



# **VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION WEEKLY REPORT**

# **VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION WEEKLY UPDATE**

Week Ending — 05/12/2023

## **Veterans Benefits and Claims Services**

### **Accreditations**

- Applications received from TAL Departments 11
- Certifications submitted by TAL Washington Office 11
- Certifications approved by VA's Office of General Counsel 5

### **The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit**

- AMA appeals pending (125+ days) 1
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) prepared 212
- Memos generated 5
- Phone inquiries 195
- Internal quality reviews 3
- Individual training 0 hours
- Team training 0 hours
- Hearings 2
- Board dispositions 318
  - o Appeals granted 97 (30.5%)
  - o Remanded 156 (49.1%)
  - o Denied 53 (16.7%)
  - o Other 12 (3.8%)

### **Senior Veterans Disability Claims Specialist**

- Compensation & Pension Claims 243
- Other Issues 15
- Contacts 258

### **Pension & Debt Management**

- New Claims (all types) 34
- Supporting Submissions 75
- Sensitive Claims 4
- Rating Reviews/Audits 57
- Contacts 121

# Health Policy

## Meetings

- May 8: Health Policy Analyst, Kenneth Harman, Matthew Cardenas, and Marie Black attended VA Health Services R&D cyber webinar series entitled, VA's Video Telehealth Tablets, Access to Mental Health Care, Suicide Risk Assessment, and Suicidal Behavior.
- May 9: Health Policy Analyst, Marie Black attended the monthly IVF Working Group to discuss upcoming projects and infertility legislation.
- May 10: Health Policy Analyst Matthew Cardenas attended the VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Program Partnership's Stakeholder Quarterly Meeting with MSOs/VSOs to discuss Massed vs Intensive Outpatient Prolonged Exposure for Combat-Related PTSD.
- May 10: Health Policy Analyst, Joshua Hastings continued correspondence with Department of Texas Commander and Navy veteran/Texas A&M School of Medicine Adjunct Assistant Professor, and past Board of Director of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine, Dr. Martin Denbar, concerning his latest accredited services to treat veterans with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) for TRICARE and VHA- clients, and a possible speaking engagement at the National Convention.
- May 12: Health Policy Analyst, Marie Black, virtually attended the President's Management Agenda (PMA) Navigating the Transition from Military to Civilian Life Experience project briefing for VSO Leaders.

## Legislative Bill Reviews

- H.R. 705 - the Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act – *Recommend Support*
- S. xx - Department of Defense Overdose Data Act of 2023 – *Recommend Support*
- H.R. xx - the Innovative Cognitive Care for Veterans Act of 2023 – *Recommend Support*
- H.R. 1815 - Expanding Veteran's Options for Long-Term Care Act – *Recommend Support*
- H.R. xx - Green Star Veterans Service Act (amends title 38 USC) – *Recommend Support*
- HR xx - Green Star Families Act (amends title 36 USC) – *No position*
- H.R. 1413 - Expanding America's National Cemetery Act of 2023 – *Recommend Support*

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End of VA&R weekly update – 05/12/2023



# **VETERANS EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION WEEKLY REPORT**

# The Weekly Report

## National Veterans Employment & Education Commission



### *Our Latest Announcement of the Week*



**John W. "Jay" Bowen**  
Chairman of the National Veterans Employment and Education Commission

Members of The American Legion's National Executive Committee (NEC), along with American Legion commission and committee members, convened in Indianapolis for the annual Spring Meetings. The NEC met in the NEC Room at National Headquarters to review reports and vote on resolutions. The National Veterans Employment & Education (VE&E) Commission Chairman, Chairman Bowen, presented his report and delivered oral remarks to Legion leadership. Chairman Bowen expertly discussed the VE&E Commission's critical role among various diverse subject matters, including small business and government contracting; education, licensing, and credentialing; employment and transition; and veteran homelessness and housing.

In addition, one resolution from the VE&E Commission was voted on and adopted by the NEC. The resolution is titled "Home Loan Guaranty Program Eligibility," and solidifies The American Legion's support to amend federal legislation to allow veterans to transfer their Veteran Home Loan benefit to their children or spouse. Chairman Bowen's Oral Remarks, the full Report, and the resolution are provided in the email.

#### In the Report

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# Economy

Excerpt from Market Watch:

A new economic research paper argues for a model that would both explain the surge in inflation but also the ability for central banks to tame it without causing a mass rise in unemployment.

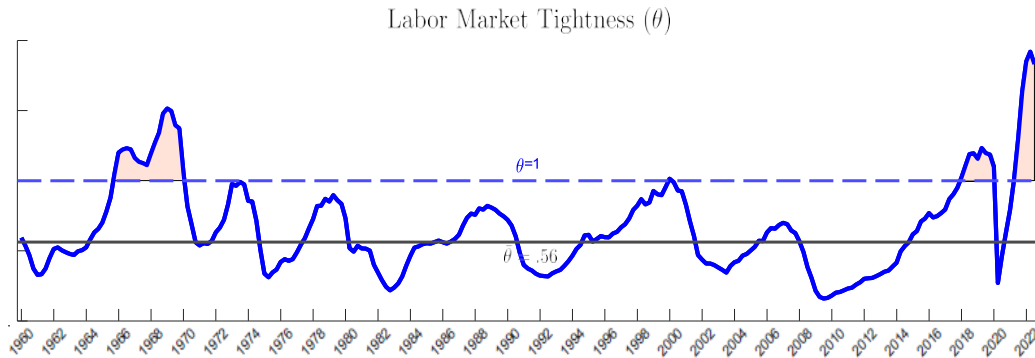
The paper, [from Pierpaolo Benigno of the University of Bonn and Gauti Eggertsson of Brown University](#), tackles a thorny subject in economic circles called the Phillips Curve. Named for the economist William Phillips, it predicts that higher inflation is associated with lower unemployment and vice versa, though that model didn't really hold during the 1970s. Economists thought that 1970s breakdown was because inflation expectations became unanchored, but that didn't explain what happened after COVID-19, when inflation surged without much of a rise in inflation expectations.



The government stimulus then caught economists by surprise since they thought the impact of excessive stimulus on inflation would be minor. One widely cited estimate posits that a 1 percentage point drop in unemployment only generates a 0.3 percentage point rise in inflation. What mainstream economists seemed to have ignored was the sudden drop in the labor supply as labor-force participation cratered, these authors say.

“If one accepts our basic premise that the inflationary surge was driven by labor shortage, there is a silver lining. If the surge is driven not by expectations – which may be hard to rein in – but instead by a steep Phillips curve, it should be much less costly to bring inflation down to target,” the authors say, in a paper circulated by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Central bankers may be able to tame inflation significantly with a relatively small sacrifice of output – a soft landing, they say. That seems to be a view largely shared by Federal Reserve policymakers.

In his introductory comments on Wednesday, Chair Jerome Powell took heart that there is evidence of the labor market coming back into balance even without a change in the unemployment rate, which was just 3.5% in March.



“Even so, there are some signs that supply and demand in the labor market are coming back into better balance. The labor force participation rate has moved up in recent months, particularly for individuals aged 25 to 54 years. Nominal wage growth has shown some signs of easing, and job vacancies have declined so far this year,” said Powell.

The S&P 500 closed lower Wednesday, its third consecutive decline, amid both the Fed decision and regional bank turmoil. The yield on the 10-year Treasury was 3.40%.

## Education, Licensing & Certification

Division staff met with the George W. Bush Institute’s Veteran Employment “Tiger Team” Task Force. The Task Force’s mission is to create tangible goals to address the inherent link among military recruitment challenges, academic enrollment declines, and in-demand jobs to meet national security imperatives.

Division staff met with Veterans Education Success. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the pending Education Department regulations, examine policy considerations on requiring the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Veterans Benefits Administration share data with other agencies to determine GI Bill student outcomes, and discuss how risk-based reviews are assessed by State Approving Agencies.

## Employment & Transition

Division staff invited Berlyn Cooper-Howard, Acting Program Director of Talent Acquisition, Classification, and Veterans programs for the OPM, to meet with Division staff and Executive Director, James Baca, at The American Legion's Washington, D.C. Headquarters. The meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 16. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss some of OPM's priorities and to identify synergy points between The American Legion and OPM to bolster Veterans Preference and hiring within the federal government.

Division Staff attended the President's Management Agenda (PMA) project briefing to Veteran Service Organization on the topic of navigating the transition from military to civilian life. The purpose of the meeting was to brief stakeholders on the progress of the project to acquire insights and feedback.

Division staff is compiling information from various studies and resources to write a white paper on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) highlighting some of its issues and concerns. The TAP program serves the purpose of assisting servicemembers to transition smoothly from the armed forces into civilian life. One problem area identified is that the TAP timeframe is too short to provide a sufficient understanding of benefits and resources to participants.

Division staff met with the Department of Texas, The Texas Workforce Commission, and The Texas Veterans Commission to discuss the timeline and action items for hosting a Transition and Employment workshop at Fort Cavazos on June 12 and a virtual job fair on July 12 during the Department of Texas's State Convention.

A registration site has been created for the Employment Workshop event at Fort Cavazos. Anthony Thomas, the Senior Transition Coordinator for the Soldier Recovery Unit at Fort Cavazos, confirmed with division staff that a classroom was reserved for the event at the Soldier and Family Assistance Center where the workshops can be held, and division staff generated a flyer to promote the event. The workshops will equip transitioning servicemembers and their spouses with the information and resources necessary to aid them in their search for gainful employment during the TAP Mega Job Fair event that the Fort Cavazos Installation will hold the next day on, June 13. The American Legion will also be present at the Mega Job Fair to serve as an educational resource to participants.

Regarding the Virtual Job Fair, the event registration and layout have been created through the Premier Virtual platform. A flyer was generated, which contains information to link employers and jobseekers to register for the event. Division staff is working to promote the event by reaching out to employers as well as through its communication channels via the Media & Communication Division of The American Legion, the



Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Labor, American Job Centers, and Military Installations.

## Housing & Homelessness

Division staff reached out the chairpersons of the Homeless Veterans Task Force (HVTF) from multiple departments across the country. Personnel spoke with chairpersons who have been leading this task force for years, including Chairman from the Departments of Illinois, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Idaho, Pennsylvania, Nevada, and Montana. The main purpose for this outreach was to reinvigorate the HVTF and assure that there is a nationwide network of assistance for veterans in need of housing. In pursuit of a refined task force, the information of members was verified, and the Division sought the appropriate points of contact for each department. Associates are finalizing the HVTF point of contact list to begin holding task force meetings. [Click here read more about the HVTF](#)

Division staff met with USA CareLiving, LLC.'s Hymie Barber to visit the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Staff worked to identify opportunities between The American Legion and USA CareLiving to create a meaningful assisted living community for veterans and their spouses. Mr. Barber identified the LaGarde building on the premises to warrant further study as it can be converted to 150 units with public spaces while also being a scalable project.

## Small Business & Government Contracts

Division staff attended a Congressional hearing titled "Leveling the Playing Field: State of Small Business Contracting." The House Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Contracting and Infrastructure, held the hearing to address the major decline of small businesses participating in federal contracting. The number of new small businesses entering the procurement marketplace declined by 79 percent from 2005 to 2019. Moreover, the number of small businesses contracts in 2022 is half of what it was in 2010. The concern is so great that the Department of Defense recently stated that this negative trend will weaken the military and directly impact our national defense.

During the hearing, the Subcommittee Chairman, Chairman LaLota (R-NY) made the following statement: "[t]oday, the Subcommittee . . . will focus on several critical issues

*facing Main Street America. We must address the alarming decline in small business federal procurement. . . . Members of this Committee— from both sides of the aisle— understand the crucial role small businesses play in increasing competition, innovation, and stimulating our economy and yet they have been systematically squeezed out of federal contracting for decades. . . . Our goal on this Committee is to create a pathway for small businesses to succeed. We understand the value and substance that make up each of these businesses in our hometowns and vow to continue to advocate for their success. . . . Small business contractors play a vital role in America’s industrial base and national security apparatus.”*

A large part of the hearing addressed the decline in government contracting between the federal government and service-disabled veteran owned small businesses (SDVOSBs). Division staff are working with Congress to aid the alarming trend this hearing highlighted. Division staff are contributing innovative ways to ensure SDVOSBs are treated fairly in the government contracting industry.

Division staff met with the Chairman of The American Legion’s Small Business Task Force (SBTF), to discuss some of the SBTF’s priorities and to inform the Chairman of Congressional meetings that staff scheduled to discuss The American Legion’s small business priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Division staff invited Laura Wages, the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA’s) Director, Policy and Engagement, Office of Veterans Business Development, to meet with Division staff and Executive Director, James Baca, at The American Legion’s Washington, DC office. The meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 17. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss some of SBA’s priorities and to discuss innovative ways that The American Legion and SBA can work together to help SDVOSBs succeed in the evolving economic landscape.

Division staff and staff from The American Legion’s National Legislative Division met with personnel from Congressman Brad Finstad’s (R-MN) office. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss The American Legion's small business legislative priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, including options for providing access to capital for veterans seeking to start small businesses, increasing contracting opportunity for SDVOSBs by increasing federal agency-wide procurement goals from 3% to 5%, and expanding the VA’s VETs First Program to the DoD.

Division staff and staff from The American Legion’s National Legislative Division scheduled a meeting with personnel from Congressman Morgan McGarvey’s (D-KY) office. The meeting will take place on Thursday, May 18. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss The American Legion's small business legislative priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, including options for providing access to capital for veterans seeking to start small businesses, increasing contracting opportunity for SDVOSBs by increasing federal agency-wide procurement goals from 3% to 5%, and expanding the VA’s VETs First Program to the DoD.