

The Weekly Report

November 5th, 2021

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National Veterans Employment & Education Commission



VE&E'S LATEST ANNOUNCEMENT

The U.S. trade deficit widened in September to \$80.9 billion, a record, driven by climbing demand for capital goods like computers and electric equipment and industrial supplies that have been soaring in cost as global supply chains remain snarled.

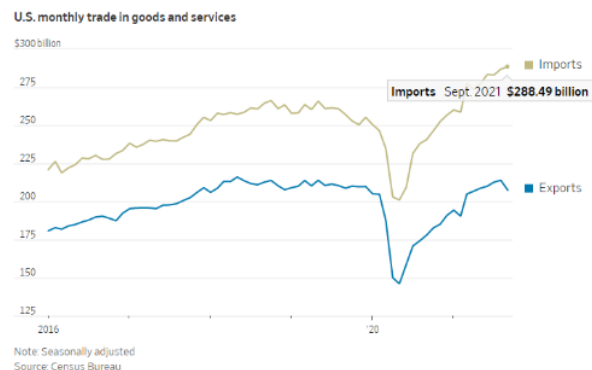
The deficit in trade of goods and services grew 11.2% in September, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The trade deficit has been trending wider throughout the economic recovery, but this was the sharpest monthly increase in the deficit since July of 2020. Imports rose by 0.6% to \$288.5 billion, also a monthly record.

The trade deficit is being driven wider by shifting patterns of demand for the raw materials and inputs for American factories and retailers, which are precisely where supply chains have been so clogged and where imported inflation has been running rampant.

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*Trade gap was also affected by a sharp
decline in U.S. exports*



ECONOMIC NEWS RELEASE

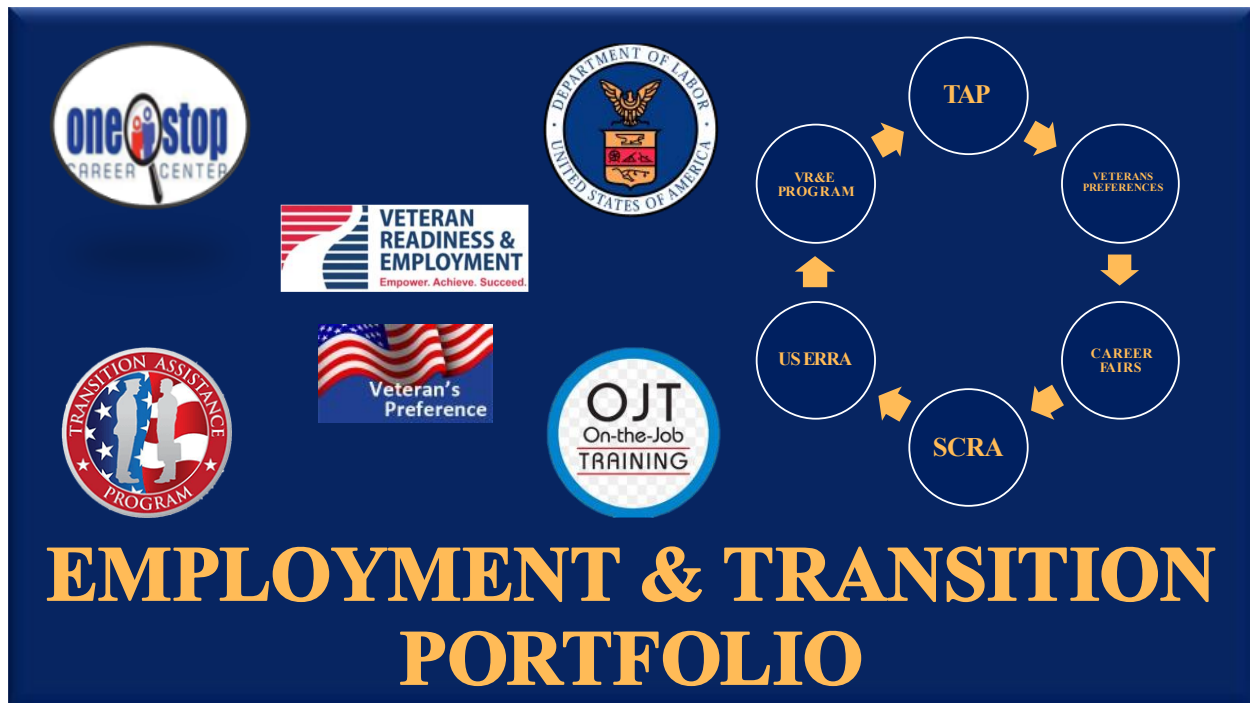
- The national unemployment rate is **4.6 percent** (October 2021)
- Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is **3.8 percent** (October 2021)
- Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is **5.5 percent** (October 2021)
- In September 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was **3.9%**. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was **4.8%** in September
- Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled **5,428** an increase of **225** from the preceding week

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	
	Oct. 2020	Oct. 2021	Oct. 2020	Oct. 2021	Oct. 2020	Oct. 2021
Unemployed	483	327	428	268	55	59
Unemployment rate	5.5	3.9	5.6	3.7	5.0	5.1



The Veterans Employment and Education Division (VE&E) *Employment & Transition Portfolio* actively participates in numerous outreach efforts for veterans seeking employment after military service. VE&E staff assist in career fairs throughout the country and works to protect the careers and benefits of Reservists and National Guardsmen during military deployments. VE&E team also lobbies aggressively for **veterans-preference** laws; conducts surveys, studies and recommends solutions on problems relating to **employment, unemployment, underemployment** and **workers' compensation** for all veterans. Additionally, VE&E staff administers several programs, conducts outreach, and testifies before Congress to ensure our servicemembers make seamless transitions from military to civilian life.

Staff Meetings on Employment Topics

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division listened in on a Senate hearing by the Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs¹ to consider three nominations, nineteen of the twenty-five legislative measures listed on the agenda, and two postal naming bills.²

Ernest W. Dubester and Susan T. Grundmann, were both nominated as members of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, while Kurt.T Rumsfeld was nominated to be General Counsel of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

S.2274: Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Expansion Act and **S.2483: Improving Cybersecurity of Small Organizations Act of 2021** were relevant bills listed in the agenda. Only S.2274 was considered among the nineteen legislative measures, which is unfortunate as it would have been informative to hear

¹ [Hearings | Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee \(senate.gov\)](#)

² [X:\WITNESS LISTS-117\2021-11-03-BUSINESS MEETING.wpd \(senate.gov\)](#)

more deliberation and consideration on S.2483 given The American Legion's interest through [Resolution No.12: Cybersecurity Protections for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses](#).³

The Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Expansion Act seeks to authorize through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) Director an apprenticeship program and a pilot program to provide cybersecurity training for veterans and transitioning servicemembers.⁴



Senator Langford expressed concern with the currently defined language of the bill regarding the shortage of qualified candidates, and asked to ammend the language to state “highly qualified candidates”. He reasoned that if there were a shortage of “highly qualified candidates”, then making use of the Direct Hiring Authority (DHA) to engage more expediently in recruiting individuals.

Chairman Peters disagreed with Senator Langford's ammendment, citing that adding the term “highly qualified” creates ambiguous language and creates a possibility for agencies to bypass the merit system. Additionally, Peters added that “partiicpants wh ocomplete apprenticeship authorized by the bill will be appointed to cybersecurit ypositions in the accepted service, which already involved a significant amount of flexibility compared to the competitive service.”



Senator Langford countered that since the public sector is competing against the private market, permitting agencies the ability to seek highly qualified individuals flexibly rather than being provided a selection by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would be advantageous.

The committee ultimately favored to report the bill favorably to the Senate without the aforementioned ammendment.

Prior to adjourning, Chairman Peters commented on S.3099: Federal Secure Improvement and Jobs Act of 2021, a bill neither deliberated in the meeting nor listed on the agenda, stating that it still needed work before it can be in a place to add to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works oversight hearing to examine programs at the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and review programs for reauthorization.

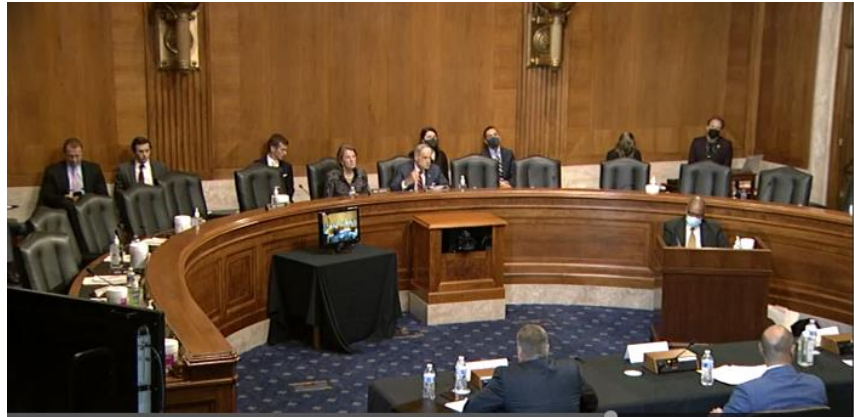
The meeting provided an opportunity to hear from Senators and EDA leadership on how the EDA programs have performed in the past and how the programs are evolving. The main theme of the hearing was reauthorization of the EDA. Last authorized in 2004, many of its policies and approaches are antiquated.

³ [2021F012.docx \(legion.org\)](#)

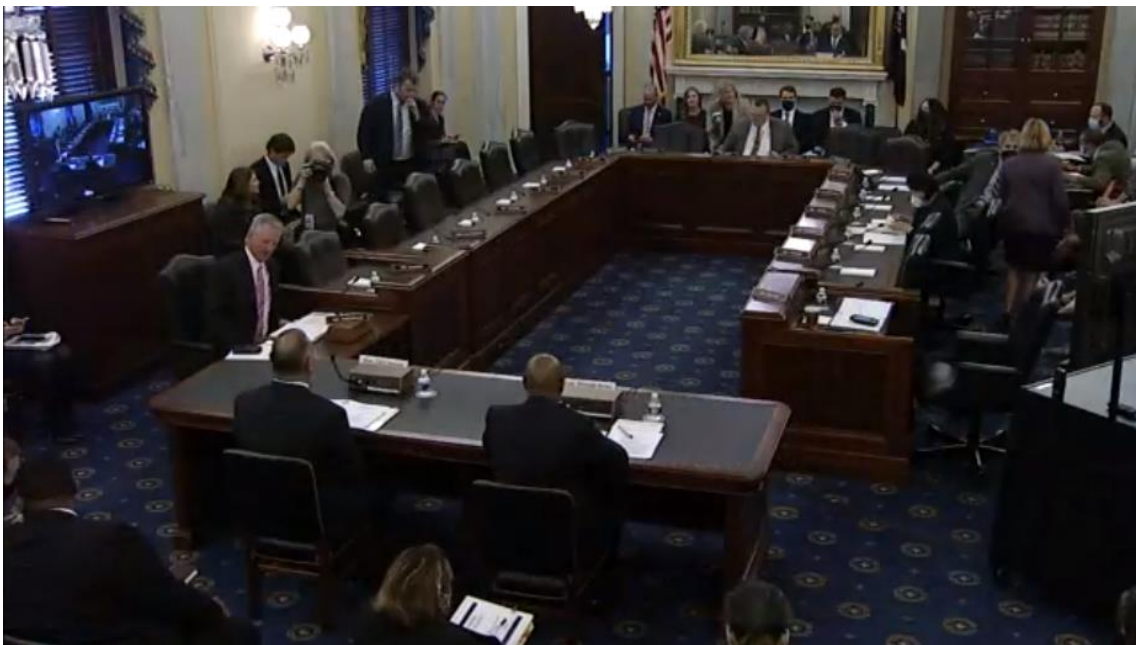
⁴ [Text - S.2274 - 117th Congress \(2021-2022\): Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Expansion Act | Congress.gov | Library of Congress](#)

Senator Thomas Carper, Chairman of the Committee, pointed out, “In the past 17 years, the economy has changed a great deal, but the EDA has not.”

The EDA is pivoting to a regional approach rather than the marco-level approach used in the past. Regional engagement enhances collaboration and community buy-in, thereby, ensuring that grants have meaningful and lasting impact. The EDA is focusing on not only adding new economic growth but preventing economic collapse and job losses in vulnerable areas. For example, by using the \$300 million in American Rescue Plan allocations in conjunction with its programs, the EDA has been able to assist communities that are or were reliant on coal to develop economic strategies; thereby diminishing the impact of shifting energy sources. Additionally, by working with regional organizations, the EDA can empower communities to develop their own economic plan by providing much needed capital and technical assistance. Lastly, the EDA intends to bolster Workforce Develop and Supply Chains by working with the Department of Energy and the Department of Labor, in order to foster systems and programs to help workers upskill, while working with employers in order to create supply chain infrastructure nodes, improve resilience, and strengthen global competitiveness.



The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a Senate hearing held by the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs (SVAC) on November 3. The purpose of the hearing was to determine how a collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) could improve Veteran and Servicemember outcomes.





Senate Committee Chairman Tester, during opening remarks, stressed the importance of the Joint Executive Committee Co-Chairs in leading interagency cooperation between the VA and DOD; listing “delivery of healthcare and benefits, military and civilian transition, and health data intractability” along with education and employment. as notable programs.

Senate Committee Ranking Member Moran noted that a fundamental problem continues to exist from DoD and military services in balancing military readiness and post military readiness into civilian transition. Ranking Member Moran stressed that “Supporting successful transition is a vital recruiting tool, and impacts nations ability to sustain an all voluntary force”.



The Honorable David Remy, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, began by discussing supply chain concerns. He stated that despite manufacturing disruptions expected to continue, and increased consumer demand, that the VA is ready to deal with those challenges. The VA intends to implement supply chain resilience by continuing to work closely with Executive Branch Entities, including the White House.

The Deputy Secretary focused on the VA’s collaboration with DOD. Not only did Remy underscore the VA’s strength with the DOD, but disclosed that both departments recently signed a strategic plan for FY2022 until FY 2027, doubling the planning cycle length compared to previous iterations. The plan establishes shared vision and 5 goals for servicemembers and veterans by:

1. Collaborating effectively and efficiently on delivered healthcare for more than 18 million veterans, servicemembers and beneficiaries.
2. Integrating benefits and services across joint business operations through a beneficiary-centric approach that eliminates gaps and discrepancies in benefits
3. Helping veterans build fulfilling civilian lives with education and jobs worthy of their skills and service
4. Enhancing transition and post separation experience with planning and programs to highest care benefits programs and job training. Post service placement in the right journey
5. Modernizing shared business operations that are efficient, cost-effective, and ensure better outcomes for veterans and servicemembers, while being a good steward of taxpayer dollars.

Remy concluded by also highlighting the importance of expanding public-private partnership networks. The Honorable Gilbert R. Cisneros, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness opened his remarks by assuring the committee that he will continue to champion the efforts of the Military The joint

strategic plan codifies the VA-DOD's roles and responsibility, permits "open and frequent dialogue, resolves conflict, leads change, guides joint actions, initiatives programs, and policies.

The Under Secretary focused on Military to Civilian Readiness (M2C Ready), which brings together "20 transitional programs, activities, and actions owned by multiple offices and agencies under an over achieving framework during a critical and officially designed transition period which extends from 365 days pre to 365 days post separation." Through this coordinated framework, standardized assessments and exams integrated programs, mental health touchpoints, and a new online single authoritative tailored statement of benefits all take part.

As of September, Cisneros continued, "there are 147 active healthcare resource sharing agreements and 35 active non medical agreements nationally. Agreements cover a wide range of support services operating and integrating programs like the VA-DOD Integrated Disability Evaluation System" (IDES). He concluded that the VA-DOD will "continue to improve performance in other areas such as payment reconciliation timeline to 30 days or less between the departments and also continue to advance joint IT architecture".

RELEVANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CAME FROM:

[Q:] Ranking Member Moran, who asked Remy how an other than honorable (OTH) discharge might impact VA services and benefits?

[A:] The Deputy Secretary responded that the VA looks at the circumstances case by case for discharges OTH, such as "mitigating or extenuating circumstances, third party evidence, performance and accomplishments during service, nature of infraction, and character of service in time of discharge". He added that individuals with such discharges are still able to receive certain benefits, especially mental health care.

[A:] Cisneros responded to Moran regarding the consistency among installations regarding senior leader engagement during the transition process. He acknowledged that it does differ from command to command, and strove to improve the TAP program further.

[Q:] Senator Hirono asked how VA feedback from DOD experience regarding electronic health records can aid in determining best practices?

[A:] Remy cited a DOD-VA interoperability group called the Federal Electronic Health Records Modernization (FEHRM), which enables the VA to tap into lessons learned from the DOD from prior deployments.



[A:] Senator Cassidy brought attention that there has been little progress in addressing the "peak" time for suicide risk after the first six months of servicemembers leaving the military. Cisneros responded that a new pilot program, The BWA Pilot Program, attempts to address the issue by starting the transition process sooner.

[A:] Senator Hassan addressed legislation she introduced to bolster the Solid Start Program. The Deputy Secretary of the VA commented on the effectiveness of the Solid Start Program in helping veterans understand benefits and resources available to them.



[Q:] Senator Boozman asked Cisneros if more could be done with the Skillbridge program to aid transitioning servicemembers and military spouses?



[A:] The Under Secretary commented on how the popular program has become more uniform.

[Q:] Senator Boozman asked what the VA and DOD were doing to facilitate data sharing with private sector entities?

[A:] Remy responded that data, information, and perspectives are shared between the VA and Veterans organizations to facilitate transition efforts.

[A:] Cisneros cited two new programs, the Electronic Health Record System and Benefits Delivery Discharge program, that would aid in smoother veteran transition by porting records directly to the VA.

[A:] Senator Blumenthal focused the discussion on the EHR system. The JEC co-chairs answered that total system implementation for the DOD will take place in 2023, with VA implementation following afterwards. Compared to previous interoperability efforts Cisneros explained that the current effort strives to adopt the exact same system despite being on different timelines.



[Q:] Senator Sinema asked Remy what the VA is doing to engage families of transitioning servicemembers?

[A:] Remy responded that due to the global health crisis, the TAP program has been provided through virtual environments.

[A:] Cisneros added that he will provide participation data of the past 18 months.

[Q:] Senator Sullivan asked about the Lovell Medical Center in Chicago, while not perfect, is the only DOD-VA joint hospital, and whether it can serve as a model for other places?

[A:] Remy responded that the VA is looking at where else the model can be expanded.

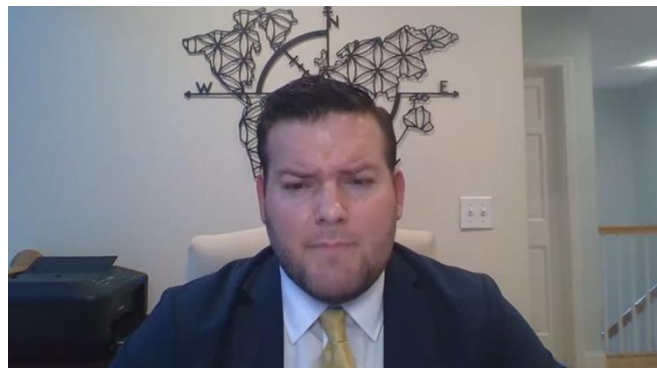


A SECOND PANEL OF WITNESSES TESTIFIED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE:



Nicholas J. Armstrong, Managing Director for Research and Data at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University stressed that TAP funding per capita was insufficient, citing in 2018 that only \$910 was spent per servicemember. He concluded that there should be a permanent and expanded DOD-VA interagency mechanism to promote collaboration, with policies spurring similar efforts among all federal agencies, in order to enhance local services and community engagement for transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

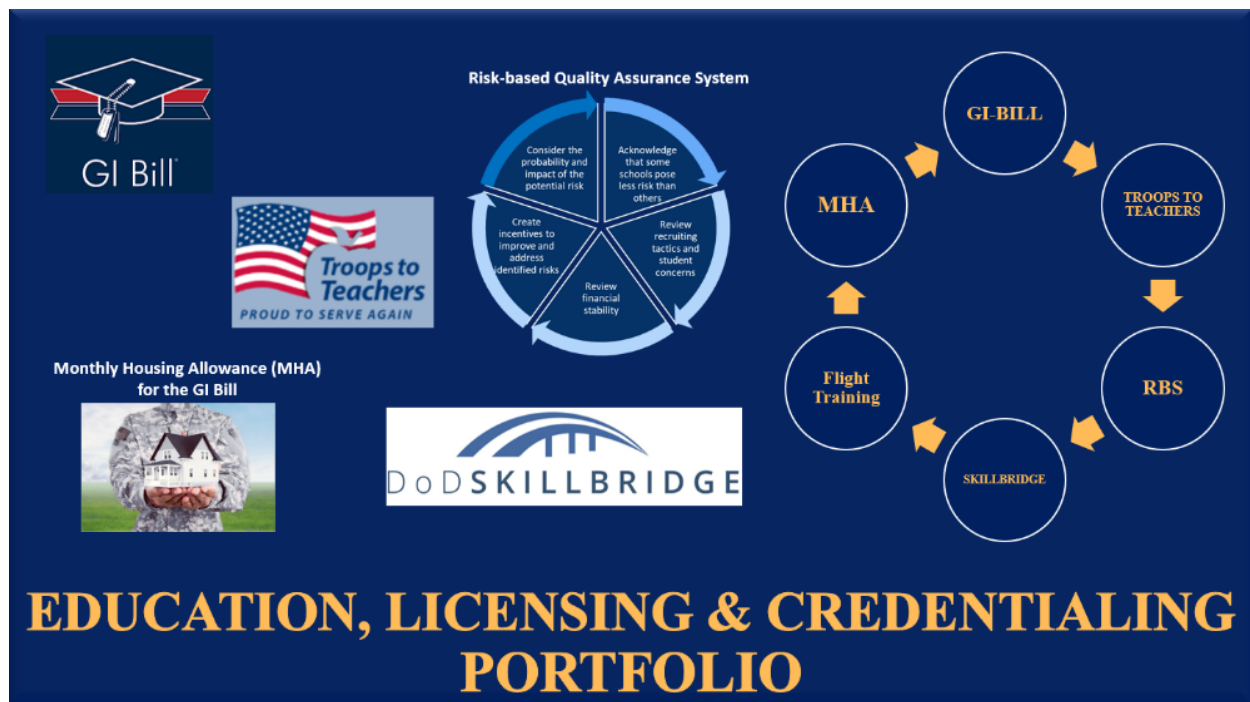
Mike Hutchings, Chief Executive Officer of Combined Arms stressed the importance of organizations such as his in filling VA program gaps. Combined arms partnered with VA programs to connect transitioning servicemembers and spouses to employment and training resources. Mr. Hutchings sought to take part in transition workshops and checklists to prevent gaps and increase servicemember engagement with community organizations prior to separation.



Thomas Winkel, Founder and Director for The Arizona Coalition for Military Families, called on all states to have a more robust partnership with the VA, military installations, the Veteran Services Department, and the greater community in order to establish more connected programs.

Mr. Winkel called on Congress to facilitate the DOD's capacity to engage with public-private partnerships by allowing the DOD to update joint ethics regulations.





The Veterans Employment and Education Division (VE&E) has maintained a strong connection to the GI-Bill since 1944 when Past National Commander Harry Colmery crafted it on stationery at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. Since then, the GI Bill – considered the most significant social legislation of the 20th century – has educated millions of Americans and gave birth to a half-century of economic prosperity. VE&E staff collaborate in breaking down credentialing barriers that affect veterans and the military community.

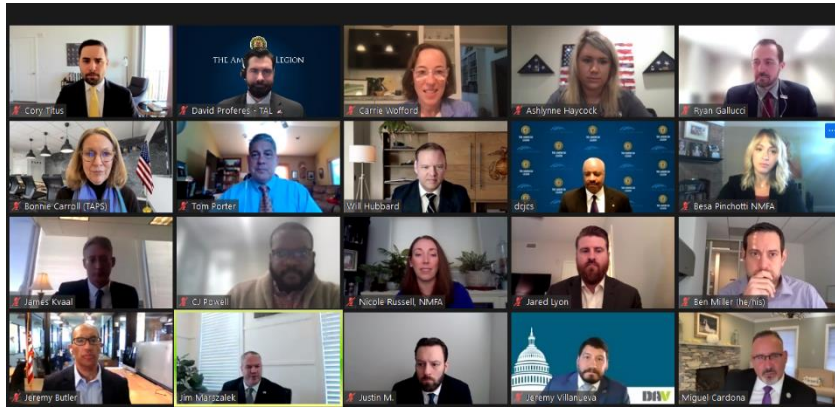
The *Education, Licensing & Credentialing Portfolio* ensures that veterans' educational benefits provided by the United States government are sufficient to pay all of the cost of a college education at state-supported colleges, all of the costs of trade school education, and a substantial portion of education provided by privately-owned colleges. VE&E staff provides assistance for veterans and also lobbies Congress and works with the VA to strengthen the benefits.

Staff Meetings on Education Topics

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the U.S. Secretary of Education to discuss various topics related to veterans and their families in higher education. Specifically, VE&E staff addressed veterans' education oversight and the ongoing Higher Education Negotiated Rulemaking 2021-2022 on the 90/10 rule.

As one of the original architects of the first GI Bill, The American Legion has a vested interest in its legacy. The GI Bill has been lauded as one of the most salient determinants of socioeconomic mobility in 20th

century. Regrettably, certain exploitative schools and training institutions have targeted servicemembers, veterans, and their families for their generous educational entitlements.



The 90/10 rule was established as an oversight mechanism to ensure for-profit schools provide quality educations to their students. Some for-profit schools have been abusing the rule by counting VA and DoD education benefits as private funds. After more than a decade of advocacy by The American Legion on this issue, Congress closed the 90/10 Loophole with the signing of the American Rescue Plan Act of

2021. The American Legion supports the closing of the 90/10 Loophole not only in legislative intent but also in regulation through [Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes by Closing 90-10 Loophole](#). VE&E staff remain engaged with the Department of Education to ensure that future regulation prevents exploitation of veterans while still promoting gainful employment.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with staff from the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) to discuss ongoing and future legislation and hearings. One of the most pressing concerns is the imminent expiration of covid protection measures for student veterans.

Many higher education classes remain online due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. At the initial onset of the pandemic, most classes adapted to online learning formats, which left student veterans at risk of financial instability from decreased monthly housing allowances (MHA). Congress passed legislation to set MHA at the full residential rate regardless of the class format. This measure is set to expire in December of this year. Both the majority and minority have introduced legislation that would extend that looming deadline to June 2022. Unfortunately, the legislation has been stalled because of contention on how the measure would be funded. The legislation is expected to go to the floor in the next couple weeks.



American legion supports protecting student veterans from unnecessary financial burdens, thereby, allowing them to continue their education using VA educational entitlements through [Resolution No. 318: Ensuring the Quality of Servicemember and Veteran Student's Education at Institutions of Higher Education](#).

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with congressman Ro Khanna's staff about the draft bill to provide tech/vocational training for certification and licensing online for veterans in Rural areas. Bill would allow veterans in these areas to take online education that they at present can not do. Real training resulting in real jobs!

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division had a conversation with senior VA officials on the NASAA Risk Based Survey (RBS) model and how that new model will change the face of GI Bill approved facility oversight well into the next decade. Also met with the RBS Pilot State Approving Agencies (SAAs) to discuss latest developments and the potential of expanding the model to other states. RBS survey must be ready to go out by October 2022 as mandated by statute. VE&E staff also met with the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) on the RBS project.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division Conversations with National Association of Veterans Program Administrators (NAVPA) on challenges facing schools with Isakson Roe requirements and path forward on 85/15 regulation. Also, met with Four Corners (HVAC and SVAC) on pending legislation and work on a package for Veterans Day; Expect that the COVID 19 protections Act will go to the floor sometime middle of November.



The Veterans Employment and Education Division (VE&E) *Homelessness & Housing Portfolio* places a priority on the issue of veteran homelessness. With veterans making up approximately 11% of our nation's total adult homeless population, there are plenty of reasons to pay close attention this particular issue. To help our struggling brothers-and-sisters-in-arms, VE&E staff works on a global level, lobbying for legislation affecting veteran homelessness, and acts on a local level, directly assisting veterans who have fallen on tough times and are without a place to live or are on the verge of homelessness.

**Staff Meetings on
Homelessness Topics**

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a town hall meeting for the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs, Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, West Los Angeles Campus Master Plan 2022. The plan lays the path for the development of 388+ acres of land donated to the United States in 1887 for the purpose of housing disabled veterans. Unfortunately, over time portions of the land were repurposed for non-veteran focused commercial uses due to lack of use, investment, and upkeep resulting in a shift from the intended purpose of the land.⁵ Over the years, this issue has drawn a great amount of media attention, especially being that homeless veterans are living in tents within the vicinity of the VA hospital campus.

During the meeting, VA representatives provided a background and overview of the draft plan which contained the following:

1. Master Plan 2022 Effort
 - Progress to Date
 - How to Leave Feedback and About Federal Register Notice
2. Master Plan 2022 Draft Introduction – Overview of Sections
3. Next Steps and Discussion
 - Engagement Activities Schedule
 - Navigating Federal Register and Finding Materials
 - Questions and Answers

MASTER PLAN 2022 EFFORT

Progress to Date

- Established Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board (VCOEB)⁶
- Selected Principal Developer who is tasked to develop community plan of at least 900 additional units of supportive housing on North portion of the campus
- Implemented Land Use Reforms to its land use management practices to ensure a veteran-centric focus
- Implemented Homeless Veterans Service Platform – Contract Emergency Residential Services (CERS)⁷

⁵ U.S Department of Veterans' Affairs, Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, West Los Angeles Campus. (October 13, 2021) Master Plan 2022 (Draft). Page 3

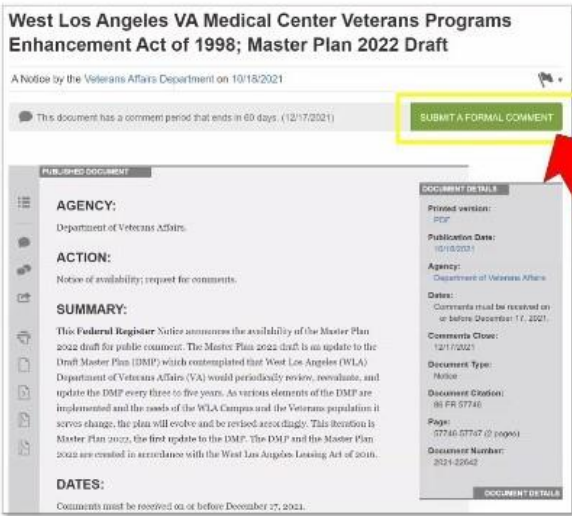
⁶ Federal Register. (November 16, 2017). "*Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board.*" Purpose: "The Board is a statutory board established by the West Los Angeles Leasing Act of 2016 on September 29, 2016. The purpose of the Board is to provide advice and make recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on: Identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnership; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, members of the Armed Forces, and the families of such Veterans and members; and on the implementation of the Draft Master Plan approved by the Secretary on January 28, 2016, and on the creation and implementation of any successor master plans."

⁷ Department of VA.VHA Homeless Program Office Fact Sheet. "*VHA Health Care for Homeless Veterans.*" Contract Emergency Residential Services (CERS) programs target and prioritize homeless Veterans transitioning from literal street homelessness, Veterans being discharged from institutions, including those in need of medical respite, and Veterans who recently became homeless and require safe and stable living arrangements while they seek permanent housing. Lengths of stay in CRS typically range from 30 to 90 days with the option to extend based on clinical need.

How to Leave Feedback and About Federal Register

- 60-Day Window for Public Comment: October 18, 2021 to December 17, 2021
- Go to www.FederalRegister.gov and search for 2021-22642
- [West Los Angeles VA Medical Center Veterans Programs Enhancement Act of 1998; Master Plan 2022 Draft](#)

About Federal Register Notice



- Review Federal Register Notice document with included instructions on...
 - Where to locate Master Plan 2022 Draft document for review
 - How to leave comment on Regulations.gov website
- Submit comments directly by clicking on **"SUBMIT A FORMAL COMMENT"** button


60-Day Window for Public
10/18/2021 – 12/17/2021

Master Plan 2022 Draft Briefing

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

How to Leave Feedback

Current Method to Provide Feedback is through the Federal Register notice or via Regulations.gov website.



- Step 1.)** Visit www.FederalRegister.gov
- Step 2.)** Type **"2021-22642"** in the search box
- Step 3.)** Click **Q** Button to Enter
- Step 4.)** Click on first choice to open Federal Register Notice

Master Plan 2022 Draft notice is document **2021-22642**

Master Plan 2022 Draft Briefing

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

MASTER PLAN 2022 DRAFT INTRODUCTION

Section 1 – Introduction to the Plan

Master Plan Goals and Vision

- **Ensure Transparency and Accountability** in land use and other decisions by engaging veterans
- Ensure all on-site programs, activities, resources, and initiatives **prioritize the needs and wants of veterans**
- Develop a **variety of high-quality supportive housing** that is tailored to the needs of vulnerable veteran populations
- **Interconnect campus operations in real-time with available off-site resources** including VA facilities, state, county, city, neighborhood systems, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and non-profit organizations

Section 2 – Veteran Housing and Support Services

- Assesses the current and projected needs for veteran housing, addressing homelessness and other at-risk veterans and their families
- Includes the need for permanent supportive housing, as well as plans to address co-locating supportive housing with healthcare services at the West LA Campus

Section 3 – Stakeholder Engagement

Enhanced-Use Leases (EUL)

- Public hearing held on July 23, 2020 on proposed EUL with the principal developer (PD) and plan for a minimum of 900 units of supportive housing

Initial and Ongoing Outreach

- Held informational listening sessions about the Draft Community Plan with veterans' groups, VSOs, and local, state, and federal representatives
- Elicited feedback from stakeholder groups and individuals both in-person and on-line

Section 4 – Existing Conditions and Site Analysis

Site Analysis

- This section provided an overview of the existing conditions of the campus and highlighted key assets, opportunities, and constraints
- Analysis Areas: Site context, historical elements, environmental considerations, open space elements, land use agreements, and utilities and infrastructure

Key Opportunities

- Preserve historic structures as building blocks for a new community
- Subway station to provide new regional access

Key Constraints

- Historical medical waste disposal areas

- CalVet property divides the campus
- Campus divided by steep bluffs and arroyo

Section 5 – Master Plan

Land Use Concept

- The West Los Angeles Veterans Collective was engaged to develop a community plan that fulfills a commitment of 1,200 units of permanent supportive housing

Features of the plan include

- Exchange or veteran operated retail store
- Recreation and therapy center
- RV Park
- Wellness center
- Job training
- Critical care center
- Ambulatory care center

Other Plan Components

- Proposed bicycle network with connections to regional network
- Potential bike and pedestrian bridge across Wilshire Blvd
- Shared-use trails

Section 6 – Phasing Implementation and Next Steps

Initial Phase (1 – 5 Years)

- A new metro station, dietetics building, and EUL housing is currently under construction
- Other projects include additional EUL housing units, new VA Police Headquarters, and a chapel

Interim Phase (6 – 10 Years)

- Includes the balance of permanent supportive housing to reach a minimum of 1,200 units
- Hoover Barracks converted into a living museum for veterans
- Agricultural Harvest and Job Training area

Long Term Phase (11+ Years)

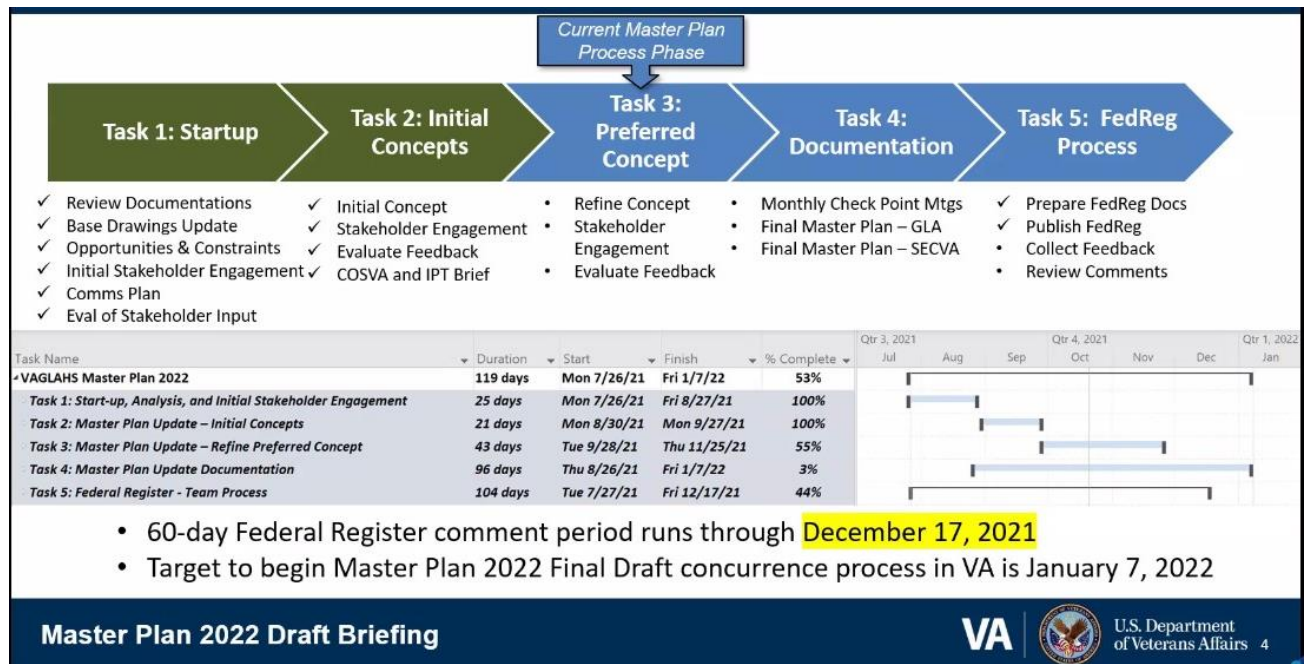


- Projects include permanent supportive housing above the 1,200 units constructed in the previous two phases
- Exchange Store on the oil and gas lease property
- Repurposing an existing structure as an information center

NEXT STEPS AND DISCUSSION

Next Steps

- Master Plan Forum: Presentation with question-and-answer sessions available from **November 15 – 19, 2021 and November 29 - December 3, 2021**
- Fifth Master Plan Town Hall Engagement: **November 18, 2021**
- Federal Register Public Comments due **December 17, 2021**
- Master Plan 2022 Final Draft Target to begin VA Concurrence Process to the Secretary of VA: **January 7, 2022**



American Legion [Resolution No. 141: Department of Veterans' Affairs Enhanced-Use Leasing \(EUL\)](#). Whereas the Enhanced-Use Leasing (EUL) activity must either: “(i) contribute to the mission of VA; be consistent with, and not adversely affect VA’s mission; enhance the use(s) of the property to be leased; and be in exchange for fair consideration to VA as determined by the Secretary; or (ii) result in a demonstrable improvement in services to eligible veterans in the geographic service-delivery area in which the property is located, The American Legion supports a publicly transparent Enhanced Use Lease process in consultation with veteran service organizations and stakeholders. Additionally, we oppose any EUL that does not specifically provide any obvious and permanent benefits, resources, or services to the veterans’ community.

American Legion [Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program.](#) Whereas SSVF funds are granted to private nonprofit organizations and consumer cooperatives that assist very low-income veteran families by providing a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability and a vast majority of VA's homeless programs are necessarily geared toward rehabilitation, The American Legion recommend Congress to adequately fund the SSVF program, which helps help at-risk veterans avoid becoming homeless, and rapidly re-house those veteran families who lose their housing.



The Veterans Employment and Education Division (VE&E) *Small Business Development Portfolio* recognizes the benefits of veteran entrepreneurship for veterans and transitioning servicemembers seeking to start their own businesses. The American Legion also understands that giving veterans the resources they need to start businesses will hasten the nation's economic recovery.

Compared to their civilian counterparts, veterans are more successful in starting and growing small businesses. Through entrepreneurship, veterans have a unique opportunity to establish themselves as job-creators and business leaders in their community. Small business is the fuel of the US economic engine, generating 70 percent of the new jobs added to the economy annually. Veteran entrepreneurship is unfortunately at a 40-year low, now is the time to support veteran small businesses to stimulate the economy and ensure America remains a global economic powerhouse.

**Staff Meetings on
Small Business Topics**

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a virtual hearing of the House Small Business Committee Meeting titled “Entrepreneurship in the New Economy”. The hearing focused on the issues and challenges facing entrepreneurs in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic. The hearing included testimony from the following individuals:

- Ms. Ellie Diop, Chief Executive Officer, Eliza Revella Consulting Services, Los Angeles, CA
- Mr. Andrew Fogarty, Executive Director, 36Squared Business Incubator, Chicago, IL
- Ms. Stephanie E. DeVane, Vice President of Entrepreneurship & Business Development, National Urban League, New York, NY
- Mr. Raymond Keating, Chief Economist, Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council (SBE Council), Vienna, VA

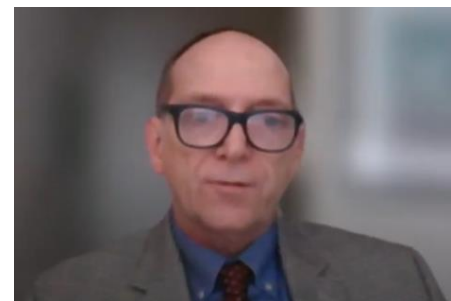


Testimony from Ellie Diop: “I am a testament to the fact that Digital entrepreneurship has created unprecedented access to customers across the world. It is providing access for people to start businesses and actually become first generation millionaires, build wealth for their families and more. At this moment, the barrier to entry for entrepreneurship is low and everyone has a chance to succeed.

Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok and YouTube give all of us the platform to share content, information and products directly to our intended audience. This can happen without paid advertising or media connections - purely through a decision to start, market research and consistent content creation.

I hope that my story shows other Americans that you don’t need a perfect start in order to start your business and begin your entrepreneurship journey. Use what funds you have available to gather the necessities and the rest you can make happen through the tools we all have available to us through social media. You just need dedication, decisiveness, consistency, and faith.”

Testimony from Andrew Fogarty “Access to capital for small businesses, and especially startups, remains a challenge. In fact, if a business needs a small loan of 10 or 20 thousand dollars, I’m only aware of one bank in Chicago, CIBC, that actively markets programs to meet that need. There are, of course, also some nonprofit lender options. However, these are typically at a higher interest rate and less desirable than a bank loan.



I would like to see more banks offering micro lending and startup funding and I would like to see the reporting process for lenders streamlined to make small business lending more attractive. It is my understanding that there is new legislation to significantly increase reporting requirements on all small business loan applications. I am concerned that this may negatively impact my clients. Access to capital is key to supporting entrepreneurship in the new economy.”

Next, I’d like to address computer literacy. The digital divide is real. Today computer literacy, and basic business training, are as key to a entrepreneurs’ success as being able to read and write was 20 years ago. We need to do better with this by making basic computer skills training and business assistance programs widely available across the country. In fact, when CARES act funding ends next fall, many small business development programs, across the country will see a decrease in capacity. This is a concern.

Finally, I'd like to discuss the underserved population. Here on Chicago's southside we have a diverse and vibrant small business community, including a significant number of immigrant business owners who hold ITIN's instead of social security numbers. Currently these business owners are shut out of most SBA lending programs. I certainly don't presume to jump into the immigration debate. However, if a business seeks to expand, buy equipment, a building or create jobs, I would like to be able to present the same options to all my clients."



Testimony from Stephanie DeVane: "Black-owned small businesses continue to experience a slower path to returning to their pre-pandemic employment levels and face a more uncertain recovery path relative to their peers. In June 2021, McKinsey & Company reported that Black-owned businesses are 20% less likely to get a loan than businesses with white owners, and these businesses often lack access to a supportive network due to implicit bias and the legacy of racism. A September 2021 Federal Reserve study found that that 51% of Black-owned businesses have less than three months of cash reserves in case of an emergency or another COVID

shutdown – a figure nearly 7% greater than their peers.

Some minority-owned businesses have benefitted from the temporary surge in investments by the private sector and government, but this is not enough to ensure that Black entrepreneurs benefit equitably from the Nation's economic recovery and to sustain their growth well-beyond the pandemic. We urge Congress to enact civil rights protections that reduce longstanding racial disparities in access to capital, mentorship, and technical training to ensure a full economic return for minority-owned business."

Testimony from Raymond J. Keating:

Mr. Keating's testimony provides numerous recommendations for policymakers to address current economic challenges and expand opportunities for small businesses. His "Pro-Entrepreneur Policy Framework" includes:

- Avoid tax increases and provide tax relief
- Emphasize regulatory relief, not imposing additional regulatory burdens
- Advance free trade
- Immigration benefits the economy



The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a meeting with the office of Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) on Friday, November 5th to discuss the Legion's legislative priorities pertaining to small business and government contracting. Relevant issues included:

- **[Resolution No. 150: Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Entrepreneurship](#)** Legion staff requested the Senator's introduction and support for a Senate counterpart to H.R. 4433 The Veterans Entrepreneurship Act, which would support a pilot program for allowing veterans to utilize G.I. Bill Funding for entrepreneurial endeavors.
- **[Resolution No. 12: Cybersecurity Protections for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Origin: Veterans Employment & Education Commission](#)** The Legion advocated for the Senator's continued support for cybersecurity initiatives that support small and at-risk businesses.

- **Resolution No. 13: Mandatory Use of the Veterans First Contracting Program by the Department of Defense** The Legion expressed the need for the expansion of VETs First to the Department of Defense and other agencies, and expressed concern with efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs to move away from the VETs First Program.
- The Legion expressed concern with a failure for USAID to meet its annual 3% SDVOSB prime and subcontracting goals, advocating for greater efforts to increase the number of SDVOSBs within USAID's supplier base. The total value of USAID's SDVOSB contracts is \$185M, but current obligations are at \$71M, which is well below the 3% target. The American Legion seeks to work with agencies and lawmakers to ensure that agencies meet their SDVOSB contracting goals.



LEGISLATION TRACKING

EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIO

H.R. 5676 - PREP Act: This bill establishes, within the Bureau of Prisons, an Office of Prison Education. The office must provide educational services to incarcerated individuals, including veterans, in federal prisons and correctional institutions. It would also require the office to inform eligible incarcerated veterans of their earned VA educational benefits.

Status: Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

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

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

S.2483- Improving Cybersecurity of Small Organizations Act of 2021: To require the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to establish cybersecurity guidance for small organizations, and for other purposes.

Status: 07/27/21 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

[Resolution No. 12: Cybersecurity Protections for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses](#)

S.2274 - Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Expansion Act: To authorize the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to establish an apprenticeship program and to establish a pilot program on cybersecurity training for veterans and members of the Armed Forces transitioning to civilian life, and for other purposes.

Status: 06/24/2021 – Read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

[Resolution No. 25: Support and Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities for Servicemembers](#)

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

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.

Action Taken: This bill was submitted for testimony, Letter of Support submitted 4/21/2021

Status: 6/23/2021 - Became Public Law No: 117-18

What's Next:

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

H.R.4433 - Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2021- This bill would amend the Small Business Act to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to carry out a pilot program on issuing grants to eligible veterans to start or acquire qualifying businesses, and for other purposes. This bill would provide the opportunity for veterans to utilize their GI Bill benefits to start and finance their small businesses.

Support: 08/03/2021 – Supported by the National Commander in a Letter of Support

Status: 07/16/2021 Referred to the House Committee on Small Business

What's Next: Committee Vote

[Resolution No. 150: Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Entrepreneurship](#)

H.R.5354 - Veterans Jobs Opportunity Act: This bill would establish a small startup tax credit for veterans, military spouses, army reservists and national guard members seeking to start small businesses.

Status: 9/27/2021 – Introduced in the House Committee on Ways and Means

[Resolution No. 14: Enhancing the Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\) for Veteran Workers](#)

S. 2812 - Veterans Jobs Opportunity Act: This bill would establish a small startup tax credit for veterans, military spouses, army reservists and national guard members seeking to start small businesses.

Status: 9/27/2021 – Referred to the Senate Committee on Finance

[Resolution No. 14: Enhancing the Work Opportunity Tax Credit \(WOTC\) for Veteran Workers](#)

H.R.3469 - Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2021: This bill provides statutory authority for the Boots to Business Program, which provides entrepreneurship training to individuals including veterans and active members of the Armed Forces, to be administered by the Small Business Administration.

Status: 11/03/2021 – Passed in the House of Representatives

[Resolution No. 222: Reaffirm Support of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development](#)

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