The 2020 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase for the 68 million Americans who rely on Social Security, VA disability, military retirees, and other government benefits will be 1.6%. An increase is good news but a modest increase compared to last year’s 2.8%. COLA increases are based on the inflation measurement period of the 3rd quarter (July, August, and September) compared to the previous 3rd quarter.

“The 1.6 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits payable to more than 63 million Social Security beneficiaries in January 2020. Increased payments to more than 8 million SSI beneficiaries will begin on December 31, 2019.”

**2020 Cola Effective & Payment Dates:**
- Retired military veterans, VA rates for compensation, and pension for disabled veterans and surviving families will be effective December 1, 2019, and will be reflected on the first check to be paid on December 31, 2019.
- Social Security benefits will be effective, beginning with the December 2019 benefits, which are payable in January 2020.
- Federal SSI & SSDI payment levels will be effective for payments made for January 2020.

**Why a COLA Increase May Not Help Social Security Recipients**
If Medicare climbs at an equivalent or higher rate, any increase may be offset by Medicare care premiums. Additional senior citizen household spending has typically outpaced COLA because the measurement to determine COLA doesn’t reflect the expenses that impact seniors most, like healthcare (not a heavy COLA calculation) and gas (a heavy COLA calculation).

**Will Chained CPI Replace CPI-W?**
Chained CPI is a new method for measuring inflation and was recently adopted with the new tax plan. Chained CPI dampens inflation by as much as .2 to .3 percent which has many advocacy groups concerned that this method will carry over to COLA. Few people are against a better measurement of inflation; in fact, many advocacy groups believe even the CPI-W is not the best measurement for retirees; however, Chained CPI many contend would be a step backward.

**COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustments) is for the following individuals or areas:**
- Retired Military Veterans
- Disabled Veterans – See [VA Disability Rate Tables](#)
- Veterans’ Pension Benefits – [Veterans Pension Rate Tables](#)
- Survivor Benefit Annuitants – [Survivors’ Pension Rate Tables](#)
- Surviving Families of Veterans – [Parents’ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Tables](#)
• Social Security recipients
• Federal Civilian Retirees
• Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
• Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
• Eligibility for Medicare Extra Help and Medicaid
• Federal & State food and housing assistance programs

## 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]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status, veteran status, and period of service</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The national unemployment rate is 3.5 percent (December 2019). Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 3.1 percent. Currently, the unemployment rate for Gulf War II women veterans is 3.1 percent (down from 8.0 percent in November).

### TOPIC 2: MEETINGS

**From Friday, January 3rd – 5th, 2020**, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended the Student Veterans of America National Conference in Los Angeles, CA. Over 2,500 Student Veterans in attendance. Presented on Legislative Panel in the afternoon on accomplishments of 2019 and discussed what lies ahead. Other participants on the panel included VES, American Enterprise Institute and HVAC staffers. The American Legion highlighted topics on higher education to include our forthcoming report on distance learning and support of HR 4625, Protect the GI Bill Act. During the conference, I conducted liaison with NAVPA, AEI, SVA, Wounded Warriors, and VFW on higher education issues and pending legislation.

**On Tuesday, January 7th, 2020**, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in train the trainer call with Sara Roberts, Veterans Program Manager, LinkedIn, allowing The American Legion to conduct LinkedIn workshops effectively to servicemembers, veterans, and their spouses.

**On Tuesday, January 7th, 2020**, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with the National Veterans Small Business Coalition to discuss the next steps in hosting a forum on the future of VA medical supply chain during the Legion’s winter conference in Washington DC.
On Tuesday, January 7th, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division discussed with NASAA President the impact of the legislation and also held an extended conversation with SVAC staff on American Legion legislative impacts and how it could be improved to protect Veterans further. Also discussed with those parties' new risk-based survey model ensuring proper oversight being developed this year by NASAA and VA.

On Wednesday, January 8th, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in a conference call with Kathy Poynton, Director, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Hiring Our Heroes. We have discussed two upcoming Career Fairs in Detroit, Michigan, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

On Thursday, January 9th, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division participated in a call with Lori Adams, Director, National Association of State Workforce Agency (NASWA). I discussed their upcoming winter conference, where they would like The American Legion to participate.

On Thursday, January 9th, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division attended a phone conference with several organizations interested in participating in an American Legion roundtable regarding homeless and incarcerated veterans. The tentative roundtable is scheduled to occur in February 2020 at the American Legion headquarters and will include federal and nonprofit organizations operating to a resource or be a resource to the homeless veteran population.

On Friday, January 10th, 2020, the National Veterans Employment & Education Division met with staff from the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee ahead of their participation in the Vet Force meeting happening later this month.

TOPIC 3: EMPLOYMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Separation Counseling for Separations</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Separation Counseling for Retirees</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>690-1100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP Workshop</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>3-8</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0900 - 1660</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrio TIP Workshop</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS and Above</td>
<td>0900 - 1660</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>20-22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTIONAL CLASSES BELOW</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship Tread</td>
<td>0930 - 1660</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>15-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Start-Up Basics</td>
<td>6900</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Track</td>
<td>0900 - 1660</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Ed Center to register</td>
<td>419-377-3464</td>
<td>3-3-4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Labor Employment Track</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>24-15</td>
<td>9-5</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Labor Vocational Track</td>
<td>0900 - 1660</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>31-1</td>
<td>29-29</td>
<td>29-29</td>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a Winning Resume</td>
<td>0900</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with Veterans</td>
<td>0900-1100</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOPIC 3: EMPLOYMENT**

2020 Transition Assistance Program Workshops/Classes

**Dates May Be Subject to Change**

**NAS/VET appointments are made every Thursday. We appointments take approximately an hour.**

*Disabled American Veterans (DAV) appointments for medical records review are scheduled on a monthly basis. Patients may be referred to a core provider for initial review, separation, or retirement claim.**

Contact the ABRC to schedule classes and appointments at 479-206-1175.

Variation on 11 Sep 2022
The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides information, tools, and training to help service members and their spouses get ready to move from the military to civilian life successfully. From start to finish, TAP guides users on veteran benefits, education options, federal assistance, and veteran employment help. All key points to a successful transition; therefore, The American Legion has been and will continue to monitor and follow the progression of the “New TAP” rollout – effective October 1st, 2019.

The TAP process, once known as Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), is broken down into five parts over a minimum 12-month timeline, although those getting ready to retire can start as far as 24 months out.

1. **Initial counseling.** Required in most cases, no less than 365 days before the servicemember's official separation date, the initial counseling is a one-on-one session with a transition counselor either in-person or by video conference. This session is meant to help you not only know what to expect from the TAP process but build a plan for getting the most out of the program.

2. **Pre-separation briefing.** Like the initial counseling, TAP's pre-separation briefing is also, in most cases, due no less than a year before you plan to leave the military officially. Also known as "transition counseling," this session is a class packed with information about available benefits and transition help.

3. **DoD Transition Day, VA briefing, and Department of Labor help.** Think of the Defense Department's Transition Day as a lesson in understanding how to shift your life from being centered on the military to being focused on the civilian world. This day of classes focuses on resilience building, learning how to manage your transition, translating your military occupational specialty into a civilian career, and more financial literacy help.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' briefing day and the day spent hearing from the Department of Labor are both designed to give you a thorough picture of the help available from those agencies. While DoD Transition Day and the VA briefing are mandatory, the Department of Labor class is optional if you are retiring after 20 years, are going to school after you transition, or can certify that you already have a post-service job lined up.

4. **Specialized transition assistance program career tracks.** Since no service member's transition is the same, TAP offers a series of two-day, individual tracks designed to help troops with their individual goals.

Those tracks are the DOL employment track, the DOL vocational track, the DoD education track, and a track-focused on starting a small business. Troops must select at least one of these tracks but can also choose to attend more than one.

5. **TAP Capstone.** After you've gone through the TAP courses and briefing days, a final TAP capstone will certify that you have checked all of your transition boxes and met the Pentagon's list of career readiness standards (CRS). The capstone is the final piece of your TAP puzzle and, in most cases, must be completed no less than 90 days before your final out date.
TOPIC 4: CAREER FAIRS

This week, work continued on The American Legion’s upcoming hiring events to be staged in Herndon (VA), Fort Carson (CO), Aurora (CO), JBLM (WA), King George (VA), Fort Meade (MD), Dalgrehn (MD), Fort Hood (TX)

The Department of Texas, with assistance from the National staff of The American Legion and Auxiliary, will be conducting several workshops – resume writing (civilian & federal), financial literacy, LinkedIn - before the MEGA Job Fair at Fort Hood on January 13th, 2020.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION**

**Transition & Employment Workshop**

Monday, January 13, 2020 ‧ 8:30am—3:00pm
Phantom Warrior Center, Bldg. 194, 37th Street, Fort Hood, TX 76544

8:30-10:00am  
**Military to Civilian Transition Resume Workshop**
Participants will recognize how to communicate their military expertise in their job application and interviews.

10:00-11:00am  
**Financial Literacy**
Participants will gain comprehensive knowledge of budgeting, emergency preparedness, and long-term investing.

11:00-12:00am  
**Federal Resume Workshop**
This workshop will show you how to alter your resume to fit Federal internship and job applications requirements.

12:00-1:00pm  
**Networking Luncheon with Employer Panel**
This panel will provide valuable information on how to succeed at networking events.

1:00 – 2:00pm  
**LinkedIn**
A great LinkedIn profile gives information about your professional background and abilities and helps get you noticed by hiring managers.

2:00 – 3:00pm  
**The American Legion Department Service Officer Claims Briefing/Assistance**

Register by visiting tinyurl.com/rhvmq7

An estimated 100 servicemembers and spouses would be attending the Workshops on Monday, January 13th, with 3,000 estimated to attend the MEGA Job Fair, Tuesday, January 14th.

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 5: VETERAN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

HUD-VASH: Continued Effort To Support Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

HUD-VASH is a unique partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides long-term case management, supportive services, and permanent housing support for chronically homeless Veterans. Using a Housing First approach, the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance with case management and clinical services provided by VA.

In 1992, VA and HUD established the HUD-VASH program to serve the neediest, most vulnerable homeless Veterans and their immediate families. VA provides case management and eligibility screening services, while HUD allocates permanent housing subsidies from its “Housing Choice” program. The primary goal of this joint program is to move Veterans and their families out of homelessness.

A key component of the program is VA’s case management services. These services are designed to improve the Veteran’s physical and mental health and enhance the Veteran’s ability to live in safe and affordable permanent housing of his or her choosing. Case management services promote housing stability and support recoveries from physical and mental illnesses and substance use disorders. As the program’s primary goal is to end homelessness and promote housing stability, HUD-VASH does not require a set period of sobriety in order for a Veteran to be considered eligible for the program, nor does non-compliance with HUD-VASH case management services necessarily lead to loss of the housing voucher. However, it is expected that a Veteran remains in the case of management, even with possible fluctuations in the Veteran’s living situation and treatment participation. Thus, a Veteran enrolled in HUD-VASH who relapses to substance abuse and re-enters treatment would not necessarily be discharged from HUD-VASH case management; in fact, such case management provides important continuity of care and an opportunity to assist the Veteran in his or her recovery.

This collaborative program between HUD and VA continues to support Veterans (and their families) who are homeless in order to locate and sustain permanent housing. Among VA homeless continuum of care programs, HUD-VASH enrolls the largest number and largest percentage of Veterans who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. At the end of FY 2019, there were 90,749 Veterans with active HUD-VASH vouchers and 83,684 vouchers in use.
Who is eligible for HUD-VASH?
There are two components to HUD-VASH program eligibility – VA requirements and Public Housing Authority (PHA) guidelines.

Veterans meet VA requirements when they:
• Are eligible for VA Health Care Services,
• Require case management services to obtain and sustain independent community housing, and
• Meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness by either
  * Lacking a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence, or
  * Identifying as his or her primary residence a shelter, welfare hotel, transitional or temporary housing facility, or public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation.

The full definition of homelessness as used by the HUD-VASH program can be found at [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless/lawsandregs/mckv](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless/lawsandregs/mckv)

**TOPIC 6: SMALL BUSINESS**

On Tuesday, Jovita Carranza was confirmed as the new administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration by a 88-5 vote in the Senate. She replaces Linda McMahon who left the position in 2019 to chair a pro-Trump super PAC. The former wrestling executive is now known as “Trump’s big money boss.” Chris Pilkerton has been the acting SBA administrator since last April.

Jovita Carranza (L) is replacing Linda McMahon (R) as the Administrator of Small Business.

Before her confirmation, Carranza served as the 44th Treasurer of the United States. In that role, her signature – along with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin’s – adorned U.S. currency. She’d also previously worked as the Deputy Administrator for the Small Business Administration during the George W. Bush administration.

Prior to her government work, Carranza worked at UPS for over 20 years. According to her official biography, she rose to become the highest-ranking Latina in the history of the company. “She started as a part-time, night-shift box handler and worked her way up to become President of Latin America and Caribbean operations” notes the biography.

When President Trump nominated her to head the SBA, he noted: “I had a choice” whether to make her a Cabinet official or not (the Small Business Administrator can be in the cabinet at the president’s discretion). He decided to keep the SBA administrator at the cabinet-level: “that decision took me how long? About two seconds to make,” Trump said during a roundtable discussion in April.

Trump’s loyalty to Carranza has been returned. At the same roundtable, the President said Carranza “liked Trump early on, very early on.” Carranza quickly agreed, “Yes, I did.”
Carranza grew up in Chicago and joined UPS soon after college in 1976. During her confirmation, she described her first job at the company as “loading shipments onto trucks.”

Gradually, she rose and held a variety of positions in between such as regional manager, workforce planning manager, human resources manager, district shipping hub manager, and national manager.

Since coming to Washington, Carranza has promoted Trump and his policies to the Latin American community, speaking at events like the League of United Latin American Citizens National Convention last summer and a Hispanic Heritage Month reception at the White House in the fall.

In a statement after she was nominated, Secretary Mnuchin noted that Carranza “played an important role in the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,” adding that at the SBA, she will “continue to promote pro-growth economic policies, eliminate job-killing regulations, and fight for the small businesses that are the lifeblood of the American economy.”

It took Carranza almost nine months to go from being publicly announced as the next administrator to today’s final confirmation. It was more a reflection of Washington’s slow pace than anything else. She earned bipartisan praise during her confirmation hearing in December. Democratic ranking member Ben Cardin (D-MD) said: “I look forward to working with Treasurer Carranza to empower America’s entrepreneurs.”

Her confirmation was opposed by two members of the Senate Small Business Committee: Ed Markey (D-Mass) and Cory Booker (D-NJ).

During her confirmation, she said that “One of my priorities will be to open more doors for women-owned businesses;“ as well as helping “entrepreneurs in disadvantaged communities, including African-American and Latino businesses” and businesses started by veterans.

Her third stated priority was disaster relief. The SBA has a sizable role in supporting local economies after a disaster like a hurricane. For example, the SBA approved more than $3.9 billion in disaster loans to individuals and businesses recovering from Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

**TOPIC 7: EDUCATION**

Caldwell University has agreed to pay the U.S. $4.8 million to resolve allegations that it participated in a scheme to defraud a federal veterans education program, according to the U.S. Attorney's New Jersey District Office On Friday.

U.S. Attorney Craig Carpenito estimated the government paid over $24 million in tuition benefits to the university to provide online classes to "thousands" of veterans under the Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act. Those classes were developed, taught and administered by a subcontractor, Ed4Mil correspondence school in Pennsylvania, which was not approved to receive education benefits.

"Even though Caldwell contributed no content or value to the courses, Caldwell charged the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill 10 to 30 times the prices charged by the online correspondence school for the same courses," Carpenito's stated in a written release.
According to the settlement agreement, Caldwell University submitted false claims for payment to the Department of Veterans Affairs from January 2011 to August 2013 to receive education benefits and funds to which it was not entitled. The Post 9/11 GI Bill was designed to help veterans who served in the armed forces following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

The release stated three individuals have already pleaded guilty to separate informations charging them with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud: Lisa DiBisceglie, the university’s former associate dean of the Office of External Partnership, who left the school before the fraud was discovered; David Alvey, founder and president of Ed4Mil LLC; and Helen Sechrist, a former employee of Ed4Mil.

Carpenito, DiBisceglie, Alvey, and others prepared and applied to the VA, stating that the courses were developed, taught, and administered by Caldwell faculty and met Caldwell’s strict educational standards. The VA approved the online courses for education benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on the representations in Caldwell’s application.

Alvey was sentenced on June 4, 2018, to five years in prison. DiBisceglie and Sechrist were each sentenced on June 5, 2018, to three years of probation.

The press release does not state whether the three defendants personally benefited from the scheme, but does say they were also ordered to pay $24 million in restitution.

The scheme was unveiled in a lawsuit filed under the "qui tam," or whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act.

Colette Liddy, director of news and media relations for Caldwell University, confirmed Saturday that "unbeknownst to Caldwell's Board and Cabinet, Ed4Mil personnel and a college employee engaged in a scheme to defraud the government."

"The Board of Trustees and the Cabinet of Caldwell University have denounced this conduct," Liddy said in a written statement. "The administration and Board of Trustees are truly sorry for what occurred." Liddy said the university "cooperated with the government throughout its investigation" and "has been committed to making restitution to the United States on behalf of the veterans of our country by returning all of the money that the University was paid under the Ed4Mil contract."

"Caldwell University has developed new policies and procedures to ensure that this type of conduct will not happen again," Liddy said.
Protect the GI Bill Act (HR 4625)

The American Legion joins other VSOs and advocates in supporting the new legislation, Protect the GI Bill Act (HR 4625), which passed the House of Representatives on the day after Veterans Day, November 12, 2019. Introduced by Chairman Mike Levin of the House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, this bipartisan legislation ensures that schools receiving GI Bill funding inform prospective students of the cost of attendance, how much their benefits cover, student outcomes, and more. The bill empowers State Approving Agencies (SAAs) to flag or suspends new enrollments to schools that violate these requirements. Levin’s legislation contains several other protections, including a ban on schools misrepresenting themselves while marketing, recruiting, and enrolling students. Dr. Joseph Wescott, AL Higher Education Consultant, worked with Committee Staff (both Democrat and Republican) early on to ensure safeguards for veterans education and training benefits were the result of meaningful oversight by the State approving agencies and the bill incorporated new and more stringent requirements while not proving overly burdensome to educational institutions.

The Protect the GI Bill Act provides for increased transparency and accountability by ensuring that educational programs which do not continue to meet federal and state requirements or which run afoul of certain financial or quality indicators, such as being placed on the Department of Education’s “heightened cash monitoring” list, will receive a risk-based survey visit from an SAA. These new compliance visits will look at such critical areas as veteran’s enrollment, program accreditation, graduation and retention rates and other measures of success. The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA) and the VA will begin working together next month, with funding provided by Lumina Foundation, to develop a national model for risk-based oversight. The American Legion will be a part of the National Advisory Board overseeing this program.

Basically, the bill will enact into the law most of the Principles of Excellence executive order. Also, measures within the bill provide for suspension or withdrawal of approval of educational programs that engage in false or erroneous advertising, such as publishing that educational credits will transfer freely to other institutions, when in fact, that will not. Though the law provides for funding these new requirements with existing federal appropriations, it also provides that the VA should use the $3 million discretionary funding to fund SAAs adequately.

The American Legion will work closely with Senators and their staff to support the passage of this important legislation to protect our Veterans and the GI Bill.

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr., Director
Veterans Employment & Education Division
202.861.2700 ext. 2989
Week Ending:  1/10/20