

NATIONAL VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION COMMISSION

TOPIC 1: ECONOMY

The COVID-19 pandemic is confronting every level of the U.S. economy with an unprecedented challenge, and the government must mount a sustained, ambitious economic response lasting months and perhaps years, UC Berkeley economists said in an online forum today.

In the latest event in the Berkeley Conversations: COVID-19 series, some of the nation's leading economists and policy experts said the effort will require expansive additional measures to relieve workers, state governments and businesses. And they agreed that the recovery program must



focus on workers and communities of color who are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

The recovery program likely will cost trillions of dollars, on top of relief measures already approved by Congress and President Donald Trump. But, they said,

aggressive investment and well-designed policy could bring the economy back more quickly and with less long-term distress for workers and businesses. They concluded that the nation can afford the investment.

“We’re definitely headed to something much deeper than the Great Recession, and comparable to Great Depression in depth,” said Jesse Rothstein, director of Berkeley’s Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE). “What we don’t know yet is whether we’ll be able to bounce back quickly or whether it will linger on for a decade or more. ... The greater extent that we can keep workers attached to their firms and keep the firms afloat, the more likely it is it will bounce back quickly.”

“What’s going to be essential is the government response — the scale, the rapidity of the response,” said Berkeley economist Gabriel Zucman, whose work on wealth distribution and tax policy has attracted international attention.

Berkeley Conversations: COVID-19 is an online discussion series organized by UC Berkeley that convenes world-class scholars to discuss a range of issues critical to the pandemic and recovery. Friday’s event was sponsored by the Goldman School of Public Policy and Berkeley’s Opportunity Lab. It was recorded and archived for public viewing at no cost.

The virulent novel coronavirus emerged in China in November 2019, and in just a few months has advanced across the planet. Over 100,000 people have died, and millions have fallen seriously ill. To check the spread of the virus, people around the world have isolated in their homes and business has shut down. There is no precedent in U.S. history for such a sudden economic shock.

Data discussed at the forum underscored the extent of COVID-19’s impact: As much as a third of the U.S. economy may be shut down. Real unemployment may be at 25%, and millions are filing for unemployment relief every week. Among members of Unite Here, a union representing 307,000 hotel and restaurant workers nationwide, 98% are out of work. California may lose \$20 billion to \$50 billion in tax revenues, and this will come from its \$200 billion annual budget.

Washington has answered with a \$2 trillion relief package, and the Federal Reserve Board this week announced \$2.3 trillion of additional virus relief for small businesses and local governments.

Still, the experts said, more will be needed to offset the damage. Economist Hilary Hoynes, co-director of the Opportunity Lab, cited three immediate priorities: expanded support under the food stamp program, increased support for renters and increased aid to state governments.

But political scientist Henry Brady, dean of the Goldman School of Public Policy, put things in perspective: The U.S. has a \$22 trillion economy, and it had been in good health before the pandemic hit.

This suggests that the nation has the capacity to invest in recovery, the experts said. But carefully targeted policy will be essential. A priority will be to assure that policy addresses the critical needs of low-income people and communities of color, who have been disproportionately hurt by the pandemic.

“Based on the fragmentary data that we have coming out of New York City, black and Latino Americans are dying at twice the rate ... of white Americans,” said Ellora Derenoncourt, who will start in the fall as a Berkeley assistant professor of economics and public policy. “Most Americans can’t work from home. That’s even more true of black and Latino workers. And so they are really bearing the brunt of this crisis.”

Some lawmakers have suggested that the United States must move as quickly as possible to return to normalcy and restart the economy. But the Berkeley experts suggested pitting public health against the economy is a false choice. Rather, they said, the two are inseparable: Assuring public health is the first step toward a sustainable recovery.

“This is a moment when we realize that we’re all in this together,” Brady said. “When we do good things for people, like providing children with food stamps, they turn out to have better lives as they go forward. ... We have to think about how, by investing in people, we actually make the society better.”

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		
	MAY 2019	MAY 2020	MAY 2019	MAY 2020	MAY 2019	MAY 2020	
Unemployed	97	369	82	320	15	49	
Unemployment rate	2.8	10.3	2.8	10.4	3.1	10.1	

The national unemployment rate is 13.3 percent (May 2020). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 10.3 percent.ⁱ Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 10.0 percent (down from 20 percent in May).

TOPIC 2: CONFERENCE CALLS

On Monday, June 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconferenced with Jamie Valerio, Program Manager, Premier Virtual. Discussed their virtual platform with respects to cost analysis, IT interface, and return of investment.

On Monday, June 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with representatives from Capital Bank to discuss the upcoming webinar, their roles and review their slides during the presentation as well as familiarizing their team with our tech platform for broadcasting on the internet.

On Monday, June 22, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conversation with Thomas L. Harnisch, Ed.D., Vice President for Government Relations, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) about issues facing student veterans involving in-state residency during Covid Crisis. Also, had virtual meeting with Education Counsel on RBS plans and how to further build out a workable national model for oversight. Further research and preparation for independent study work.

On Tuesday, June 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division meeting Mark Toal, Outreach Director, Department of Labor Veterans Employment Training Services, (DOL-VETS). We discussed the upcoming Advisory Committee Veterans Employment, Training & Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) virtual meeting. Currently The American Legion does not have voting power. The American Legion's nomination is currently pending approval from the Secretary of Labor.

On Tuesday, June 23, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division had a conference call with President of DeVry University and his staff about education quality and relevance of programs provided by DeVry; excellent conversation on the future of the University, their scholarship programs and how to proceed with any future engagements. We will be having a FU meeting with the Provost of the University to discuss further quality and how they connect Veterans with gainful employment and ensure their success while they are in school.

On Wednesday, June 24, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the Gohkan Coskon, CEO Intel Harriet Fulbright Global Institute. We discussed the feasibility of extending an international certification program that is geared toward transitioning servicemembers stationed overseas (Japan) who may be interested in seeking employment within the aviation industry.

On Friday, June 26, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division teleconferenced with Sarah Roberts, Program Manager, for Veterans Initiative with LinkedIn. We discussed the upcoming LinkedIn webinar on June 30th, 2020.

On Friday, June 26, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division hosted a small business webinar with the SBA and Capital Bank to discuss the Paycheck Protection Program and answer any last-minute questions before the application period expires next week. As veteran small businesses find ways to stay afloat in the times of large scale social distancing and shutdowns, The American Legion brings together resource partners that will help small businesses and nonprofits navigate through emergency federal programming to prevent mass unemployment during the economic downturn.

TOPIC 3: TRACKING LEGISLATION

HR 6800, the Heroes Act: Allows VA to provide transport and purchase food, shelter, phones, clothing, blankets and toiletry items for homeless veterans; Authorizes VA to set up temporary encampments on the grounds of VA Medical Centers to allow homeless veterans to shelter on VA parking lots temporarily; Allows VA to provide reimbursements to social service providers receiving grants for the costs of services for minor children. (Davy)

[Resolution No. 324: Support Funding for Homeless Veterans](#)

HR 2224: To direct the Secretary of Labor to prioritize services to homeless veterans with dependent children in carrying out homeless veterans' reintegration programs and for other purposes. (Ariel/John)

[Resolution No. 326: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families](#)

S. 2594: To amend title 5, United States Code, to modify specific requirements concerning service and retirement for veterans' preference for federal hiring. (Ariel)

[Resolution No. 317: Enforcing Veterans' Preference Hiring Practices in Federal Civil Service](#)

S.2857 - Protect Veterans' Education and Taxpayer Spending Act of 2019: A bipartisan bill to close the 90-10 loophole.

[Resolution No. 15: Support Greater GI Bill Outcomes By Closing 90-10 Loophole](#)

Status: Requires letter of support.

S. 3745: Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act: to require the Department of Education to grant full student loan discharges to three specific emergency categories of defrauded borrowers—specifically borrowers covered by:

- (1) Department of Education findings against Corinthian;
- (2) Department of Education findings against ITT Tech; and
- (3) State attorneys general group discharge applications made before the date of enactment. (John)

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

Status: Letter of support drafted.

S.3637 - A bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to extend lease protections for servicemembers under stop movement orders in response to a local, national, or global emergency, and for other purposes.

Status: UC'd through Senate and House. Support letter drafted.

HR 1196, Jobs for Veterans Act of 2019: This bill allows an increased work opportunity tax credit for employers who hire veterans who have been certified as discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and who begin working for the employer after December 31, 2019, and before January 1, 2024. This increased credit is in addition to any work opportunity tax credit allowed to a veteran with a service-connected disability. (Ariel/John)

[Resolution No. 354; Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program](#)

HR 7010, Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act of 2020: This bill significantly changes the terms of the PPP loans to be more advantageous to small businesses. Including more flexibility in applying the loan to other expenses besides payroll and benefits and extending the time frame for expending the loan. (Davy)

HR 4625: To require education programs to be approved by the VA to abide by the Principles of Excellence to include a ban on deceptive or misleading recruiting, clear information about total costs and program requirements, accommodation for deployments, ensuring a point of contact for veterans, and not being under a punitive action by an accreditor. (John)

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

HR 6957: To direct the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs to treat a period of full-time National Guard duty, performed in response to the national emergency declared on March 13, 2020, by the President concerning COVID-19, as not shorter than 90 days. (John)
[Currently Studying for appropriate resolution.](#)

HR 4941 Veteran Employment Transition Act” or the “VET Act” was sponsored by Representative Andy Kim. The last action on the bill was in the House on 12/02/2019; it was referred to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The bill's goal is to improve the Transition Assistance Program. The bill would allow certain veterans' service organizations to contact veterans regarding benefits and to better inform veterans of employment opportunities. The Service groups would inform veterans of the benefits and employment opportunities with the Federal, State, and local governments. The groups inform veterans of events for in the area. (Raymond/Ariel)
[Resolution No. 70: Improve Transition Assistance Program](#)

H.R.7003 is a bill sponsored by Rep. Takano, Mark D-CA-41 and was introduced 05/22/2020. The bill would authorize a pilot program in the Department of Defense to enhance efforts to provide job placement assistance and related employment services directly to members of the National Guard, Reserves, and veterans of the Armed Forces. The last action on the bill was 05/22/2020 and referred to the Committee on Armed Services. (Raymond/Ariel)
[Resolution No. 81: Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops for National Guard and Reserve Members](#)

Coronavirus Emergency Borrower Defense (E-BD) Act: to require the Department of Education to grant full student loan discharges to three specific emergency categories of defrauded borrowers—specifically borrowers covered by:

- (1) Department of Education findings against Corinthian.
- (2) Department of Education findings against ITT Tech; and
- (3) State attorneys general group discharge applications made before the date of enactment. (John)

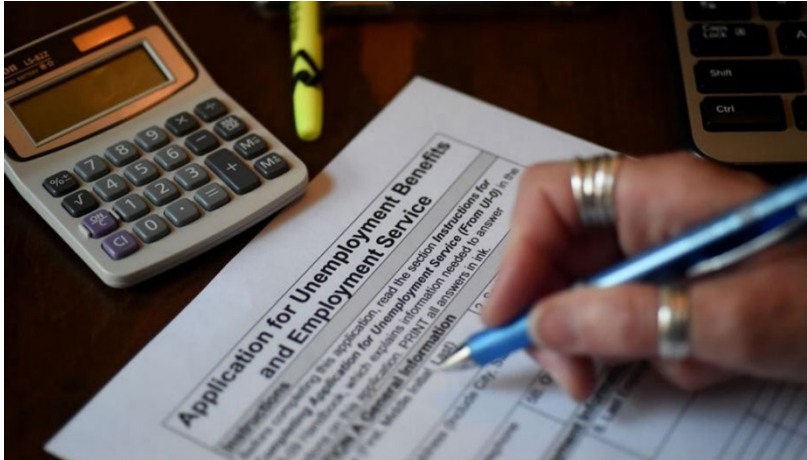
[Resolution No. 82: Preserve Veteran and Servicemember Rights to Gainful Employment and Borrower Defense Protections](#)

HR 7111: Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2020: Require the Secretary of VA to carry out a rapid retraining program that provides eligible veterans up to 12 months of retraining assistance for in-demand occupations. These 12 months of benefits would be equivalent to payments made to students and schools through the Post 9/11 GI Bill. (John/Ariel/Joe W.)
[Resolution No. 316: Support Employment of Veterans in the Public and Private Workforce](#)

Homeless Veteran Coronavirus Response Act: The bill allows VA to use existing funds for a broader range of services; authorizes the Department to collaborate with outside organizations to facilitate shelters on its properties; loosens restrictions on Grant and Per Diem (GPD) payments, and requires VA to ensure veterans participating in VA homeless programs have access to VA telehealth services. (Teresa)
[Resolution No. 326: Support Funding for Additional Housing for Homeless Veterans with Families](#)

TOPIC 4: EMPLOYMENT

When young men and women enlist in the military, they are asked to do a lot, therefore, we need to ensure that they are adequately prepared for that transition back to the private sector. The American Legion is encouraged to see that the Assistant Secretary of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) is continuing its priority of transitioning servicemembers during these uncertain times.



In this photo illustration, a person files an application for unemployment benefits on April 16, 2020, in Arlington, Virginia

This is reflective in an article released this week by John Lowry assistant secretary of labor for Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

Many have likened the coronavirus pandemic to war, for a good reason. On the battlefield, military units with the agility to "improvise, adapt, and overcome" put the odds in their favor.

For businesses attempting

to succeed in the COVID-19 theater, the ones that pivot the quickest will emerge in the best position.

Veterans spend their formative years learning how to excel in challenging and dynamic environments. Let them help you win this war.

Veterans comprise one of the most capable and resilient talent pools in the nation. Before military training even begins, our all-volunteer force is filled with high-quality recruits. Approximately 66% of high school graduates enroll in college, whereas only 29% even meet the standards for entry into military service. Indeed, many people are unaware that it's statistically harder to get into the military than into most undergraduate institutions.

During their years of military service, veterans learn to work effectively in diverse teams while accomplishing difficult missions under stressful conditions. They gain valuable hard and soft skills in a culture that encourages initiative, believes in accountability, and develops some of the finest leaders in the world.

Navy veteran Bill Berrien provides a great example of these skills in action. Berrien leads Pindel Global Precision, a Wisconsin-based manufacturing company. Last month, Berrien and his team retooled their operation to supply ventilator components to four separate manufacturers, quickly adapting to a new line of business created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Pindel Global Precision is playing a critical role in this war while also positioning itself for continued success in the marketplace.

I took advantage of leadership like Berrien's during my decades of personal experience in the private sector. It reinforced my belief in the extraordinary value of veterans. I now lead the Veterans' Employment and Training Service at the U.S. Department of Labor, and it is our vision for all veterans to reach their full potential in the workforce. Achieving this vision not only helps veterans, their families, and the organizations they serve, but it is also good for the nation's prosperity and security.

At the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, our highest priority is getting the transition right when service members leave the military. The coronavirus has not changed this priority — if anything, it makes the priority more urgent. Last year, as part of the interagency Transition Assistance Program, our agency provided in-person transition assistance to 172,000 service members.

Since this year's outbreak, we have migrated the vast majority of transition assistance to virtual platforms and have made similar adjustments to the entire portfolio of our agency's services. We continue to serve those who served and are positioning to support the recovery.

Before the coronavirus crisis, the contribution of veterans to the American economy reached a historic milestone. Unemployment among veterans fell to 3.1% in 2019, the lowest annual veteran unemployment rate since 2000. Unfortunately, there are more than 1 million newly unemployed veterans as a result of necessary COVID-19 countermeasures.

Although most of the unemployed veterans will return to work once the "all clear" has been sounded, some will not. There will also be legions of transitioning service members who will be discharged into an economy that remains on partial hold because of COVID-19. These unemployed, as well as the many underemployed veterans, comprise a critical resource to enable the great American recovery. I encourage any organization seeking increased agility and resilience to hire from this extraordinary talent pool.

TOPIC 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Several cities across the U.S. are bucking recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by continuing to do regular sweeps of homeless encampments, risking further spread of the virus at a time when health officials are seeking to gain an upper hand on the still-expanding pandemic.

Such struggles involving COVID-19 highlight the nation's ongoing problem with housing. And they showcase the challenge public health officials face: Controlling the spread of the coronavirus also risks increasing the spread of other infectious diseases, such as hepatitis A, that thrive amid the trash-and-feces-strewn sidewalks that can be found in some encampments.

In Denver, Lewis and hundreds of others were displaced in late April and early May from sprawling, blocks-long encampments, as part of what city officials say is an ongoing effort to periodically clean city streets and keep infectious diseases down. Most homeless campers moved their belongings just a few blocks, where their tents now line more than a quarter mile of sidewalks.

An hour south, in Colorado Springs, the police department says it is continuing to follow CDC guidance to prevent COVID-19 spread among the city's homeless population, but also that it has continued enforcing camping bans at certain times on public property, ticketing homeless people who are camping if they refuse to relocate. Those in the camps say a bulldozer cleared at least one site.



And in St. Louis, the city's health department ordered the removal of camps near City Hall, prompting an outcry from homeless advocates.

In all, at least a dozen cities in recent months have continued such camp removals — which goes against CDC guidelines amid the pandemic, according to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

As some U.S. communities continue to reopen, and as downtown businesses welcome back employees and customers, some homeless advocates fear such sweeps will only worsen.

"There's no strategy," Jacob Wessley, director of outreach and engagement for the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless says. "That is our concern: When they do sweep this area, where are [those without homes] going to go?"

In Denver, one such cleanup in early May netted 9,500 pounds of trash and more than 50 hypodermic needles, according to Nancy Kuhn, spokesperson for the city's department of transportation and infrastructure.

"Denver has a responsibility to address unsafe, unhealthy, and unsanitary conditions impacting our community," Kuhn says.

Some cities say the pace of such sweeps has dropped dramatically during the pandemic.

Seattle officials conducted four such sweeps from mid-March to early June — each because of "extreme circumstances," says Kevin Mundt, a spokesperson for Seattle's human services department. That compares with 303 such camp removals in the final three months of 2019.

Honolulu created a dedicated area for people to camp and "quarantine" for about two weeks before moving into shelters, in case they had COVID-19. But some homeless campers who did not move had their camps dismantled, which led them to disperse through the community.

The goal is to limit the spread of the virus, while encouraging campers to move indoors, says Marc Alexander, executive director of the city's Office of Housing.



Even so, many homeless advocates say the CDC's guidance is clear, and such efforts don't pass muster. If individual housing units aren't available, the CDC says, homeless campers should be allowed to remain in place during the pandemic. Tents should be at least 12 feet apart, and camps of more than 10 people should be provided hand-washing stations and hand sanitizer.

"Clearing encampments can cause people to disperse throughout the community and break connections with service providers," the CDC guidance warns. "This increases the potential for infectious disease spread."

Already the coronavirus has infected some people who lack permanent housing. In

Colorado, for example, at least 483 homeless people have tested positive for COVID-19, state officials reported June 14. Nearly 80% lived in Denver.

Infection rates in the camps, however, are unclear. None of the 50 homeless campers in downtown Denver who agreed to testing in early June were positive for the coronavirus, according to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. But a different survey a month earlier indicated nearly a quarter of the 52 people tested at a nearby homeless service center were infected with the virus, despite showing no symptoms.

In downtown Denver encampments, dozens of tents stand packed together, often less than a foot apart along sidewalks. Hardly anyone wears masks, and many in the tent community say the virus is low on their list of concerns.

Several hand-washing stations accompany portable toilets in the area, each provided by a local advocacy group. But the stations don't always have water.

For some homeless campers, the situation is preferable to staying in a shelter.

Avoiding those cramped confines and the accompanying risk of illness makes "common sense," says Erin Lorraine, who is 19 and has been homeless off and on for seven years. One sweep led her to move closer to the South Platte River on the west side of downtown.

"These are our homes," Lorraine says. "We're not hurting nobody."

Not all homeless campers see Denver's cleanups as so nefarious. Many say they were told by Denver officials that they could return after city crews sprayed down the sidewalk.

"As long as they keep it to where we're getting cleaned, not swept, it's all right," says David Scott.

But some of those displaced by previous sweeps say that trust has been broken.

Melody Lewis was away from her tent during a recent cleanup and returned to find that city crews had confiscated many of her belongings, including at least one tent, a bike and some shoes. She refused to go to a shelter, partly because of the threat of illness. As Lewis relates her story, an old sign hanging from a lamppost a few feet away is a reminder of a previous camp cleanup.

"We try to ignore it," Lewis says of such warnings. "Our stuff and our minds are never secure."

To limit the spread of the coronavirus, some nonprofits and cities — including some of the places conducting sweeps — have gotten creative, opening isolation shelters for people who are experiencing COVID symptoms and helping some particularly at-risk people move into paid motel rooms.

Recent sweeps also have renewed a conversation in Denver about whether to create sanctioned encampment sites — areas where people can pitch tents and live in socially distanced communities with a city's blessing.

Elsewhere, such regulated camps lend homeless people stability, while increasing the odds that caseworkers can find their clients when housing becomes available, says Tom Luehrs, executive director of the St. Francis Center, a homeless services organization in Denver.

Already, San Francisco has temporarily created a few such encampments, with a total capacity of roughly 200 people.

"Some people have been out on the streets for years," Luehrs says. "And that's where they feel best about living, because maybe we haven't given them better options as a community."

Colleen Echohawk, co-chair of Seattle's Continuum of Care, a coalition of agencies and nonprofits working to address homelessness, says she empathizes with city officials who are having to juggle competing public health threats. Seattle is among the latest areas to face an outbreak of hepatitis A in its homeless community.

But Echohawk questions whether more could be done to limit the impact of sweeps.

"What's frustrating about this is that you move them, and then they just moved into other encampments, and then took with them their COVID-19, and they took with them their hepatitis A," Echohawk says. "It's a real dilemma."

TOPIC 6: CAREER FAIRS

ALL CAREER FAIRS SCHEDULED THROUGH JULY HAVE BEEN CANCELLED, SUSPENDED, OR POSTPONED.

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

THE NEXT VIRTUAL EVENT (LINKEDIN BRANDING) WILL BE JUNE 30, FROM 12:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. EST

The American Legion held its fifth virtual workshop on Paycheck Protection Program.

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

TOPIC 7: SMALL BUSINESS

The American Legion has been tracking the federal stimulus packages and the evolution of the unprecedented Paycheck Protection Program. The Program was plagued with botched roll out then suspected abuse by large businesses, to the extent that concern was raised over whether the bailout was really reaching the small businesses on main street that employ veterans and where we shop. Increased scrutiny ultimately led to the Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin relenting to demands for more programmatic transparency.

The Treasury Department and Small Business Administration bowed to congressional pressure Friday and said they will disclose information on companies that received loans under the government's massive small business rescue program. The names of companies and nonprofits



Small Business Administration hosting summit for veterans, servicemembers and military spouses who want to own a small business.

that got loans larger than \$150,000 under the Paycheck Protection Program will be released, along with other identifying information, the agencies said in a statement. Loan amounts will only be given within a certain range.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the move represents an agreement with the bipartisan leaders of the Senate Small Business Committee, which is headed by Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Ben

Cardin (D-Md.). Those lawmakers had asked for all borrowers to be identified; the deal will cover nearly 75 percent of the more than \$500 billion that has been lent out, though only a minority of the 4.5 million total beneficiaries.

“I am pleased that we have been able to reach a bipartisan agreement on disclosure which will strike the appropriate balance of providing public transparency, while protecting the payroll and personal income information of small businesses, sole proprietors, and independent contractors,” Mnuchin said in the release. The compromise comes amid growing concern from lawmakers of both parties about the limitations the administration has placed on oversight of its coronavirus response.

Mnuchin ignited controversy last week when he said the Trump administration will not reveal the names of companies and nonprofits that got the PPP loans, which are guaranteed by the government and can be forgiven in full if borrowers use a majority of the funds to pay their workers. The agencies had expressed worry that such disclosures might reveal proprietary information about the borrowers because the loans are based on payroll. The agencies will only release totals for loans of less than \$150,000 aggregated by ZIP code, industry, business type and “various demographic categories,” the Treasury and SBA said.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement: “Democrats will continue to push for maximum transparency from the Trump administration, especially when it comes to CARES Act funds,” referring to the \$2 trillion relief package Congress passed in March. Senator Rubio signaled he was satisfied with the agreement. “The American people deserve to know how effective the PPP was in protecting our nation’s small businesses and the tens of millions of Americans they employ,” he said in a statement. “I also understand the very real concern that many small business owners have with regard to disclosing proprietary information. Today’s announcement strikes a balance between those concerns and the need for transparency.”

TOPIC 7a: SMALL BUSINESS

On June 20, 2020, U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-Md.) issued the following statement after the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Department of the Treasury announced that SBA will begin to disclose data on the recipients of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans:

“From the beginning of this economic crisis, Congress has been working to ensure that the implementation of PPP meets the standard of transparency the American people deserve. I am pleased that the Trump Administration reversed course from its initial refusal to disclose this data following calls for transparency from me, Chairman Rubio, and our Democratic and Republican colleagues. As Congress begins to consider the best way to continue supporting small businesses in the weeks and months to come, this data will help ensure that we are able to get capital as quickly as possible to the small businesses that need it most.”

On April 17, Cardin and Democratic Senators Jeanne Shaheen (N.H.), Chuck Schumer (N.Y.), and Ron Wyden (Ore.) sent a letter to SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin urging the officials to provide American taxpayers with data on how small business relief funds are being distributed.

On May 5, Senate Republicans blocked legislation introduced by Cardin, Shaheen, Schumer and Democratic Senators Sherrod Brown (Ohio), Joe Manchin (W.Va.), and Jack Reed (R.I.) that would require SBA to provide Congress and the public with timely, detailed data on the agency’s COVID-19 small business relief programs.

On June 12, Cardin criticized the Administration’s refusal to provide any data on who is receiving PPP loans to Congress or the public.

On June 18, 2020, U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-Md.), and Democratic Senators Chris Coons (Del.) and Jeanne Shaheen (N.H.), senior members of the committee, introduced the Prioritized Paycheck Protection Program (P4) Act. A House companion was introduced today by Democratic Reps. Angie Craig (MN-02) and Antonio Delgado (NY-19).

The bill authorizes new lending under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to small businesses with 100 employees or less, including sole proprietorships and self-employed individuals. Eligible businesses must have already expended an initial PPP loan, or be on pace to exhaust the funding, and must demonstrate a revenue loss of 50 percent or more due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill would extend the application deadline for initial PPP loans from June 30 to December 30, or longer, at the discretion of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and would use existing PPP funding to make P4 loans.

To ensure that underserved and hardest-hit businesses can access P4 loans, publicly traded companies are ineligible for the loans; hospitality and lodging businesses with multiple locations are limited to an aggregate loan amount of \$2 million; and the bill would reserve the lesser of \$25 billion or 20 percent of PPP funds for employers with 10 or fewer employees, as well as small businesses in underserved and rural communities. The bill also directs SBA to issue guidance to give priority to businesses with 10 employees or fewer in the processing and disbursement of P4 and PPP loans, and requires SBA to request demographic information of P4 and PPP loan recipients.

Additionally, the P4 Act would:

- provide eligible small businesses with as much as 250 percent of monthly payroll costs worth up to \$2 million;
- prevent affiliated businesses with separate locations from receiving more than \$2 million in aggregate P4 loans; and
- allow P4 recipients maximum flexibility to apply for loan forgiveness as soon as 8 weeks after the loan disbursement.

On June 19, 2020, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, released a statement after the U.S. Treasury Department and the Small Business Administration (SBA) announced they reached a bipartisan agreement with the leaders of the Committee on how the Administration will publicly disclose Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) data.

Details of PPP loan disclosure.

- SBA will disclose the business names, addresses, NAICS codes, zip codes, business type, demographic data, non-profit information, jobs supported, and loan amount ranges as follows:
 - \$150,000 – \$350,000
 - \$350,000 – \$1,000,000
 - \$1,000,000 – \$2,000,000
 - \$2,000,000 – \$5,000,000
 - \$5,000,000 – \$10,000,000

These categories account for nearly 75 percent of the loan dollars approved. For loans below \$150,000, totals will be released, aggregated by zip code, by industry, by business type, and by various demographic categories.

BROADBAND

Despite its global leadership in quality of connectivity, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated shutdown of businesses and schools have exacerbated the Digital Divide. In particular, rural connectivity lags and many lower income families lack the necessary digital tools to connect. Additionally, as people are unable to visit their doctors, they need to use new tools to stay healthy.

To achieve these goals the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recommends long-term funding and permitting relief to sustainably bridge the divide while offering temporary, targeted, and timely solutions to address COVID-19 specific disparities.

This will help improve education, health, and the underprivileged while giving our slumping economy a much-needed boost.

Funding High-Cost Broadband

According to the Federal Communications Commission's 2020 Broadband Deployment Report, 22.3 percent of Americans in rural areas and 27.3 percent of those on Tribal lands lack access to high-speed internet. Prior to the pandemic, the Chamber Technology Engagement Center (C_TEC) released a report, which surveyed approximately 5,300 rural small businesses. Sixty-six percent of respondents cited that poor connectivity affected their business. The report's economic analysis also concluded that if rural small business had access to digital tools yearly GDP and jobs would increase by \$41.3 billion and 316,605 respectively. With some predicting de-urbanization in response to COVID-19, these numbers could also increase, making rural connectivity even more vital.

Better infrastructure would allow for greater use of these digital tools and technology in rural small businesses across the country. The Chamber estimate that if given access to digital tools, rural small businesses could innovate and add nearly \$47 billion to U.S. GDP.

5G technology will be an economic game changer if history is a guide. According to one study, "the creation of 4G networks contributed nearly half a trillion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2016, and the introduction of mobile broadband added \$100 billion to the U.S. GDP." Regulatory certainty drives capital investment and unfortunately many state and local governments are charging exorbitant fees and stalling small cell broadband deployment. It is for this reason that the Chamber supports the approach taken by Senators Thune and Schatz who introduced the STREAMLINE Act, which would work to reduce fees and impose shot clocks on localities for making permitting decisions.

A national broadband permitting strategy should also modernize how wireline broadband decisions are made. Wireline broadband and the cable industry provide a massive benefit for covered regions. In 2018, the cable industry contributed to a \$421 billion economic impact and supported 2.9 million jobs. The Chamber supports wireline streaming and cable franchising reform in addition to notice requirements when state and local governments intend to alter public rights of way.

COVID-19 is rapidly changing the way we work, learn, and stay connected. The pandemic has highlighted the need for a strategic, long-term broadband funding and permitting strategy. At the same time, Congress must address the urgent short-term needs caused by the pandemic related to education and healthcare equality. America's communication infrastructure leads the world because of the private sector, but it will be vital for our continued leadership for Congress to help fill in the gaps.

TOPIC 8: EDUCATION

Representatives Conor Lamb (PA-17) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1) led a coalition of bipartisan Members in a letter to Senate and House leadership advocating for the needs of our nation's veterans, transitioning service members, and their families in the next COVID-19 legislative response package.



“The transition for our service members back to civilian life can be difficult no

Cuinn Mulinaro, 26, a U.S. Navy veteran, in a break room he and his fellow student-veterans call the Bunker, part of the Veterans Center at San Diego State University. (Peggy Peattie)

matter the circumstances. However, particularly during the current coronavirus pandemic, we believe Congress must do everything in our power to support our veterans and transitioning service members, especially by addressing their workforce development, employment, and economic needs,” the lawmakers wrote to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

“Veterans' unemployment rates are rising due to COVID-19. During the Great Recession from 2007-2009 studies show that veterans who recently transitioned to civilian life faced higher unemployment rates than both older veterans and non-veterans. These studies also indicate increased veterans' suicide rates during the Great Recession, tied in part to less economic opportunity. Accordingly, we are concerned that the adverse economic conditions stemming from COVID-19 could cause similar harm to the veterans' community today. Therefore, we believe that additional targeted veterans and transitioning service members' workforce policy improvements are needed across several federal agencies to COVID-19 and to ensure economic stability for the veterans' community in the long-term.”

The letter outlined the following measures of support to assist veterans and their families navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- GI Bill benefit coverage for veterans who are nontraditional students in Registered Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training programs.
- Funding for the Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) for veterans.
- Increasing access for veterans and transitioning service members to additional skilled training programs.
- Recognizing veterans' service-connected skills through enhancements to our existing credentialing system.

This letter is supported by various groups and coalitions, including the Union Veterans Council (UVC), International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Utility Workers Union of America-AFL-CIO, Transportation Institute and the Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Services.

The American Legion Veterans Employment & Education Division is researching the practicality of these recommendations and has also raised the issue of streamlining licensing and credentialing for transitioning servicemembers.

As veterans transition during the coming years, more work can be done to stabilize their stable economic footing as they enter the civilian workforce. One example is military medics who save lives on the battlefield but because of crediting reciprocity issues lack the ability to reinforce frontline healthcare workers fighting COVID-19. Further policies and oversight are needed to establish and maintain effective resources for active-duty and separating service members and spouses who pursue industry-aligned credentials. These include allocating manpower and funding for agency reviews of federal and state regulations to create exemption/fast-tracking to licenses and credentials for specialty skilled service members, including welders, aviation mechanics, truck drivers, specialty health care workers and medics, construction workers with specialty operating skills, and other licenses and credentials. Establish an interagency task force to create partnerships with state credentialing agencies in order to expand civilian-military credential translation equivalents and reciprocity.

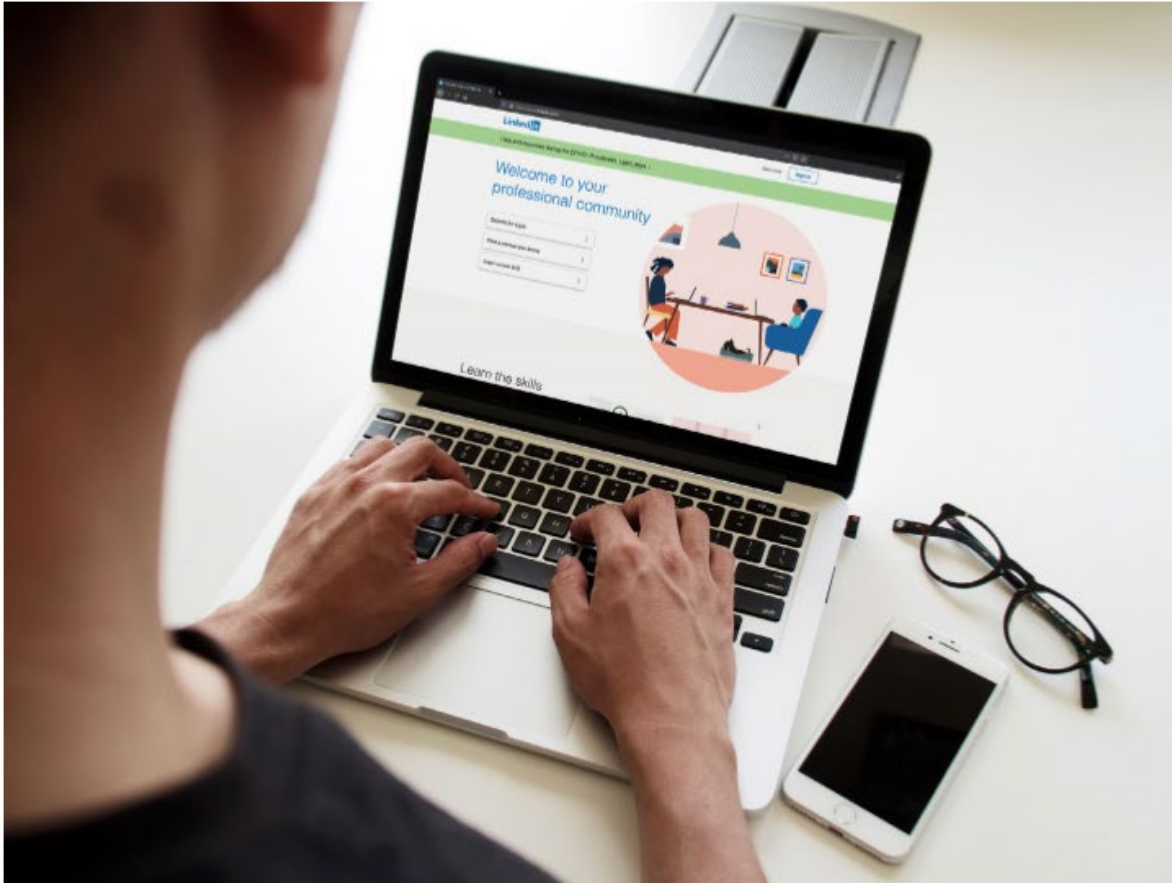
Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending: 6/26/20



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