



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

April 13, 2020

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Washington Update

Coronavirus Relief

On Friday, April 10, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (CA) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY), after talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, released positive statements about coming to a deal over \$251 billion in business lending for the Paycheck Protection Program by entering into a bi-partisan negotiation that would include Democratic spending priorities - including funding for hospitals and states and local governments (earlier in the week, the White House and Republicans had rejected the Democratic proposal). On Saturday, April 11, however, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (CA) released a contradictory statement saying they again rejected the Democrats' position. The small-business program runs out of money in a few days - on Friday, April 17 - and both sides are saying different things. Democrats want a bigger bill while Republicans want a narrow one. The White House maintains there will be no negotiations and they plan to push through small business lending this week.

Congress is feeling pressure to act quickly on another round of coronavirus relief - creating division among Republicans. Some GOP lawmakers are looking to hold back on moving forward with another massive package while others are calling for a rapid infusion of trillions of dollars in federal aid. At the state level, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan is spearheading a push for an additional \$500 billion to states.

[Click here](#) to read McConnell and McCarthy's statement.

Unemployment Insurance Claims

U.S. unemployment claims have soared past 16 million. On Thursday, April 9, the Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported 6,606,000 unemployment claims, a decrease of 261,000 from the previous week's revised level of 6,867,000 - up by 219,000. The 4-week moving average was 4,265,500, an increase of 1,598,750 from the previous week's revised average of 2,666,750 - up from 2,612,000. The advanced seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 5.1 percent for the week ending March 28, an increase of 3.0 percentage points from the previous week's unrevised rate.

[Click here](#) to read the DOL BLS report.

Perkins

On Friday, April 10, the U.S. Department of Education released a second set of questions and answers regarding Perkins and COVID-19. During a recent Town Hall webinar and via emails, the Department had learned of shifting state staff priorities to address the outbreak, as well as widespread closures of local Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that require hands-on learning under the direction of skilled instructors or workplace mentors. In response, they released a new set of FAQ to help address local plan requirements, consultation, performance data submissions, and provide further flexibilities and support.

[Click here](#) to access the document.

Economic Recovery Task Force

The Trump Administration is preparing to announce a second task force on economic recovery that would likely include senior staff from the Treasury Department, the National Economic Council, the Labor Department and the Department of Commerce. There has also been outreach to business leaders, major sports teams and well-known athletes. The second task force would mainly focus on reopening the economy.

The Administration is laying the groundwork for a May reopening of parts of the economy as unemployment numbers continue to rise, with President Trump considering reopening businesses in parts of the country that do not have outbreaks. On Wednesday, April 8, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) unveiled guidelines meant to encourage those in critical sectors who have been exposed to the coronavirus but aren't showing symptoms to continue working. Even with an aggressive approach and optimistic outlook, the decision to reopen the economy may largely be out of the federal government's hands and controlled more by governors - many of whom have imposed strict measures on citizens and businesses.

Public health experts have warned that without significantly expanded testing and contact tracing capabilities, reopening the economy too soon could trigger a new wave of infections and death. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA) suggested the House is not likely to return to Washington on April 20, as scheduled. In an interview, Pelosi warned Trump against reopening the economy too soon, saying doing so could cause further economic pain.

Department of Education

On Monday, April 6, the White House sent President Trump's nominee for Education Department Inspector General, Andrew A. De Mello, to the Senate to be confirmed. De Mello is a Justice Department tax attorney who would oversee the Department as it prepares to dole out more than \$30 billion in emergency education assistance under the coronavirus stimulus, if confirmed.

Also, the White House has selected new Education Department Liaisons. Tom Wilson, an attorney in northern Virginia who also served on his local school board, will take the lead as top White House liaison, while Rebekah Clark will serve as deputy White House liaison. Clark previously worked in congressional affairs at HUD and was an advance associate for the White House.

Disability Employment Guidance

On Monday, April 6, the Department of Labor (DOL) State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED) released the policy brief *Covid-19: Federal Disability-Specific and Other Related Guidance*. During this crisis, state and local policymakers are adopting and implementing policies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy brief summarizes guidance issued by Federal Government agencies that can assist in ensuring state and local policy aligns with the nation's civil rights laws and other disability-related policies. Below are links to additional federal resources as well.

[Click here](#) to read the policy brief.

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living \(ACL\) Coronavirus Resources](#)

[U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services \(OSERS\) Resources](#)

[National Rehabilitation Information Center \(NARIC\) Resources](#)
[U.S. Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#)

DOL/ETA

[Labor Department Announces Availability of \\$42.5 Million in Youth Apprenticeship Grants](#)

On Monday, April 6, the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) announced the availability of \$42.5 million in Youth Apprenticeship Readiness grants to support the enrollment of in-school or out-of-school youth apprentices (ages 16-24) into new or existing Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). ETA intends to fund approximately 15 to 25 Youth Apprenticeship Readiness grants, with awards ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million. The amount of grant funding an applicant can receive will depend on the proposed number of youth enrolled in RAPs.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

[U.S. Department of Labor Publishes Guidance on Pandemic Unemployment Assistance](#)

On Sunday, April 5, the U.S. Department of Labor announced the publication of Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) 16-20 providing guidance to states for implementation of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program. Under PUA, individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment compensation and are unable to continue working as a result of COVID-19, such as self-employed workers, independent contractors, and gig workers, are eligible for PUA benefits. This provision is contained in Section 2102 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) Act enacted on March 27, 2020.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Coronavirus Threat - Help for America's Small Businesses and Their Workers: Labor Secretary, SBA Administrator

The extraordinary measures needed to defeat the coronavirus have delivered a hard blow to American workers and our economy. Less than a month ago – on March 6 – the Labor Department reported that the economy had once again exceeded forecasts by adding 275,000 jobs, with unemployment tying a 50-year low. Last week, we reported the loss of 701,000 jobs, and that more than 6.6 million Americans had filed for unemployment. These sudden job losses are different from any period of high unemployment in the past. It does not result from any underlying weakness in the economy. Instead, it's the result of purposeful and short-term measures – a necessary pause – to protect public health.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

WDC in the News

Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia Faces Blowback As He Curtails Scope of Worker Relief in Unemployment Crisis

The Labor Department is facing growing criticism over its response to the coronavirus pandemic as the agency plays a central role in ensuring that the tens of millions of workers affected by the crisis get assistance. The criticism ranges from direct actions that the agency has taken to limit the scope of worker assistance programs to concerns that it has not been aggressive enough about protecting workers from health risks or supporting states scrambling to deliver billions in new aid.

In recent days, Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia, who has expressed concerns about unemployment insurance being too generous, has used his department's authority over new laws enacted by Congress to limit who qualifies for joblessness assistance and to make it easier for small businesses not to pay family leave benefits. The new rules make it more difficult for gig workers such as Uber and Lyft drivers to get benefits, while making it easier for some companies to avoid paying their workers coronavirus-related sick and family leave.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

50-State Guide to COVID-19 Business Resources

While the health toll of the COVID-19 pandemic remains to be seen, it is clear already that businesses in general and the woodworking industry in particular face serious economic impacts. Those impacts include forced closures, loss of business, disruption of supply chains, cancelled orders, and challenges to meet social distancing

requirements while maintaining manufacturing production. Woodworking Network surveyed the industry in March and found the vast majority expecting serious disruptions in business but still optimistic about the future. However, that optimism came with some confusion about what resources would be available to economically survive the pandemic and where to go for help. There is also plenty of confusion over whether woodworking businesses fall under the heading of "essential services."

Both state and federal officials have recognized the economic damage the pandemic has wreaked and that the fallout will likely continue for a long time. A number of programs have been launched to aid businesses of all sizes in the wake of the virus. But there is a wide variance in what programs are available in each state and where to find information about those programs.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Reports & Articles

New from Brookings

COVID-19 is a Chance to Invest in our Essential Infrastructure Workforce

Even as the COVID-19 pandemic keeps millions of people home and many businesses shuttered for social distancing, up to 62 million essential workers are still reporting to their jobs in hospitals, grocery stores, and other critical industries. They are on the frontlines against the coronavirus, vital to our public health and economic survival. Of them, 17 million workers who operate and maintain our infrastructure are among the most essential—delivering our packages, keeping our water running, ensuring our broadband is up to speed, and more.

Infrastructure workers were essential long before COVID-19, but their economic importance has come into greater focus during the crisis and is beginning to shape the response, too. As federal, state, and local leaders look to provide economic relief, they must pay special attention to the support and protection of our current infrastructure workforce. Additionally, this moment offers an opportunity that we may not see again anytime soon: the chance to jumpstart long-term infrastructure careers for millions of prospective workers nationally.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

What Makes a Job Meaningful?

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the near shutdown of many economies around the world. It has already thrown at least 10 million out of work in the U.S. and threatens the

jobs of millions more worldwide. Yet, job loss often means much more than a lost livelihood - it entails being deprived of social identity, status, routine and time structure, and contacts with colleagues. While many hope that unemployment will quickly decline once economies recover, the psychological consequences of job loss for individuals and their families are severe and long-lasting.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Who Stands to Lose if the Final SNAP Work Requirement Rule Takes Effect?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a final rule that would limit eligibility for SNAP work requirement waivers based on the economic conditions of places across the United States. A nationwide preliminary injunction halting this rule was ordered on March 13, 2020 by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia; as of April 1 USDA had not appealed. SNAP work requirements have been suspended during the COVID-19 health emergency. Those work requirements will return when the Secretary for Health and Human Services declare the health emergency over, even if the economic emergency remains.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

New from American Enterprise Institute

Sector Strategies in Austin: A Case Study in Workforce Planning

Over the decades, public policy efforts to assist economically disadvantaged and marginalized populations have often centered on services that quickly provide these populations with jobs and earnings. The resultant workforce development programs have tended to adopt a short-term focus on easing economic distress without paying attention to building skills through work experience and training.

Recent years, however, have seen a considerable shift in many workforce leaders' perspectives. New calls for "demand-driven," "regional economic development," and—the most recent—"sector strategies" approaches seek to reorient the workforce development field toward a recognition that employers and labor demand should drive efforts to improve the quality of labor supply. In this framework, employers identify the competencies and skills needed by workers in various jobs, and employment and training programs adapt to meet these competency and skill needs. When properly executed, workers benefit—and public investments in these workers support rising wages and the flourishing of the broader community through sustainable growth, an expanded tax base, and reduced dependence on public programs.

[Click here](#) to read the full report.

New from Aspen Institute

Webinar: Job Quality in Practice - Worker Organizations Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis

The global pandemic and economic aftermath place us in a time of unprecedented uncertainty with respect to our work and well-being. Frontline workers are once again bearing the brunt, and the divides of race, ethnicity, gender, and place are further exacerbated. Too many hospitality, restaurant, domestic, manufacturing, retail, administrative services, and construction employees have already been fired, furloughed, or put on sharply reduced hours. At the same time, there's ramped-up hiring of healthcare, grocery retail, logistics/distribution, direct care, and other workers. Despite the vital roles they play in keeping our economy moving, they are underpaid. They are overworked. They enjoy few health protections. And many lack essential benefits. "Frontline hero" status and temporary "hero bonus" pay under these challenging circumstances are fitting for the many who do essential jobs that enable others' locked-down lives in this era. It's appropriate, but it is not sufficient. Nor does it address longstanding job quality inequity. Raising the voices and bargaining power of workers has been the focus of our three panelists throughout most of their careers.

This webinar is the fifth in our Job Quality in Practice webinar series. The Job Quality in Practice series is designed to support practitioners across fields – including workforce development, economic development, capital deployment, policy, worker advocacy, and business – to address job quality in their work. Webinars share updates on current conditions and priorities as well as actionable tools and approaches. We also seek to highlight leading practitioners' work and create connections across disciplines.

[Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

A High Road Company's Rapid Response to COVID-19: A Conversation with Marlin Steel President Drew Greenblatt

For decades, Baltimore's Marlin Steel has combined a nimble and innovative manufacturing production system with a commitment to their forty associates – offering above average pay and benefits, employee cross training, and sizable bonuses each pay period for meeting and exceeding production goals. This good company/good job focus pays off in dedicated workers, first-rate quality, happy customers, and admirable growth. In recent weeks, their capacities proved up to an enormous challenge to quickly produce vitally needed equipment to fight against the COVID-19 virus.

[Click here](#) to read the full article.

Fast Fact

The Department of Homeland Security estimates that roughly 50-60 million Americans - potentially more than 40% of the U.S. workforce - perform 'essential infrastructure' jobs.



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