposed to open, frustrated applicants spent more than four hours reloading a broken site before the agency shut it down. No applications were accepted.

“After our vendors fixed the root cause of the initial tech issues, more in-depth risk analysis and stress tests identified other issues that impact application performance,” Andrea Roebker, an agency spokeswoman, said on Friday. “The vendors are quickly addressing and mitigating them and working tirelessly with our team so the application portal can reopen A.S.A.P. and we can deliver this critical aid.”

A spokeswoman for Salesforce.com, whose technology underpins the system, said the company “worked with S.B.A. to resolve initial technical issues, and we’re continuing our work together to enhance the site’s performance.”

The restaurant fund is run by a different part of the agency and uses a separate technology system than the shuttered venue program. After waiting nearly four months for that program to start, industry businesses can’t hold out much longer, said Audrey Fix Schaefer, a spokeswoman for National Independent Venue Association, a trade group.

“Landlords can’t last forever. Eviction notices are coming. People are saying, ‘We can’t do this anymore,’” she said.

The Paycheck Protection Program, created just weeks after the pandemic took hold, has made \$762 billion in forgivable loans to millions of businesses over the last year.

It is scheduled to end May 31, but it appears likely to exhaust its funding before that. As of the middle of last week, the program had \$44 billion left, an S.B.A. spokesman said.

[Reported by Edwin Cruz]

TOPIC 8: CAREER FAIRS

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](#)

Virtual Job Fair

May 20, 2021, 1pm - 5pm

VIRTUAL JOB FAIR-FOCUS ON SECURITY, LAW ENFORCEMENT, CYBERSECURITY

1-3pm: Reserved for candidates who have active security clearances

3-5pm: Open to all job seekers

Presented by [*JobZone*](#)

[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]

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Week Ending: 4/23/2021