

Economic Nuggets

February 11, 2022

The latest news, views, and announcements

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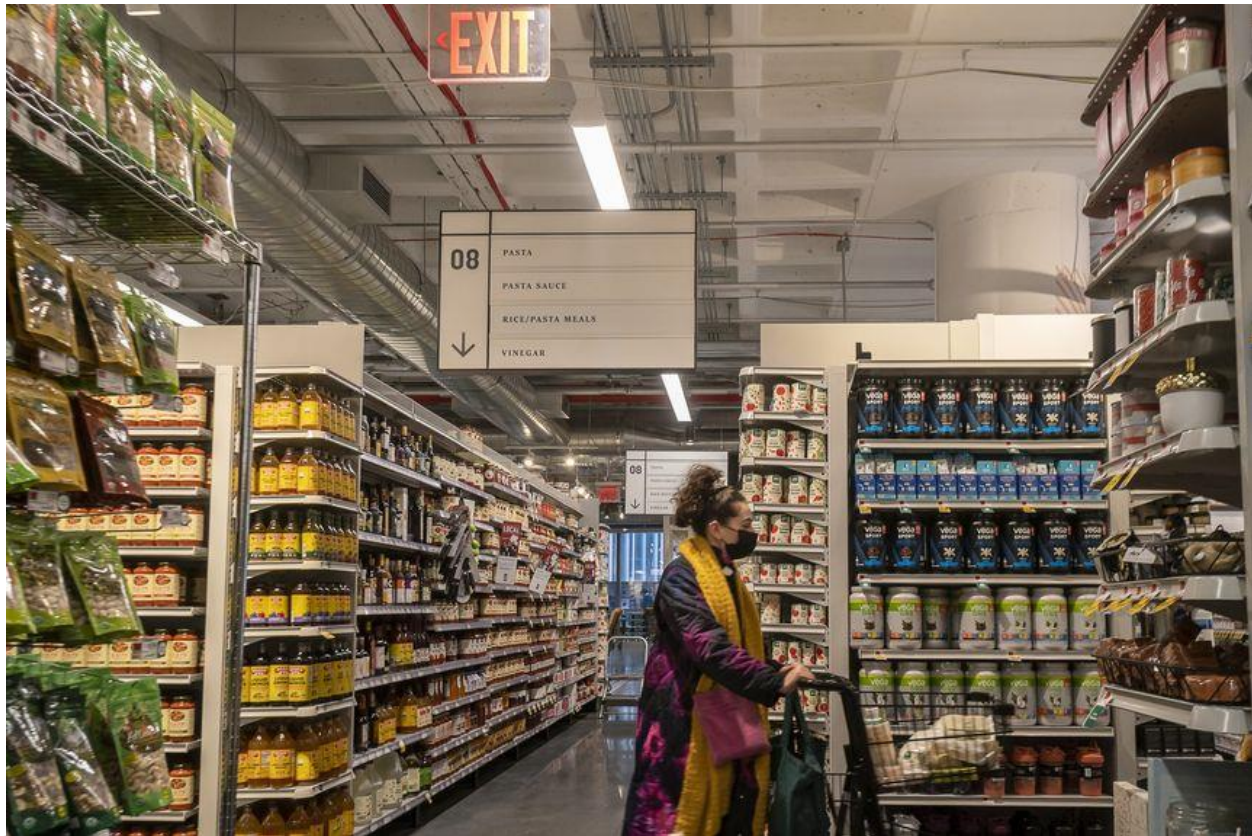
VE&E'S LATEST ANNOUNCEMENT



The National Veterans Employment & Education Division staff attended the 2022 National Association of State Approving Agencies Conference from February 4th – 9th, 2022.

Director Joseph Sharpe participated in a panel to discuss major Key Points:

- Roe and Isakson
- Setting parameters for RBS
- Extension of COVID 29 protections allowing NCDs to be taken online
- Guard and Reserve Parity Act
- 85/15 regulations need a complete reworking with schools (NAVPA) and SAAs (NASAA) at the table Adoption of the NASAA Risk Based Survey Model



ECONOMY

*Prices Were Up Sharply For A Number Of Everyday Household Items In January, Including Food, Vehicles, Shelter And Electricity.
(Photo: Richard B. Levine/Zuma Press)*

U.S. INFLATION RATE ACCELERATES TO A 40-YEAR HIGH OF 7.5%

Strong consumer demand and pandemic-related supply constraints continued to push up prices in January

A relentless surge in U.S. inflation reached another four-decade high last month, accelerating to a 7.5% annual rate as strong consumer demand collided with pandemic-related supply disruptions.

The Labor Department on Thursday said the consumer-price index—which measures what consumers pay for goods and services—in January reached its highest level since February 1982, when compared with the same month a year ago. That put inflation above December's 7% annual rate and well above the 1.8% annual rate for inflation in 2019 ahead of the pandemic.

The so-called core price index, which excludes the often volatile categories of food and energy, climbed 6% in January from a year earlier. That was a sharper rise than December's 5.5% increase and the highest rate in nearly 40 years.

Prices were up sharply in January for a number of everyday household items, including food, vehicles, shelter and electricity. A sharp uptick in housing rental prices—one of the biggest monthly costs for households—contributed to last month's increase.

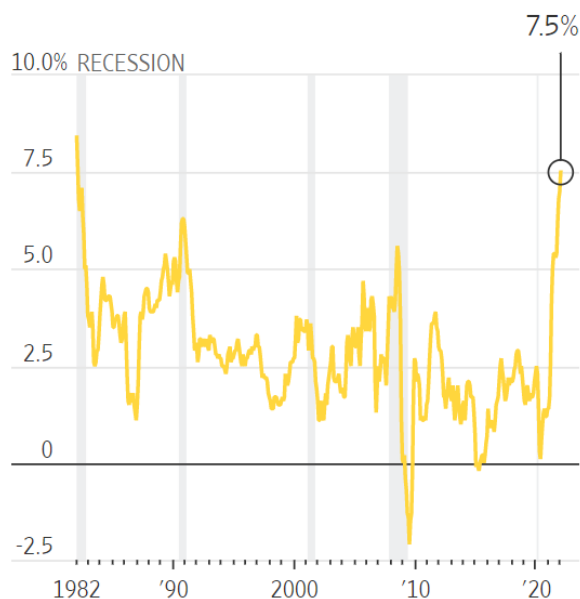
High inflation is the dark side of the unusually strong economy that has been powered in part by government stimulus to counter the pandemic's impact. January's continued acceleration increased the likelihood that Federal Reserve officials could speed up a series of interest-rate increases this spring to ease surging prices and cool the economy.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note hit 2% for the first time since mid-2019 on the prospect of tighter monetary policy, while stocks slipped.

Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. financial economist at Oxford Economics, said what started as pandemic-specific inflation has now “broadened out across many, many categories both on the goods side of the economy and on the services side.”

“It reflects supply constraints both in the goods market and the labor market but it also is a function of still strong demand, particularly from U.S. consumers,” she added.

Consumer-price index, change from a year earlier



Source: Labor Department

On a monthly basis, the CPI increased a seasonally adjusted 0.6% last month, holding steady at the same pace as in December.

Used-car prices continued to drive overall inflation, rising 40.5% in January from a year ago. However, prices for used cars moderated on a month-to-month basis, a possible sign that a major source of inflationary pressure over the past year could be easing.

Food prices surged 7%, the sharpest rise since 1981. Restaurant prices rose by the most since the early 1980s, pushed up by an 8% jump in fast-food prices from a year earlier. Grocery prices

increased 7.4%, as meat and egg prices continued to climb at double-digit rates.

Energy prices rose 27%, easing from November’s peak of 33.3%, but a jump in electricity costs was particularly sharp when compared with historical trends.

Higher prices are putting pressure on consumers, with inflation adding as much as \$250 a month to living expenses, and businesses, which are scrambling to keep up with rising materials and labor costs.

Alex Mishkit launched her salon, Alex Cher Beauty, a year ago. Since then, she has increased prices to keep up with the rising costs of key supplies. First it was the nitrile gloves, which leapt as much as 30%. Then the price of waxing sticks shot up, followed by the price of wax itself, which rose around 15%.

“To a small-business owner going on her second year, it adds up. So I’m hyper-aware of the slightest increase because every dollar counts,” she said. With overall supply costs running between 10% and 15% more than they were when she opened her doors, Ms. Mishkit in December nervously announced a price increase of around 10%. To her surprise, she said, customers were supportive.

“I was definitely taken aback by the positive responses I received from clients,” she said, adding that it made sense given how consumers’ expectations have changed over the past year. “I mean, just turn on the news and it’s all about inflation. So I don’t think there’s a shock when there’s a slight price increase.”

The January number includes a once-a-year revision that affects seasonally adjusted data for the past five years. The Labor Department also updated the list of goods included in the calculation, known as a spending basket, to reflect consumer habits in 2019 and 2020.

Prices for autos, household furniture and appliances, as well as for other long-lasting goods, continue to drive much of the inflationary surge, fueled by pandemic-related

supply-and-demand imbalances. Most economists expect the dynamic to fade as businesses adapt and demand normalizes. But it isn't clear when supply snarls will ease enough to take pressure off prices, particularly because of recent disruptions from the Omicron variant of Covid-19.

Fed officials also think the surge in inflation will ease later this year, but the sustained nature of price increases has prompted it to consider raising rates more quickly than previously planned.

"Inflation is at a new 40-year high and it isn't just the rate that should be worrying the Federal Reserve, but also the breadth of corporate pricing power," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING. "With wages, commodity prices and supply-chain strains all contributing, the Fed will need to respond aggressively."

He added that the Fed could raise interest rates by half a percentage point at its March policy meeting, increasing them from the level of nearly zero set early in the pandemic.

The economy expanded 5.5% last year, the fastest pace since 1984. That brisk growth is powered by a strong labor market. Employers added 1.6 million jobs over the past three months, putting upward pressure on wages. With inflation well above the Fed's target, the steady gains in hiring leave the Fed on track to raise interest rates next month and could prompt further increases in May and June.

Mounting wage pressures related to the nation's tight job market also could start feeding into inflation. Annual wage growth was running at 5.1% in January, the fastest pace since 2001, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's wage tracker, which makes adjustments for changes in the composition of workers. However, inflation continues to outpace wage growth for most workers, eroding their spending power.

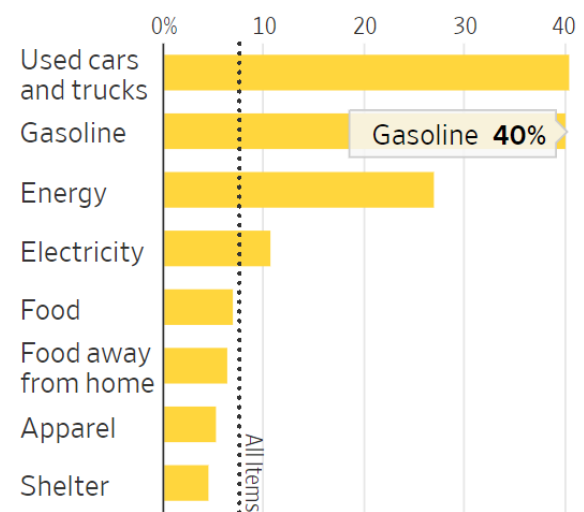
In corporate offices, concerns about inflation loom large, according to a survey of 133 CEOs of large U.S. companies conducted by the Conference Board, a business research group.

Nearly 3 in 4 respondents said Fed rate increases were unlikely to immediately curb inflation, with most citing the role of supply-chain woes and a large minority of executives pointing to the need to raise prices to cover increasing wage bills. About 72% said they expect to pass on higher labor and transportation costs to customers within the next 12 months.

A steady pickup in residential rental costs, which account for nearly one-third of the CPI, is adding to inflationary pressure and will likely keep doing so, said Aichi Amemiya, senior U.S. economist at Nomura Securities.

The rental vacancy rate dropped to 5.6% in the fourth quarter, its lowest level since the 1980s. Mr. Amemiya said such a low vacancy rate could push housing rents even higher as new lease contracts are signed this year, putting more pressure on inflation.

Consumer Price Index, 12-month change ending in January



Note: Not seasonally adjusted

Source: Labor Department

Allison Reyes and her boyfriend, Patrick Oldt, had been in a new apartment located close to the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia's Center City for four months when the basement flooded from high water after last summer's Hurricane Ida. That sent the couple looking for a new place to live—and gave them sticker shock because prices

for similar rental properties were 30% more expensive than just a few months before.

“We were shocked. We were looking at the exact same apartments we had looked at just a few months earlier whose prices had gone from \$2,400 a month to \$3,000 a month,” said Ms. Reyes, 34 years old, who works as a brand manager. “We ended up having to downgrade in size and location. Now we’re spending more money for a smaller apartment by about 400 square feet.”

In December, about 47% of small businesses said they planned to raise prices in the next three months, on net, according to the National Federation of Independent Business, a trade

association. That figure is down slightly from the last three months of 2021, but close to the highest share since monthly records began in 1986.

Mr. Amemiya of Nomura Securities said that rising inflation expectations among consumers, along with wage increases across the labor force, add to the risk that price pressures remain persistent. That could encourage the Fed to raise rates more than expected, even if the overall inflation trend declines in the coming months, he said.

Guilford, G. (2022, February 10). U.S. inflation rate accelerates to a 40-year high of 7.5%. The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-inflation-consumer-price-index-january-2022-11644452274?mod=Searchresults_pos15&page=1

ECONOMIC NEWS RELEASE

- The national unemployment rate is **4.0 percent** (January 2022)
- Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is **5.2 percent** (January 2022)
- Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is **3.9 percent** (January 2022)
- In January 2022, the veteran unemployment rate was **3.5%**, up from **3.3%** the previous month. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was **3.9%** in January.
- Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled **5,088** an increase of **374** 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	
	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022	Jan. 2021	Jan. 2022
Unemployed	500	338	461	298	38	40
Unemployment rate	5.5	3.8	5.8	3.9	3.3	3.3



**EMPLOYMENT
& TRANSITION**

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION WANTS MORE VETERANS IN TRUCKING INDUSTRY

The White House is spearheading a push to encourage more veterans to pursue careers in the trucking industry in an attempt to address a critical shortage of truck drivers.



Officials with the Biden administration met with representatives from veterans service organizations — including The American Legion's Director of Veterans

Employment and Education, Joe Sharpe — last week to encourage the VSOs to share the message with their members.

“We can think of few Americans better prepared to take on this challenge than our nation's veterans, since many have military trucking experience, are familiar with safety culture, and have maintenance skills,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said at a Tuesday news conference.

The push to bring more veterans into the trucking industry is part of the Biden administration's Trucking Action Plan, announced in December.

“The pandemic exacerbated longstanding workforce challenges in the trucking industry, including high turnover rates, an aging workforce, long hours away from home, and time spent waiting — often unpaid — to load and unload at congested ports, warehouses, and distribution centers,” the administration said in a release announcing the plan.

Among the measures being taken to bring more veterans into the trucking industry:

- Helping employers seeking CDL drivers connect with federal, state, and other resources to facilitate connecting those employers to job-seeking veterans.

- Expanding partnerships between the Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP) to the trucking industry to more effectively assist transitioning servicemembers.
- Exploring use of the Off-Base Transition Training Pilot Program (OBTT) to extend employment readiness curriculum to connect veterans, National Guard and reserve members, and their spouses to a career path in trucking.
- Amplifying VA programs that provide truck driving and related training to include the Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program and the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP). VA currently offers 120 approved commercial driving programs to veterans eligible for the VRRAP program, of which 31 are currently being used. More than 8,400 commercial driving programs are approved for use by eligible veterans under the GI Bill.

The administration has also compiled [a list of federal resources](#) for transitioning servicemembers and veterans seeking careers in the trucking industry. The list includes programs and other resources provided by the Departments of Labor, Transportation, Defense, Veterans Affairs, and the Small Business Administration.

“So, we see this as a win-win-win — getting more veterans to work, addressing the shortages in the trucking industry,” Psaki said.

The American Legion. (2022, February 9). Biden administration wants more veterans in trucking industry. The American Legion. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://www.legion.org/careers/254879/biden-administration-wants-more-veterans-trucking-industry?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ+MORE+%3E&utm_campaign=Source%2BCode%2BHeader&utm_term=newsletter

\$7.8 MILLION GRANT EARMARKED TO ASSIST TRANSITIONING TROOPS, FAMILIES AT FORT HOOD

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas accepted a \$7.8 million check from the Texas Workforce Commission during a ceremony, Jan. 27, at the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas – Killeen office here to help Soldiers separating from the military.

“It’s a two-year grant for \$7.8 million for current Soldiers, military spouses, active duty military spouses and recently-separated veterans,” said Susan Kamas, executive director of Workforce Solutions of Central Texas.

The funds will be geared specifically toward transitioning service members and spouses out of military life, utilizing one of Fort Hood’s Career Skills Programs. The funds cover work-related expenses, such as the purchase of clothes for a veteran’s first civilian job, the cost of tools they may need, tuition expenses, exams and licensures, as well as lodging and travel expenses for when the veteran goes out of the region for training.

“It’s exciting,” said Mark Phillips, chief of transition for the Fort Hood Transition Assistance Program, about the funds. “Out of the 65 locations, only Fort Hood is getting the opportunity to use this grant to help our men and women.”

The funds were provided through the Department of Labor’s National Dislocated Worker Grant program. The grant’s intended use is for service members, spouses and veterans in Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills and San Saba counties.

“This creates opportunities for service members and their families as they transition out of the Army,” explained Maj. Gen. Steven Gilland, III Corps and Fort Hood deputy commander. “Our Transition Assistance Programs are solely developed to help our Soldiers transition out of the Army and into their next career, which is vitally important so that they have that helping

hand. And the people who work in those programs are incredibly helpful.”



Signing the giant check on behalf of the Texas Workforce Commission, Aaron Demerson, who was appointed by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott as the commissioner representing employers, said he is excited that as men and women transition out of the military, they have opportunities here in the Lone Star State.

“I always say the rubber meets the road at the local level. We’re not able to be successful at the state if we don’t have the volunteers who have taken care of business, and allowed Susan to do what we do on a regular basis,” Demerson added. “We’re uniquely blessed when we have bodies who truly get it, and that’s the secret sauce that we have here in the great state of Texas. I’m excited about this grant, in particular because it’s serving our military men and women.”

Fort Hood has approximately 9,000 Soldiers who transition from the military annually, and Phillips said about 70% of those choose to stay in Texas, which is why the state has a vested interest in taking care of the employment needs of its veteran population.

Two veterans and a spouse spoke about their experience with the Career Skills Programs and how the services of Fort Hood’s Transition Assistance Program helped them. Nina Yaun, a military spouse who was born in Germany, shared how the assistance helped her receive a

nursing license. Stan Balcer, a 30-year veteran, received several unique certifications that set him apart, before becoming a real estate marketer. Jonathan Cuff, Ford technician strategy recruiting manager, explained how the Ford Technicians of Tomorrow program is a 16-week career skills program designed to certify and employ service members as they transition out of the military.

Fort Hood currently has 21 different skills programs from which service members can choose.

“These programs allow our teammates to start new careers,” Gilland said. “It’s a career that changes their lives, it changes their family’s lives and has the potential for generational change.”

Cruz, B. (2022, February 8). \$7.8 million grant earmarked to assist transitioning troops, families at Fort Hood. [www.army.mil](https://www.army.mil/article/253793/7_8_million_grant_earmarked_to_assist_transitioning_troops_families_at_fort_hood). Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://www.army.mil/article/253793/7_8_million_grant_earmarked_to_assist_transitioning_troops_families_at_fort_hood

¿DID YOU KNOW?

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Learn how GI Bill training programs can help you pay for books, supplies, and housing while you’re learning a trade or skill through on-the-job training or apprenticeships. Find out how to get these education benefits.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR EDUCATION BENEFITS?

You may be eligible for benefits if you qualify for the GI Bill and want to work in an industry or job that has on-the-job training, like:

- Plumbing
- Hotel management
- Firefighting

WHO’S COVERED?

- Veterans
- Spouses and children getting benefits through either the Fry Scholarship or the Survivors’ and Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) Program
- Children getting transferred benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill (also called Chapter 33)

Exception: You can’t get on-the-job training if you’re an active-duty service member or a spouse using a transferred benefit.

WHAT BENEFITS CAN I GET?

- Money for books and supplies, up to \$83 per month

- Money for housing, if you're covered under the Post-9/11 GI Bill
-

HOW DO I GET THESE BENEFITS?

You'll need to make sure the program is approved for VA education benefits. [Use the GI Bill Comparison Tool to find out if the program is approved](#)

You'll most likely need to enter into a training contract for a set amount of time with an employer or union. During training, you'll probably get a salary from the employer or union, which can go up as you gain more skills. When you finish your training, you'll get a job certification or journeyman status.

If you're a Veteran in an approved program, you can use your GI Bill benefit and get tax-free money for books and supplies. The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers you a monthly housing allowance (MHA) in addition to your entry-level wage. We issue GI Bill payments each month after your employer or union reports your hours to us.

Your payment depends on which GI Bill program you're using. [Review the payment rates](#)

POST-9/11 GI BILL MHA PAYMENT RATES

You'll get 100% of your applicable MHA during the first 6 months of training. Then you'll get this percentage of your MHA until your benefits run out:

- 80% of your applicable MHA during the second 6 months of training
- 60% of your applicable MHA during the third 6 months of training
- 40% of your applicable MHA during the fourth 6 months of training
- 20% of your applicable MHA during the rest of the training period

Note: If you completed at least 90 days, but less than 3 years, of active-duty service after September 10, 2001, your applicable MHA benefit will be lower than the full amount shown in the rate tables. Depending on how long you served, you'll start with an amount that's between 40% to 90% of the full benefit.

ALL OTHER GI BILL PROGRAMS PAYMENT RATES

You'll get this percentage of your GI Bill rate until your benefits run out:

- 75% of the full-time GI Bill rate for the first 6 months of training
- 55% of the full-time GI Bill rate for the second 6 months of training
- 35% of the full-time GI Bill rate for the rest of the training period

[Get more information about on-the-job and apprenticeship training programs \(PDF\)](#)

VA. (2022, January 13). *On-the-job training and Apprenticeships. Veterans Affairs*. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/on-the-job-training-apprenticeships/>

Staff Meetings on Employment Topics



The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with William Dwyer, who works with Representative Robin Kelly's Office. Mr. Dwyer relayed the congresswoman's interest in introducing a TAP pilot program to provide more support for military spouses and shared draft language for the program.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a virtual meet-and-greet where various Veteran Service Organizations were introduced to the new VA acting service director, Mary Glenn. Ms. Glenn has been with VACO since 2008, having spent most of her time within compensation service. She served as acting deputy director of VA's compensation service, where she was responsible for developing and implementing policies for VA administration disability detail and compensation programs.

In 2016, she was appointed deputy director of the mental examination unit, where she oversaw the implementation of new contract examination staff. Ms. Glenn also thrived in other positions within the VA as Assistant Director of Training Staff, Contract Management, and Budget. She has a close working relationship with Veteran Service Organizations as a claims processor and director of regional offices.

Ms. Glenn is currently serving a 90-day detail for the education service as of January 17, 2022. In her current position, Ms. Glenn is focusing on the automation of the Digital GI Bill. VBA is also trying to make things more automated to move claims faster and more accurately while still providing veterans excellent service.

As she is still learning within her new position, she intends to engage with Capitol Hill once she acquires more knowledge under her belt. Insofar she has attended four corners meetings to keep abreast of what they are asking.



The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with the CIA to discuss a working relationship on aiding the agency to find qualified veterans for its occupations.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division Director Joseph Sharpe testified on Feb. 2 before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on efforts to secure high-demand jobs for veterans.

A shortage of high-skilled labor — further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic — has left employers struggling to fill certain positions. While many veterans use their GI Bill benefits to earn conventional four-year degrees, intensive, short-term programs can develop the skills that today's employers require, Sharpe told lawmakers. This enables veterans to accelerate themselves to new positions in the job market and address the economic challenges of today.

"To be viable candidates in the 21st century workforce, veterans need training opportunities that are affordable, flexible and applicable to their desired industries," said Sharpe.

Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) is a five-year pilot program designed to help eligible veterans secure meaningful employment in the high-demand technology sector. The program was initially authorized in the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 and launched in the spring of 2019.



VET TEC pairs eligible veterans with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) training providers offering high-tech training and skills development. This includes information science, data processing and computer software programs. VET TEC also uses an employer consortium to help veterans find employment following the completion of their program. Rather than a traditional four-year degree path, VET TEC courses range between 40 and 700 training hours.

The VET TEC program provides non-active duty students a housing stipend and subsidized tuition by VA, while preserving GI Bill eligibility. Nearly 5,000 veterans have utilized the program to date, with an 88% graduation rate and a 72% employment rate. On average, it is taking graduates around two months to find employment and starting salaries have averaged more than \$59,000. Currently, only 16 states have approved training providers available, said Sharpe.

"The American Legion calls on Congress to increase VA training program offerings and access for VET TEC throughout the nation and its territories," he testified.

"Additionally, Congress should require a report detailing demographic, geographic, and Diversity Equity and Inclusion metrics of applicants rather than just age to ensure the program is best positioned to serve an increasingly diverse veteran population."

In addition to the VET TEC program, certain eligible veterans have access to the Veteran Rapid Retraining and Assistance Program (VRRAP). That program offers education and training for high-demand jobs — including health care, education and engineering — to veterans who are unemployed due to the pandemic.

Veterans participating in VRRAP will receive up to 12 months of tuition and fees and a monthly housing allowance based on Post-9/11 GI Bill rates. To be eligible, veterans must be unemployed because of the pandemic and not eligible for GI Bill or VR&E benefits.

VRRAP was developed as part of the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus economic relief package signed into law by President Biden in March 2021. About \$17 billion was allocated to support VA in its response to the pandemic. Of this, \$386 million went to VRRAP. To date, only one quarter of the funding has been used.

“To boost veteran engagement in VRRAP, Congress should work with VA, Department of Labor and American Job Centers to increase program outreach to meet the funding or participant limits,” Sharpe told the subcommittee. “Additionally, Congress should eliminate the VRRAP program eligibility cutoff age of 66 to provide older veterans access to this vital benefit.”

According to Sharpe, part of the reason many veterans could be shying away from the program is the ambiguity. Asking Congress to clarify what constitutes unemployment specifically attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic as criteria for VRRAP would mitigate this issue.

“Finally,” said Sharpe, “The American Legion calls on Congress to expand VRRAP eligibility to any veteran who is either unemployed or underemployed.”

The American Legion supports the program through [Resolution No. 305: Support the Development of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities.](#)



**EDUCATION,
LICENSING &
CREDENTIALING**

CHANGE THAT WOULD SIMPLIFY TRANSFERRING GI BILL BENEFITS TO SPOUSES, CHILDREN GAINS FOOTHOLD IN CONGRESS

Lawmakers are hoping to clarify the process of serving members transferring their GI Bill benefits to dependents with a bill introduced in the Senate on Wednesday.

Specifically, the bill would eliminate a field on forms service members must fill out to transfer their benefits that is the "cause of many incorrectly completed transfer forms," according to a news release from Sen. Tommy Tuberville's office.

Forms to transfer the benefit require service members to specify an end date when the benefit will no longer be available to the dependent. But, according to the news release, there are "multiple examples of service members misreading the information requested in the GI Bill benefit transfer forms, resulting in eligible dependents being barred from education benefits."

"Our service members and their families sacrifice greatly for our freedoms, and it isn't right that confusing paperwork can get in the way of a dependent receiving education benefits after the tragedy of losing a loved one," Tuberville, R-Ala., who introduced the bill, said in the press release.

The forms have particularly been an issue when a service member dies and dependents can't change their paperwork to use any remaining benefits.

Sens. John Thune, R-S.D., and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., are co-sponsors. A companion bill was introduced in the House last month by Reps. Greg Murphy, R-N.C.; Cindy Axne, D-Iowa; and David Trone, D-Md.

Under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, a service member can transfer their benefits to a spouse or child if

they have served for at least six years and commit to serving another four years.

The bill introduced Wednesday would eliminate the "end date" field and the benefit would simply expire on the dependent's 26th birthday, as specified elsewhere in law.

The bill is backed by the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS, which said the measure is needed to "ensure surviving spouses and children who are using transferred entitlement are not disqualified due to a technicality."

"This much needed legislation will give the Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to remove the end date on transferred entitlement and strengthens benefits for surviving families," TAPS President and Founder Bonnie Carroll said in the statement released by Tuberville's office.

This new piece of legislation that was introduced by Senator Tuberville will help to prevent spouses and children from being deemed eligible for Post 9/11 GI bill benefits due to an error on the transfer form. Per [Resolution No. 14: Post 9/11 Transfer of Educational Benefits](https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/02/09/change-would-simplify-transferring-gi-bill-benefits-spouses-children-gains-foothold-congress.html), The American Legion supports this piece of legislation that would allow more veterans to be able to transfer their GI bill benefits, as Congress is the only governing body that is able to fix this problem.

Kheel, Rebecca. "Change That Would Simplify Transferring GI Bill Benefits to Spouses, Children Gains Foothold in Congress." Military.com, 9 Feb. 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/02/09/change-would-simplify-transferring-gi-bill-benefits-spouses-children-gains-foothold-congress.html>.

SC EMPLOYERS COULD GET STATE TAX BREAK FOR HIRING EX-INMATES OR VETERANS



S.C. Department of Corrections Director Bryan Stirling announces the state has the lowest recidivism rate in the country at under 22 percent at a ceremony on July 13, 2021, at the Manning Reentry/Work Release Center in Columbia. File/Jeffrey Collins/AP

South Carolina employers could get a state tax credit for hiring veterans or former inmates under a bill advancing in the House that aims to train workers while linking ex-cons to a stable job so they don't end up back in prison.

The bill sent Feb. 9 to the House floor on a unanimous vote would provide employers a tax break of up to \$6,500 per hire over three years if the worker stays on the payroll for the duration of the allowed credit.

Hires must be participating in federally validated apprenticeship programs, which are coordinated through South Carolina's technical colleges and provide on-the-job training with a paycheck.

The break applies only to the three years following a potential worker's release from lockup for a nonviolent crime or honorable discharge from the military.

What happens during those first three years is critical for whether inmates get their lives on track or return to bad habits and crimes that put them back behind the razor wire, Corrections Director Bryan Stirling said.

"If people are working and learning and educated when they're out, particularly when they're recently released, that's a setup for success," he said.

He expects the incentive to prompt more South Carolina businesses to hire ex-felons and encourage those that already do to expand their numbers, further reducing the state's recidivism rate.

According to the latest data, less than 22 percent of ex-felons return to prison in South Carolina within three years of release, the lowest rate among the 42 states that track that figure.

Rep. Joe Daning, the bill's main sponsor, said the incentives are meant to help solve two problems. "We need employees. We have jobs we can't fill. Apprenticeship is the best way to get skilled labor," said the Goose Creek Republican, who knows firsthand what he calls the "no brainer" benefits for the employee and employer. The Trident Technical College director entered an apprenticeship welder program after leaving the Air Force in 1964.

As for inmates, he said, "the reason they're in there is because they don't have the skills to begin

with.” Training them for a skilled job that provides a consistent paycheck can break a cycle of crime, he said.

People with a criminal record have a hard time getting hired. The incentive will hopefully lead to more employers being willing to look past their history, Daning said.

Under the bill, the employer could get a \$3,000 tax credit the first year of employment, \$2,500 the second year and \$1,000 the third. The break could apply to a range of state taxes, including income taxes, bank taxes and corporate license taxes.

Spreading it out over three years should help ensure businesses keep the workers employed, Daning said.

It’s unclear how much the tax credits could reduce state revenues. South Carolina’s fiscal experts estimated its potential impact at \$500,000 to \$4 million annually, but changes approved by

the Ways and Means Committee are expected to reduce the total breaks. Updated estimates are not yet available.

The new legislation moving through the South Carolina House of Representatives would provide companies who hire veterans with a tax break. Veterans must be participating in federally credited apprenticeship programs which will provide the veteran with on-the-job training along with a paycheck. The American Legion supports this new program per [Resolution No. 25: Support and Expand Apprenticeship Opportunities for Servicemembers](#). This resolution calls for an expansion of apprenticeship opportunities for veterans, which is what this new bill in South Carolina is doing.

Adcox, Seanna. “SC Employers Could Get State Tax Break for Hiring Ex-Inmates or Veterans.” Palmetto Politics, The Post and Courier, 9 Feb. 2022, https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/sc-employers-could-get-state-tax-break-for-hiring-ex-inmates-or-veterans/article_a3e530b0-89d2-11ec-8631-afd9b8050f0e.html.

Staff Meetings on Education Topics

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a Department of Education Rulemaking Debrief and Feedback to discuss what happened at table two of negotiations between the Department of Education surrounding predatory practices regarding the use of government allocated fund to help veterans access an education.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Steve Gonzalez, Mark Brenner, Jeff Arthur, Joe Wescott, Conway Casillas, and Jillian Klein to discuss updates regarding the next round of negotiated rule making and the 90/10 rule.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with members from Veteran Evaluation Services (VES) and Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to plan for a meeting with the U.S. Secretary of Education on Tuesday, February 15, 2022. Relevant topics of discussion will include public service loan forgiveness, disability loan discharges, borrower defense, and school oversight.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division and the Legislative Division met with Congressional staffer John Goetz from U.S. Senator Tim Scott's (R – SC) office to discuss pending GI Bill legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives to identify where the Senator could potentially introduce well-matched Senate versions. The foremost bill under consideration is H.R.5918 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance. The American Legion will continue to work with Sen. Scott to advance legislation that will improve GI Bill outcomes for veterans and their families.



PRESS RELEASE

EDITH NOURSE ROGERS STEM SCHOLARSHIP

Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship

The Edith Nourse Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship allows some eligible Veterans and dependents in high-demand fields to extend their Post-9/11 GI Bill or Fry Scholarship benefits. Read below to find out if you're eligible for up to 9 months (or \$30,000) of added benefits and how to apply.

Am I eligible for the Rogers STEM Scholarship (GI Bill extension)?

You may be eligible for this scholarship as a Veteran or a Fry Scholar if you meet at least one of these requirements.

At least one of these must be true:

- You're currently enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree program or qualifying dual-degree program, **or**
- You've earned a post-secondary degree or a graduate degree in an approved STEM degree field and are enrolled in a covered clinical training program for health care professionals, **or**
- You've earned a post-secondary degree in an approved STEM degree field and are working toward a teaching certification
-

Keep reading for the full eligibility requirements.

Full eligibility requirements

To be eligible, you need to meet all of the requirements listed here for your situation.

If you're currently enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree or qualifying dual-degree program All of these must be true:

- You're enrolled in a qualifying undergraduate STEM degree program that requires at least 120 standard semester credit hours (or 180 quarter credit hours) to complete, **and**
- You've completed at least 60 standard credit hours (or 90 quarter credit hours) toward your degree, **and**
- You have 6 months or less of your Post-9/11 GI Bill (or Fry Scholarship) benefits left. To find out how much of your benefits you have left, [check your Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits](#).

Note: You can't use the STEM scholarship for graduate degree programs at this time.

If you're enrolled in a covered clinical training program for health care professionals All of these must be true:

- You've earned a qualifying degree in a STEM field, **and**
- You've been accepted or are enrolled in a covered clinical training program for health care professionals, **and**
- You have 6 months or less of your Post-9/11 GI Bill (or Fry Scholarship) benefits left. To find out how much of your benefits you have left, [check your Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits](#).

If you're working toward a teaching certification All of these must be true:

- You've earned a qualifying post-secondary degree in a STEM field, **and**
- You've been accepted or are enrolled in a teaching certification program, **and**
- You have 6 months or less of your Post-9/11 GI Bill (or Fry Scholarship) benefits left. To find out how much of your benefits you have left, [check your Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits](#).
-

How we prioritize scholarships

If you meet these eligibility requirements, we can't guarantee that you'll receive the Rogers STEM scholarship.

We give priority to Veterans and Fry Scholars who:

- Are eligible for the maximum Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit (100% level), **and**
- Require the most credit hours compared to other applicants
-

Which degree programs can I use this scholarship for? You can use this scholarship for undergraduate degree programs in these subject areas:

- Agriculture science or natural resources science
- Biological or biomedical science
- Computer and information science and support services
- Engineering, engineering technologies, or an engineering-related field
- Health care or a health-care-related field
- Mathematics or statistics
- Medical residency (undergraduate only)
- Physical science
- Science technologies or technicians

[Download the full list of eligible STEM degree programs \(PDF\)](#)

Note: We updated this full list of eligible programs in March 2021.

How do I apply for the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship?

You can apply online right now. The online application should take you about 15 minutes to complete.

[Apply for the STEM Scholarship](#)

More questions about the Rogers STEM Scholarship What happens after I apply for this scholarship?

We usually make a decision about each scholarship within 30 days. We award scholarships on a monthly basis. If we need more information from you to make a decision, we'll send you a letter.

If we approve your application, you'll get a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) in the mail. This is also called a decision letter. Bring this COE to the VA certifying official at your school. This person is usually in the registrar's, financial aid, or Veteran's office at the school.

If we don't approve your application, you'll get a denial letter in the mail.

What's STEMText?

We use STEMText to communicate with you about your Rogers STEM Scholarship benefits through text messages.

If you receive the Rogers STEM Scholarship, we'll send an opt-in text message to your primary phone number. We'll ask if you'd like to receive updates about your VA STEM benefits by text message. To participate, respond "yes" within 7 days of receiving this message.

You can also use STEMText to verify your attendance each month. Verifying by text instead of email can help you get your housing payments faster. We'll send you a text message each month asking if you attended your STEM courses. To verify, just respond "yes."

[Go to our STEMText video \(YouTube\)](#) to learn more.

Note: If you need to update your primary phone number, call us at [888-442-4551](tel:888-442-4551). We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. If you have hearing loss, call [TTY: 711](tel:711).

How much can this scholarship extend my GI Bill benefits?

If we approve your application, you'll get a GI Bill extension of up to 9 months (or \$30,000, whichever comes first).

What are the scholarship rates for private schools?

The Chapter 33 rates for private or foreign schools apply to the STEM scholarship as well. We update these rates each academic year.

[Review current education benefit rates](#)

Can I use this scholarship for graduate degree programs?

No. You can only use the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM scholarship for an undergraduate degree program, a teaching certification, or a covered training program for health care professionals.

Can I use the Yellow Ribbon Program with the STEM scholarship?

No. You can't use the Yellow Ribbon Program with this scholarship. Schools can apply for Yellow Ribbon funding, but we can't match it.

Can I take part in the work-study program while I'm using the STEM scholarship?

Yes. If you have a STEM scholarship, you're now eligible to apply for the Veterans work-study program. [Learn about the work-study program and find out how to apply](#)

Can I transfer my STEM scholarship to my dependents?

No. You can't transfer these benefits to dependents.

Veterans Affairs. (2022, January 12). Edith Nourse Rogers stem scholarship. Veterans Affairs. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from <https://www.va.gov/education/other-va-education-benefits/stem-scholarship/>



HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING

2021 PIT COUNT DATA, UPDATES ON VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

On February 4, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the [results of the 2021 Point-in-Time \(PIT\) Count](#), the annual effort to estimate the number of

Americans, including Veterans, without permanent housing.

The results showed that on a single night in January 2021, there were 19,750 Veterans

experiencing sheltered homelessness in the U.S. This reflects a 10% decrease in the number of Veterans experiencing sheltered homelessness from 2020. This also represents the largest one-year decline since 2015 to 2016.

Other notable insights include that Veterans experiencing sheltered homelessness represented only eight percent of all sheltered adults experiencing homelessness in the United States and accounted for only 11 out of every 10,000 Veterans in the country.

Homelessness advocates have eagerly awaited these results, which would show the effects of the pandemic on homelessness. In addition to changing the way homeless services are delivered, COVID-19 also impacted the ability of communities to do their counts in January 2021.

[HUD's 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report](#), which documents the results of the PIT Count, provides national estimates on sheltered homelessness and findings on unsheltered homelessness from the communities that conducted unsheltered counts. So, while the report is an important snapshot into the state of sheltered homelessness, it does not provide a complete picture of homelessness in America.

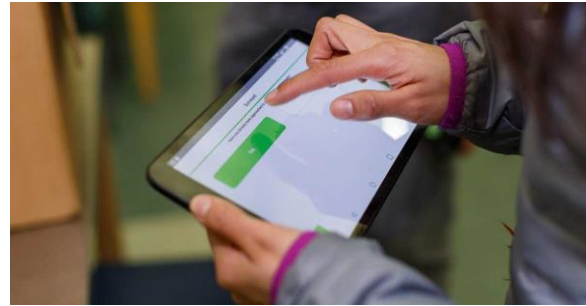
SHELTERED VS UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

Knowing how many Veterans experiencing sheltered homeless versus unsheltered homelessness has always been an important way HUD and VA evaluate the progress toward ending homelessness for all Veterans. But this year, the distinction is even more important.

Veterans who experience sheltered homelessness often live in places such as emergency shelters, transitional housing programs or other supportive settings. In contrast, Veterans who experience unsheltered homelessness live in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings and literally on the street.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put even more pressures and risks on Veterans living on the street or other unsheltered settings because they

are not able to shelter-in-place to avoid contracting or spreading the virus.



VA is working to rapidly house unsheltered Veterans to protect them and the broader community. For example, between March 2020 and September 2021, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program placed nearly 32,000 Veterans in hotels or motels. 20,000 of these Veterans have since moved on to permanent housing.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE SPURS INNOVATION

Entering the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, VA and its community partners continue to work tirelessly to address the urgent and evolving needs of Veterans who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Being responsive to these needs often inspired innovative changes to the way homeless services were delivered.

Additionally, with the passage of the [American Rescue Plan](#), VA received additional funding to support program enhancements such as:

- [Expanding the SSVF Shallow Subsidy initiative](#), which allowed grantees serving homeless and at-risk Veteran families in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands to offer 2-year rental subsidies to eligible Veteran families.
- Expanding existing and establishing new Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) residential contracts effectively serve Veterans during the pandemic.
- Providing additional \$95 million in Grant and Per Diem (GPD) funds to support grantee

costs associated with providing personal protective equipment (PPE), deep cleaning for facilities, use of motels for isolation and quarantine, and more.

Furthermore, from May 2021 through January 2022, VA Medical Centers across the United States helped more than 18,000 Veterans using nearly \$1 million in funding through the expanded flexibilities authorized by [Section 4201 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, MD Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act](#).

Section 4201 also allowed for the creation of a nationally coordinated rideshare program, which provides support to Veterans who need transportation to meet health, housing, legal and employment needs. As of January 2022, this service has provided more than 38,000 rides to over 9,300 Veterans at a value of nearly \$1.7 million.

THE WORK AHEAD

Despite the many challenges that Veterans have faced during 2021, ending Veteran homelessness remains a top priority for VA. In collaboration with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, HUD, the U.S. Department of Labor, and other federal and local partners, VA will continue to execute evidence-based approaches – such as [Housing First](#) – to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.

Since 2010, more than 920,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently

housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from becoming homeless through HUD's targeted housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs.

LEARN ABOUT VA PROGRAMS

- Veterans who are homeless or at risk for homelessness should contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838).
- Visit the [VA Homeless Programs website](#) to learn about housing initiatives and other programs for Veterans exiting homelessness.
- For more stories like these, [subscribe to the Homeless Programs Office newsletter](#) to receive monthly updates about programs and supportive services for Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The American Legion supports the additional funding from the American Rescue Plan, as it aligns with [Resolution No. 24: Support Funding and Changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Program](#), supporting Congress to authorize and make appropriations for the Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program to level the need demonstrated in communities.

Diaz, M. (2022, February 4). 2021 pit count data, updates on veteran homelessness. VAntage Point. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/100030/2021-pit-count-data-updates-on-veteran-homelessness/>

OLD MANATEE COUNTY JAIL COULD BECOME HOME OF PROGRAM TO HELP HOMELESS VETERANS

Manatee County leaders are considering a plan that would help homeless military veterans while breathing life into an old jail facility that has been vacant for more than a decade.

At a county commission meeting last month, commissioners discussed how to use funds from the federal American Rescue Plan, which is designed to help communities recover from

COVID-19. One plan that appeared to unanimously popular would devote at least \$13 million to renovate the 80,000 square foot jail building into a center for homeless veterans, and another \$2 million to design the project.

"This is by far the largest project focusing on homeless veterans in the United States," County

Administrator Scott Hopes told commissioners during the January 4 meeting.

The old jail facility, which is connected to the Manatee County Judicial Center in Bradenton, hasn't been used for about 15 years.

Commissioner Misty Servia has two sons in the military and has taken a personal interest in the project.

"There is no veteran that deserves to be without basic housing," Servia told FOX 13 Monday. "I know personally how hard they serve our country because we talk to them every single week, we hear about what they're doing. Multiply that by the thousands and tens of thousands of people locally that have served our country and now come back to a community where they can't find housing."

According to the 2021 homeless census, there were more than 500 homeless people in the Manatee-Sarasota region, including at least 51 veterans.

Agencies that help the homeless, including Turning Points in Bradenton, said the jail renovation project would meet a critical need.

"Every person who's experiencing homelessness has their own story, has their own challenges," said Kathleen Cramer, Turning Points' Executive Director. "The idea is to bring the social services to the veterans that are then in this transitional housing, which really is a best-in-class type of model."

There are, however, still several unknowns, including whether the plan would be allowed under the government's guidelines for COVID-19 relief funding.

County leaders also aren't sure if they're budgeting enough money.

"You're not building that thing out for 13 million dollars. Not in a heartbeat," said Commissioner George Kruse during the January meeting.

Hopes, however, told commissioners he's confident the funding will be there even if the project ends up exceeding \$13 million, saying, "we believe that we will have numerous of funds from a number of entities."



The county will receive a total of \$78 million from the American Rescue Plan. Community leaders would still have to decide what services would be offered at a new homeless shelter for veterans.

The American Legion supports this initiative, as in [Resolution No. 12: Housing Options for Homeless Veterans](#), we support the collaboration with government and non-government organizations to find outside-the-box and innovative ways to compassionately end Veterans' homelessness.

Mesmer, A. (2022, February 8). Old manatee county jail could become home of program to help Homeless Veterans. FOX 13 Tampa Bay. Retrieved February 9, 2022, from <https://www.fox13news.com/news/old-manatee-county-jail-could-become-home-of-program-to-help-homeless-veterans>

Staff Meetings on Homelessness Topics

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended the monthly “4 Corners” congressional meeting on Veterans Homelessness with staff members of the U.S. House Veterans Affairs Committee and the U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to discuss ongoing legislative priorities with stakeholders.

The primary topic of conversation was the upcoming legislative hearing taking place on March 16th, 2022. Though the bills being debated have not yet been publicly released, staffers indicate that many of the proposed bills will focus on improving outcomes within the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program.



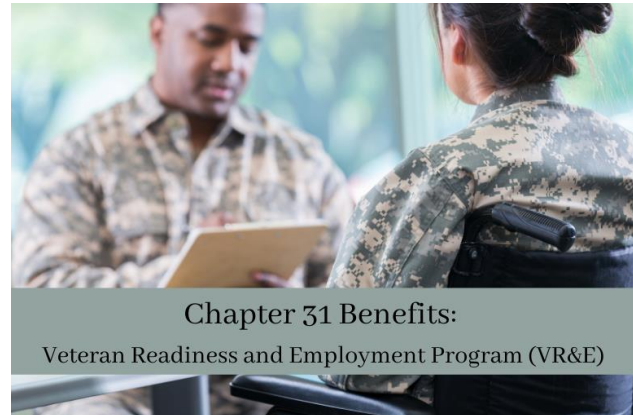
Other priorities will include developing policies to increase the point-in-time (PIT) counts of homeless veterans nationwide to understand how resources can be utilized to provide the greatest outcomes for homeless veterans. Staffers also discussed planning for an upcoming oversight trip to the West LA Veterans Administration campus.

!NEWS ALERT!

VETERAN EXCELS WITH VETERAN READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT (VR&E) PROGRAM

Air Force Veteran Karyn Elliott completed her education through VA’s Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) program by obtaining a master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

While pursuing her education, Elliott faced several challenges and heartbreaks. The school she was attending closed, so she transferred to National Louis University to complete her degree. In this new program, she encountered changes with the unfamiliar school and learning format. Additionally, Elliott lost two of her family members – her brother and father – and suffered permanent neck and back injuries from a car accident. Through it all, she did not let her education slide. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a 4.0 GPA.



Chapter 31 Benefits:
Veteran Readiness and Employment Program (VR&E)

Elliott was provided a vocational assessment and counseling and guidance to identify a suitable vocational goal; she also received guidance to conduct labor market research, as well as case management support to resolve any barriers and coordinate referrals to necessary medical services.

At school, VR&E assisted with tuition, books, supplies, a laptop and subsistence allowance. Ultimately, the VR&E services and assistance that Elliott received provided her the opportunity to be employable in a suitable job that utilizes the knowledge and skills obtained through completion of her master's degree.

WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER THE VR&E PROGRAM?

[VR&E](#) is committed to assisting service members and Veterans with service-connected disabilities and a barrier to employment to prepare for, obtain and maintain suitable employment, to the maximum extent possible, and to achieve independence in daily living. VR&E offers five program tracks to help Veterans discover their career paths, uncover exciting employment opportunities, and succeed and grow in their chosen professions. The five program tracks are:

1. Reemployment: to successfully return to a civilian job held before deployment.
2. Rapid Access to Employment: to quickly secure employment with existing skills and experience.
3. Self-Employment: to plan for and start a business.
4. Employment through Long-Term Services: to obtain training and/or education, college or certification programs, on the job training, non-paid work experience, apprenticeships, and/or internships.
5. Independent Living: to be as self-sufficient as possible – if not able to return to work right away.

VR&E'S OCTOBER OBSERVANCES

This October, VR&E supports [National Disability Employment Awareness Month \(NDEAM\)](#) and [Spina Bifida Awareness Month](#). NDEAM aims to educate about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy. This year's theme is "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion," which reflects the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to employment and community involvement during the national recovery from the pandemic.

In addition to NDEAM, each October is [Spina Bifida](#) Awareness Month, and each October 25th is World Spina Bifida Day. The purpose of these observances is to raise awareness of those Americans living with spina bifida, as well as the community that cares for them.

VR&E helps eligible dependent children with spina bifida through [VA's Benefits for Certain Children with Disabilities Born of Vietnam and Certain Korea Service Veterans \(Chapter 18\) program](#). The Chapter 18 program provides services that enable the eligible individual to achieve a vocational goal and reach the level of employability needed for entry into employment in a suitable occupation.

Owens, S. (2021, October 20). *Veteran excels with veteran readiness and employment (VR&E) program*. VAntage Point. Retrieved February 11, 2022, from <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/96239/veteran-excels-with-veteran-readiness-and-employment-vre-program/>



SMALL BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

WHAT ARE THE 2022 SMALL BUSINESS SET-ASIDE THRESHOLDS?

As we head into the new year, it seems like a good time to check-in on the adjusted small business set-aside thresholds for 2022. As you may recall, the threshold are tied both to the micro-purchase

threshold and the simplified acquisition threshold. While these rates are periodically adjusted for inflation, the thresholds remain unchanged going into 2022. Currently, the micro-

purchase threshold is \$10,000 and the simplified acquisition threshold is \$250,000. Here's what that means for small business set-asides:

Acquisitions \$10,000 – \$250,000: these procurements are exclusively set-aside for small businesses if the “Rule of Two” is met. FAR 19.502-2(a). The CO may therefore award a small business set-aside under the 8(a), HUBZone, SDVOSB, and WOSB programs. FAR 19.203(b).

Acquisitions > \$250,000: these procurements may be set-aside for small businesses if the “Rule of Two” is met. FAR 19.502-2(b). Accordingly, the CO must first consider the small business socioeconomic programs before considering a general small business set-aside, unless already in the 8(a) program. FAR 19.203(c).

Where possible, non-construction contracts should be partially set-aside for small businesses when the “Rule of Two” is met. FAR 19.502-3.

The “Rule of Two,” as you may recall, requires a reasonable expectation that at least two responsible small business concerns that are competitive in terms of fair market prices, quality, and delivery, will compete.



As with any general rule, there are exceptions. Notably, the Department of Veterans Affairs (“VA”), under the Veterans First Contracting Program, **must** set-aside contracts for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (“SDVOSBs”) and veteran-owned small businesses (“VOSBs”) regardless of these thresholds. 38 U.S.C. § 8127(d). For acquisitions below \$5,000,000, the VA may use non-

competitive procedures (*i.e.*, directed sole-source awards) to award to a VOSB or SDVOSB. 38 U.S.C. §§ 8127(c), (d).

Turning back to the dollar thresholds for general government purchasing, while these rates were changed more than a year ago (previously \$3,500 – \$150,000), the impact on small business government contractors remains to be seen. As we discussed previously, in FY 2020, the actual number of small businesses receiving prime contracts *decreased* from FY 2019 (which was a decrease from FY 2018). The increased simplified acquisition threshold may translate into a reduced barrier to entry for small businesses seeking to break into federal contracting, but that impact may take time. More set-asides may create more room for small businesses to compete on smaller-scale contracts to get their foot in the door. This, in turn, should lead to increased competition

But, federal contracting is not like the private marketplace. And even small contracts come with a host of government-specific requirements and sometimes cumbersome compliance obligations. And where past performance is often weighed heavily in an evaluation, many new companies face the Catch-22 of not being able to get their foot in the door because they do not yet have their foot in the door. So while the increased set-aside thresholds may present enticing opportunities for small businesses to become government contractors, small businesses should enter the government marketplace only after fully assessing whether they can withstand the government's unique terms and conditions. The federal government is a wonderful customer; but they are also a demanding one. Small businesses need to be aware of these demands before they make promises that they cannot keep.

Procuring government contracts can be a lucrative opportunity for small businesses. The Federal government has specified annual prime contracting goals for designated small businesses. Currently, the government-wide contracting goal requires that at least 23% of all federal government contracting dollars should be granted to small businesses, and there are targeted sub-goals within that. For example, of that 23%, 3%

of all federal contracts must be awarded to Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB). This is important when looking at the adjusted small business set-aside thresholds for 2022. Small business set-asides are a powerful tool for helping small businesses compete for and win federal contracts. When market research concludes that small businesses are available and able to perform the work or provide the products being procured by the government, those opportunities are “set-aside” exclusively for small business concerns. Currently, the micro-purchase threshold is \$10,000 and the simplified acquisition threshold is \$250,000. This means that if the value of the goods or services the government is looking to purchase are between \$10,000 and \$250,000, the contract will automatically be set aside and awarded to small businesses if the “Rule of Two” is met. The “Rule of Two” is met when there is a reasonable expectation that at least two small businesses will be competing for the contract in terms of a fair market price, quality, and delivery. Although government contracts between the micro-purchase threshold (\$10,000) and the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000) are automatically and exclusively set aside for small businesses, small businesses can also compete for contracts above the simplified acquisition threshold (\$250,000). This is because Contracting Officers are also required to set aside

contracts above \$250,000 for small businesses if the “Rule of Two” is met, allowing small businesses an opportunity to access larger contracts. But, as with any rule, there are exceptions, particularly with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Under the “Veterans First Contracting Program,” the VA must set aside specific procurement opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) and veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) regardless of the micro-purchase and simplified acquisition thresholds. However, the VA hasn’t applied this program to the extent they pledged, and the Legion is advocating to change that. In [Resolution No. 55: Mandatory Use Of The Veterans First Contracting Program](#), the Legion states, “The VA has been hesitant in fulfilling the statutory intent of the Veterans First Contracting Program and the VA might outsource supply chain contract administration tasks to large businesses or other federal agencies in order to work around Veterans First Contracting Program. The VA’s resistance to utilization of veteran small businesses led to low participation rates among veteran small businesses.”

“What Are the 2022 Small Business Set-aside Thresholds?” The National Law Review, <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/what-are-2022-small-business-set-aside-thresholds>.

LARGEST EVER BROADBAND EXPANSION PLANNED IN ILLINOIS

Gov. J.B. Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Broadband announced \$47 million in funding for 22 projects in every region of the state through the second round of Connect Illinois, the state’s broadband expansion plan.

To promote broadband access, the Illinois Office of Broadband is making \$350 million in funding available through a third round of grants, which will be accepted and awarded on a rolling basis through 2024, or until funds are depleted.

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“The recent commitment by Gov. Pritzker, to provide the largest broadband capital investment to date, will substantially help soybean farmers to



become more successful with their business operations and will greatly assist in providing broadband to Illinois’ rural residents.”

The governor’s Round Two funding includes \$23 million in Connect Illinois grant awards matched by \$24 million in non-state funding for a total of over \$47 million, with plans to expand broadband access to approximately 13,000 homes, businesses, farms and community institutions across Illinois — through 22 new projects, with at least one in every region of the state.

“This funding will mean families and businesses across the state will have access to education, health care, employment opportunities and essential connectivity,” said Mike Levin, ISA senior director of Government Relations. “It will

mean new jobs, economic development and a narrowing of gaps among small and large Illinois communities.”

The American Legion understands the importance of digital connectivity and that’s why they advocate for broadband expansion in [Resolution No. 1: Expansion of Broadband in Rural Areas](#). In the resolution, it states, “Broadband is a tool that enables increased productivity for farms, factories, forests, mining, and small business. Connectivity is especially vital for agriculture, the original “Made in America” industry, to increase farm productivity to feed the world. High-speed broadband, and the digital opportunity it brings, can be essential to innovation, economic opportunity, health care, and civic engagement in today’s modern society, and rural areas continue to lack access due, in part, to challenges with providing service to areas where deployment costs are high, and returns in investments are low.”

Person. “Largest Ever Broadband Expansion Planned in Illinois.” *AgriNews*, AgriNews, 2 Feb. 2022, <https://www.agrinews-pubs.com/business/2022/02/02/largest-ever-broadband-expansion-planned-in-illinois/>.



Staff Meetings on Small Business Topics

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division held attended a Review of SBA’s Top Management and Performance Challenges in Fiscal Year 2022 and SBA OIG’s Semiannual Report to

Congress Hearing. The hearing covered issues related to SBA's management of its programs related to pandemic relief, contracting and counseling, access to capital, and disaster assistance, as well as information technology (IT) controls.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division held a Veteran Small Business Task Force Subcommittee Meeting on Veterans Business Verification. The Subcommittee will be providing recommendations to the Task Force about how to improve the verification process that the federal government uses to determine whether a business is eligible for set-aside status for federal contracting opportunities.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division met with Matt Walker, Vice President of Governmental Affairs at the National Restaurants Association, to discuss strategies for enhancing The American Legion's Small Business and Government Contracting legislative priorities.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a hearing titled "Review of SBA Entrepreneurial Development Programs and Initiatives" held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The purpose of the hearing was to learn about current programming updates from the Small Business Administration and receive feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of the programs.

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division is scheduling upcoming congressional meetings over the month of February to advance the American Legion's Small Business and Government Contracting Legislative Agenda. To date, appointments have been made with offices including Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D – IL), Sen. Thom Tillis (R – NC), and Sen. Joe Manchin (D – WV).

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a hearing titled "Review of SBA Entrepreneurial Development Programs and Initiatives" held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship. The purpose of the hearing was to learn about current programming updates from the Small Business Administration and receive feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of the programs.



After opening remarks from committee Chairman Sen. Ben Cardin the meeting's first panel focused on oversight of Mark Madrid, Associate Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Entrepreneurial Development (OED). Madrid highlighted the surge of entrepreneurship that has taken place over the past year, with over 5 million new small businesses being created. Madrid highlighted the work being done with the SBA's Community Navigator Pilot Program funded by the American Rescue Plan to expand outreach and business development opportunities to underserved communities.

Committee Ranking Member Sen. Rand Paul (R – KY) criticized the Community Navigator Pilot Program as ineffective and wasteful, citing data indicating low user satisfaction and high failure rate among businesses that were targeted by the program. Anecdotal evidence as cited by Madrid, Paul argues, is negated by the overall ineffectiveness of the program and



the SBA writ large. He advocated that the best solution for ensuring small business success was simply ensuring that the “federal, state, and local government stay out of the way.”



Witness testimony, along with a video of the entire hearing, can be accessed [here](#).

SPOTLIGHT

BIPARTISAN BILL PROPOSED TO HELP SERVICE MEMBERS SUCCEED IN SMALL BUSINESS

A bipartisan bill proposal aims to connect service members with jobs in small businesses after their time in the military.

U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) are in support.

The lawmakers are proposing bipartisan legislation to help train service members exiting the military with skills for small business ownership. The Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act—or the VET Act—would codify into law for five years the “Boots to Business” initiative under the Small Business Administration (SBA), a pilot program originally launched in 2013 in partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD) designed to help service members and their spouses transitioning out of the military acquire the tools to succeed as small business owners.

The SBA’s “Boots to Business” program provides small business entrepreneurship training to military personnel exiting the military under the SBA, in partnership with the DOD through the Transition Assistance Program. However, since the program is not currently codified into law, it could be closed at any time under the discretion of either federal agency.

In addition to codifying this program into law for five years, the VET Act will also require that reports are issued to Congress to measure the program’s success, detailing program costs, the number of participants, the completion rates, the generalized demographic information, the jobs created, the number of small businesses formed, and other data.

“It’s providing opportunities for military members and their families that are separating off of active duty service to start entrepreneurial activities and small businesses in their own communities,” said Sen. Joni Ernst. “We know that small business is the backbone of Iowa as it is for many other states so we want these veterans to be able to engage in whatever their career passions might be as they are exiting the military.”



The founder of the Quad Cities Veterans Outreach Center says the legislation would help members transition back into society.

“All of the sudden they have to come back to society here and they have to choose a career and not only do they have to choose a career but get educated and trained in the career. Our legislation helping them get more training and financing is going to be a great asset for them,” said Lola VanDeWalle, Founder of the Quad Cities Veterans Outreach Center. “They will be able to build something, create something, become a big part of our business world and they can come back knowing they are going to have the chance and opportunity to pursue their own business and their own jobs.”

This program aligns with [Resolution No. 156: Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program](#), where the legion advocates for an entrepreneurial training program for veterans and states that the program should, “encourage and motivate veterans to explore their management and organizing abilities required in formulating sound business plans and help in obtaining needed financing for successful implementation of a business.”

Clark, Marci. “Bipartisan Bill Proposed to Help Service Members Succeed in Small Business.” MSN, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/smallbusiness/bipartisan-bill-proposed-to-help-service-members-succeed-in-small-business/ar-AATs5iB?ocid=BingNewsSearch>.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHT

DEPARTMENT OF NEW JERSEY:

“Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention” is a community-based presentation that covers the general scope of suicide, the research on prevention, and what people can do to fight suicide. Participants will learn common risk factors and warning signs associated with suicide, and how to keep themselves and others safe. Topics covered include **Scope of the Problem, Research, Prevention & What You Can Do.**

Virtual Presentation:

Tuesday, **February 15 – 7:30PM,**

Register - <https://tslnjfeb22.attendase.com/>.

Bob Looby, KOVA Designer & Author,
boblooby@embarqmail.com, 908-894-0746.



DEPARTMENT OF VERMONT:

Tom Scanlon, Senior Vice Commander authored the following article:

I have heard legionnaires ask, “What are the National Commissions and Committees all about” and “what can individuals from a department contribute on a national level?” I will try to put a little clarity to it through my own experience.

There are various Commissions (Americanism, Convention, Finance, Internal Affairs, Legislative, Marketing, Media & Communications, Membership & Post Activities, National Security, Special, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, and Veterans Employment & Education), and many of which have various committees under the same. I was formerly a member of the Law and Order & Homeland Security Committee which is under the National Security Commission. My three decades in law enforcement and retiring as an executive in that field from a major law enforcement agency enabled me to make viable recommendations and decisions.

My most recent appointment is to the Veterans Employment and Education Commission. At the most recent convention in Phoenix, I attended the commission meeting and there were excellent presentations, particularly in the area of veteran’s employment. The two that particularly interested me were from the CEO’s of Hiring our Heroes, a project of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and SkillMil. They work at placing veterans into the workforce, particularly those exiting the services. Both function in different ways, for example, SkillMil utilizes the military occupational specialties and other credentials to include non-military to connect veterans to jobs.

As a result of these presentations, and the fact that my son-in-law had recently told me he currently needs over 1,000 employees, and it will rise to over 4,000 with the infrastructure bill passing, I saw the potential in getting all of them aligned and connected, working to put veterans in the front of the line for jobs.

My son-in-law is the International Servicing Director for the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT). They do commercial/residential painting, industrial/bridge painting, drywall finishing, glazing (glass structures), to include the painting of military facilities and vessels, both inside and out. They also have training centers in every state and some of the jobs, particularly work on military installations require clearances. Bridge painting, for example, is a job that requires training and certification, and is highly paid work. With the passing of the Infrastructure Bill there will be an increased need for individuals to fill these types of positions.

I was able to get them all connected, and they have all met and are working on plans to get our veterans good paying jobs. A positive result helping our nation’s heroes. I am proud to have played a little part in the solution to the problem of veteran’s employment.

Being on a National Commission or Committee has to be taken seriously so as to effect positive outcomes. It is not just a check in and check out.



CAREER FAIRS

Virtual Job Fair

February 24, 2022

1pm - 3pm

VIRTUAL HIRING EVENT: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAREERS

Military community job seekers from around the globe will meet, network, and interview with Federal Government industry employers at this interactive virtual hiring event.

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

Springfield, VA

February 24, 2022

10am - 2pm

Noon-2pm: Open to all job seekers

American Legion Post 176
6520 Amherst Avenue
Springfield, VA 22151

SPRINGFIELD JOB FAIR

This event will be held in-person from 10am-2pm and virtually from 11am-2pm.

10am-noon: Reserved for veterans, military family and/or candidates who have active security clearances

Presented by [JobZone](#)
[More information](#)

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

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



LEGISLATION TRACKING

EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIO

H.R. 5545 - Responsible Education Mitigating Options and Technical Extensions (REMOTE) Act:

This draft bill would extend expiring provisions established to support student veterans using educational entitlements during the pandemic.

Status: 12/21/2021 - Became Public Law No: 117-76

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

S. 1607 - Student Veterans Transparency and Protection Act of 2021: This bill would improve veterans' access to information about higher education and allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to restore benefits that veterans use at schools subject to civil enforcement.

Status: 12/15/2021 - Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

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

H.R. 4233 - Student Veterans Counseling Centers Eligibility Act: This bill would award grants to community-based Veteran Centers to provide counseling and mental health services to veterans using VA higher education benefits.

Status: 11/17/2021 – Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

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

H.R. 1836 - Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021: This bill would expand eligibility for the post-9/11 GI Bill to count every day that a servicemember is paid and in uniform toward benefit eligibility in order to achieve GI Bill parity for National Guard and Reserve members.

Status: 11/4/2021 – Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Voice Vote.

[Resolution No. 349: Support Legislation to Improve the Post-9/11 GI Bill](#)

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: 11/02/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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

H.R. 5509: Student Veteran COVID-19 Protection Act of 2021: This draft bill would extend expiring provisions established to support student veterans using educational entitlements during the pandemic.

Status: 10/25/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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

H.R. 5483 – Informing VETS Act: This bill would award grants to community-based Veteran Centers to provide counseling and mental health services to veterans using VA higher education benefits.

Status: 10/25/2021 – Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

S.1944- Vet Center Improvement Act of 2021: To improve Vet Centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Status: 12/15/2021 – Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

[Resolution No. 8: Child Care at Vet Centers](#)

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: 11/13/2021 – Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Ordered to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably.

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

S. 1838 - Building Credit Access for Veterans Act of 2021: This bill expands access to housing for veterans and current servicemembers by establishing a pilot program using alternative credit scoring information for veterans and service member.

Status: 11/17/2021 - Referred to Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

H.R. 5783 - Reaching Every Homeless Veteran Act of 2021: This bill amends title 38, United States Code, to improve homeless veterans reintegration programs.

Status: 10/28/2021 - Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

H.R. 2190 - Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2021: This bill permanently establishes existing programs that assist homeless veterans and other veterans with special needs.

Status: 6/16/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

SMALL BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING PORTFOLIO

H.R. 4977 - Better Cybercrime Metrics Act: This bill establishes enhanced cybercrime reporting mechanisms.

Status: 12/8/2021- Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary. Reported Favorably

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

H.R. 3193 - Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility Act: This bill authorizes the Department of Commerce to award economic development grants for public-private partnerships and certain consortiums to carry out specified broadband projects.

Status: 11/15/2021 - Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

[Resolution No. 1: Expansion of Broadband in Rural Areas](#)

H.R. 4515 - Small Business Development Center Cyber Training Act of 2021: This bill would amend the Small Business Act to require cyber certification for small business development center counselors.

Status: 11/03/2021 Received in the Senate and Read twice and referred to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

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

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](#)

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.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.1687 - Small Business Cyber Training Act of 2021: This bill requires the Small Business Administration to establish a program for certifying at least 5 or 10% of the total number of employees of a small business development center to provide cybersecurity planning assistance to small businesses.

Status: 5/18/2021 – Introduced in the Senate Committee on Entrepreneurship

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

ACTION TAKEN ON LEGISLATION

EDUCATION, LICENSING & CREDENTIALING PORTFOLIO

H.R.6112 – MOVE Act: To extend the delimiting period for certain individuals to use educational assistance benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: 12/01/2021 – Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

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

H.R. 5918: To amend title 38, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs repays members of the Armed Forces for certain contributions made by such members towards Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: 11/29/2021 – Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

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

H.R.5151 - Col. James Floyd Turner IV U.S.M.C. GI Bill Transfer Act of 2021: To amend title 38, United States Code to provide for the transfer of entitlement to educational assistance under Post-9/11

Educational Assistance Program of Department of Veterans Affairs when an eligible individual dies after approval of transfer and before transferring all of the individual's entitlement, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status 11/04/2021: Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Voice Vote

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

Draft Bill - VET Student Loan Act: This draft bill would eliminate the time limits on many veterans' education benefits retroactively.

Action Taken: Bill Reviewed - Support

Status: Draft – Not yet introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

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

Draft Bill - Boldly Repaying America's Veterans with Education Act (BRAVE Act): This draft bill would amend Section 108(f) of the Internal Revenue Service Code to eliminate the taxability of discharged student loans for veterans who died or were left permanently disabled as a result of their service.

Action Taken: Bill Reviewed - Support

Status: Draft – Not yet introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 347: Veterans Education Debt Forgiveness](#)

Draft Legislation on SCRA for Education: "To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to establish protections under that Act for a member of the Armed Forces who leaves a course of education, paid for with certain educational assistance, to perform certain service."

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status:

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

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

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITION PORTFOLIO

S.2761 – Every Veteran Counts Act of 2021: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to maintain demographic information regarding veterans and publish such information on a website of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Action Taken: Bill Reviewed - Support

Status: 12/15/2021 – Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.

[Resolution No. 378: United States Census to Include Veterans Information](#)

H.R.2196 - Justice for Servicemembers Act: To amend title 9 of the United States Code to prohibit predispute arbitration agreements that force arbitration of certain disputes arising from claims of servicemembers and veterans.

Action Taken: Bill Reviewed – Support. Joint Letter of Support submitted 11/17/2021.

Status: 10/19/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law.

[Resolution No. 85: Support Employment and Reemployment Rights of National Guard and Reservists Returning from Deployment](#)

Draft Legislation on WARTAC Report: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report on the Warrior Training Advancement Course of the Veterans Benefit Administration.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status:

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 105: Support and Expand Warrior Transition Advancement Course \(WARTAC\)](#)

HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING PORTFOLIO

H.R. 5529: Veterans Justice Outreach Improvement Act: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make certain improvements to the Veterans Justice Outreach Program, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on 10/08/2021

Status: 11/04/2021 Ordered to be Reported (Amended) by Voice Vote.

What's Next: Pending Action by House

[Resolution No. 145: Veterans Treatment Courts](#)

H.R. 5624 - SSVF Report Requirement: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to Congress a report on the shallow subsidy program under the supportive services for veteran families program, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: 11/02/2021 Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

What's Next: Pending Action by Committee

[Resolution No. 340: Support Permanent Authorization for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program](#)

H.R. 5606- Return Home to Housing Act: This bill amends title 38, United States Code, to adjust the rate of per diem payments provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grantees that provide services to homeless veterans.

Action Taken: Testimony on 9/21/21 and Quote for Support on 10/13/2021

Status: 10/25/2021- Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

[Resolution No. 24: Support Funding and Changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Program](#)

H.R. 5301 - Homelessness Tech Assistance: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide technical assistance to recipients of grants for supportive services for very low-income families in permanent housing and comprehensive service programs, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: 09/30/2021 Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

What's Next: Pending Action by Committee

Resolution: Pending Draft Resolution

H.R. 5025 - Homelessness Extend HVRP: To amend title 38, United States Code, to increase and extend the authorization of appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration programs.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: 09/09/2021 Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

What's Next: Pending Action by Committee

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

H.R.492 - Supporting Veteran Families in Need Act: To amend title 38, United States Code, make permanent the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' authority to provide financial assistance for supportive services for very low-income veteran families in permanent housing.

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

Status: 3/16/2021 - Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity

What's Next: Pending Action by Committee

[Resolution No. 331: Support Housing Preference for Low-Income Veterans in the Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

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:

S. 2172 - Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act: This bill improves grants, payments, and technical assistance provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to serve homeless veterans.

Action Taken: This bill was submitted for testimony, Letter of Support submitted 6/23/2021

Status: 07/28/2021 Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Ordered to be reported without amendment favorably

What's Next: Pending Action by Senate

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Draft Legislation on Homeless Grant Elimination of Matching: Adjustment of Grants Awarded by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs for Comprehensive Service Programs to serve homeless veterans.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: Not Yet Introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Draft Legislation on Eliminate Loan Limitations: To amend title 38, United States Code, to eliminate the Freddie Mac conforming loan limitation for loans made to veterans with remaining guaranty or insurance loan entitlement under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: Not Yet Introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 314: Support Elimination of the VA Home Loan Funding Fee](#)

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Substance Abuse Pilot: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on substance use and alcohol use disorder recovery for homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: Not Yet Introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

Resolution: Pending Draft Resolution

Draft Legislation on Increase Homelessness Per Diem: To amend title 38, United States Code, to adjust the rate of per diem payments provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grantees that provide services to homeless veterans.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21, Provided Quote in Support of Bill on 10/13/2021

Status: Not Yet Introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 24: Support Funding and Changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem Program](#)

Draft Legislation on Homelessness Elderly Pilot: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on grants for care for elderly homeless veterans, and for other purposes.

Action Taken: VE&E Testified on 9/21/21

Status: Not Yet Introduced

What's Next: Waiting for formal introduction of legislation

[Resolution No. 319: Expanding Veterans Employment and Homeless Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

SMALL BUSINESS & GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING 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.

Action Taken: Supported by the National Commander in a Letter of Support submitted 08/03/2021

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. 2082 - VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act: This bill would make certain improvements relating to the supply chain of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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

Status: 5/4/2021 - Voted 22 - 6 by House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

What's Next: A full vote in the U.S. House

[Resolution No. 55: Mandatory use of the Veterans First Contracting Program](#)

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

Acronym	Definition
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	SBA's 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

RESOURCE PAGE

ABOUT TANGO LIMA PODCAST

What happens when three veterans walk into a podcast studio? Vibrant camaraderie, playful joking and hot takes ensue. Join Mark Seavey, Ashley Gorbulja-Maldonado and Jeff Daly as they explore current events, interesting trends and quirky stories of interest to the military community.

The weekly podcast is produced by The American Legion.

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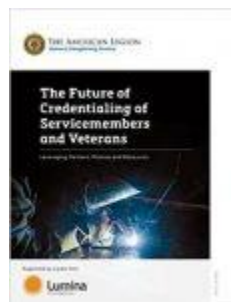
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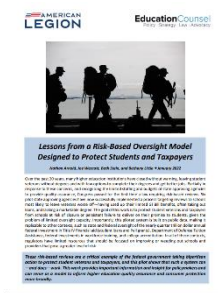
[The State of Credentialing of Service Members and Veterans](#)



[The Future of Credentialing of Servicemembers and Veterans](#)



[Opening Doors Online Access, Accountability and Excellence in Veteran Distance Learning](#)



Lessons from a Risk-Based Oversight Model Designed to Protect Students and Taxpayers

Awards Program



The first American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Commission award was established in 1947 and honored employers across the country who had established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, disabled veterans, and older workers.

- Learn how to apply for these Awards at: <https://www.legion.org/careers/awards>
- For more information contact:
Edwin Cruz
(202) 263-5771
ecruz@legion.org

Services That Really Help

Career fairs and workshops,
guidance on education,
homeless services, small
business resources and more:



➤ **CAREER/EMPLOYMENT CENTER:**

- <http://legion.monster.com/?scmdlCmscc=1>
- <https://www.legion.org/careers/resources>

➤ **HOMELESS VETERANS FIND HELP:**

- <https://www.legion.org/careers/homelesstaskforce>
- <https://www.legion.org/homelessveterans/resources>

➤ **VETERANS EDUCATION BENEFITS:**

- <https://www.legion.org/education/statebenefits>
- <https://www.legion.org/education/federalbenefits>

➤ **VETERAN SMALL BUSINESS TOOLS:**

- <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USSBA/bulletins/2eba258>

MORE STORIES...

CLARKSTON AMERICAN LEGION POST 377 TO HOST FREE OAKLAND COUNTY VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR

“Clarkston American Legion Post 377 will host a free Oakland County Veterans Resource Fair from 9 a.m. to noon, Thursday, Feb. 24, at 4819 Mary Sue St., Independence Twp”

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SUPPORT VETERAN TRANSITION TO THE WORKFORCE DURING RECORD LABOR SHORTAGE

“As our nation struggles with record labor shortages, education officials should be looking for ways to help and not hinder veteran transition from military service to the workforce”

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ANNUAL HOMELESS CENSUS CONDUCTED BY THE VA, HUD, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS WORK TOWARDS ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

“As part of its continued work towards ending Veteran homelessness, the Department of Veterans Affairs is participating in the 2022 Point-in-Time Count led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development this winter to estimate the number of Veterans living in America without safe, stable housing”

[Continue reading the article](#)

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