

# HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

REPUBLICANS | RANKING MEMBER MIKE BOST

## H.R. 637: The Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2021

### Background:

Congress has perhaps no greater calling than the calling to help those who have served live their version of the American dream once they hang up their uniforms and to put the numerous skills and talents that veterans developed in service to use in their civilian lives. In 2019, the veteran unemployment rate was just 3.1%, the lowest in 19 years. However, due to the economic impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the veteran unemployment rate rose to 5.3% as of December 2020. More than 81% of the over 462,000 veterans unemployed at the start of 2021 are in their prime working years between the ages of 22 and 66. Helping these veterans affected by the pandemic get back on their feet should be one of Congress' highest priorities.

The Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2021 would create a rapid retraining program to provide unemployed veterans and members of the National Guard or Reserve with up to 12 months of education benefits so that they can pursue training in high-demand occupations. These benefits would be equivalent to the benefits provided under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. To be eligible, veterans must meet several eligibility criteria, including being between the ages of 22 and 66 and unemployed; having an honorable or other than dishonorable discharge; and not being eligible for any other VA education benefit, enrolled in another Federal of State job training program, receiving disability compensation for reasons that have led to unemployability, or in receipt of any unemployment benefit when they begin training under this program. Members of the National Guard or Reserve who were called up on Federal orders to assist states with the COVID-19 response would also be eligible for the rapid retraining program as long as they meet the other age, unemployment, and discharge requirements.

### The Message:

- Our veterans are dedicated, talented, hard-working leaders, as employers around the world can attest. They are an asset to any workplace and key to the long-term strength of the American economy.
- The Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2021 would help veterans and members of the National Guard and Reserve who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 gain skills to compete for meaningful, high-paying careers once the pandemic is over.
- By focusing on veterans between the ages of 22 and 66 who aren't currently eligible for the GI Bill, we are helping veterans in need to thrive in post-COVID economy and make the most of their prime working years while also supporting the American recovery effort to create a better future for us all.