The Texas Veterans Commission asked the University of Houston (UH) Veterans’ Services Office (VSO) to represent veterans in higher education at our capital in Austin, Texas. On March 25, 2009, I testified before the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations on a most important legislation for college and university veterans. The legislative session was on the proposed State Bill 1538 authored by Senator Leticia Van de Putte related to veterans’ resource centers at colleges and universities in the state of Texas. If passed, it will require public colleges and universities to establish veterans’ resource centers on each campus. It will also establish a regional office on certain campuses based on the Higher Education Coordinating Board’s 10 educational regions.

As a representative of the University of Houston, I was not able to take a position for or against the proposed legislation. However, I gave a dam good testimony on what the UH VSO already has as a veterans’ facility, which the senators applauded. The committee decreed the VSO a model veterans’ resource center for the state and for this proposed legislation. I could not be more proud of the UH Student Affairs administrators such as Dr. Elwyn Lee, Diane Murphy and Dr. David Small for supporting all of our efforts at the VSO since I arrived as Coordinator in May of 2005. I must also give thanks to my staff, Sandra Glass, James Freeman and my seven work-study students who tirelessly give peer-to-peer counseling to our present veteran population.

What is now left to do to really establish this one-stop-shop concept to stay ahead of the game is to have the division of Academic Affairs help us in our quest to better serve those who have served, our next generation of leaders, the veterans of the United States of America.

By Allen Grundy Program Manager

The VSO can no longer accept any applications for GI Bill educational benefits or enrollment re-certification. The forms will still be available in our office. However, you must deliver them personally to Registration & Academic Records in the Welcome Center (University Boulevard & Calhoun Road). To avoid the lines of the general student population, be sure to identify yourself as a military veteran prior to receiving a line number. Direct all enrollment and GI Bill questions to Kristopher Butler in Registration & Academic Records, 128 Welcome Center, 713-743-9353.
By Tommy Lee Kirby

As a member of the Texas Air National Guard currently serving at Ellington Field’s 147th Fighter Wing, it was an honor to interview a fellow soldier who had served in the military during both World War II and the Korean Conflict. Dr. Ernest Shaw mentioned how rough it was for him during the times of segregation. Surprisingly, I did learn that it was simply a part of life for most people.

Dr. Shaw was an eccentric individual who had plenty of stories to tell and tons of pictures and articles to back up those stories. His experiences in both conflicts were told in such a manner that I could sense a fraction of what it must have been like during that time.

Having this opportunity to listen to an aged person tell his stories is an experience I enjoy. It was and is always a pleasure to talk to those voices from the past who have lived the stories an individual like myself can only read.

By Olivia Bush

The Bush Cares Project is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to help veterans successfully transition from the battlefield to books. According to the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 98% of newly enlisted service members enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill and 96% contribute money to the plan; nonetheless, only 50% actually use the benefit toward completing a degree once they get out of the military. A major component of The Bush Cares Project is VetED, a program to increase the numbers of veterans who attend a college or university and offer assistance to keep them in school until graduation.

The VetED program will offer two scholarships: Operation Freedom to Higher Education and Operation Leave No Vet Behind. The scholarships give financial assistance to veterans who are eligible for the GI Bill and veterans discharged from the military longer than 10 years who are no longer eligible for the GI Bill, respectively. The scholarships provide financial assistance with monthly expenses such as rent, daycare, utilities, and transportation. A monthly stipend will be paid directly to the veteran’s creditor to cover or subsidize the expense. In turn, the veteran is obligated to attend workshops offered by The Bush Cares Project or one of our partners, including Understanding your Credit, Budgeting Basics, Stress Management, Living Green, and Parenting 101. We are also asking our participants to give back to the community by volunteering with a charity of their choice for at least three hours per week.

In partnership with the VSO and Veterans Collegiate Society, The Bush Cares Project has been given the opportunity to pilot this program on the campus of University of Houston. The VSO generously donated an office on campus in Room 268 of the University Center. The office hours are Fridays, 9 am – 12 pm. For more information about the VetED program, stop by the VSO or call (832) 212-4297.

Note: The VetED program will award scholarships for the Fall 2009 Semester. Applications for the scholarships will be accepted beginning June, 2009. The deadline is August 1, 2009.
Registration and Financial Woes

By Todd Winkel

I had heard many stories from my fellow students about the failure of the people who work in registration and financial services (RFS) to assist them with financial problems and concerns. I didn’t know the magnitude of their frustrations until I experienced the ineptitude of the RFS after Hurricane Ike. I trusted the individuals in RFS to help me with my withdrawal from classes after the hurricane. They said they would inform the necessary authorities that I would no longer need G.I. Bill money for the remainder of the fall 2008 semester. I was told that my G.I. Bill money would stop for the fall semester, and I could reapply for it again in the spring when I returned to school. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Each time I called to ask why I was still receiving G.I. Bill money even though I was no longer a student, I was given the runaround story. They had sent an email but would send another one. In the end, I have a huge headache of a problem to sort out this semester because of the ineffectiveness of RFS at the Welcome Center during fall 2008.

I thought I would be treated with respect as a military veteran who had experienced much after Hurricane Ike and would be taken care of by the university during a time of crisis. Unfortunately, I did not receive the level of professionalism I thought was expected of employees of the University of Houston while dealing with RFS. The laissez-faire attitude of RFS despite my obvious vocal worry and concerns about not receiving G.I. Bill money this spring after the snafu of the fall 2008 semester was met with lackadaisical empathy by the RFS staff who assist veterans.

I thought I could trust the RFS to help me, but in the end they were not on my side. I forgot there is an organization on campus that will assist military veterans, and it is the Veterans’ Services Office. If I had turned to the VSO for assistance, I doubt I would have received the token “we’ve taken care of the problem” and “I’ll send another fax/email” answers after each of my phone calls last fall. I should have visited and asked for assistance from the VSO when I returned to campus after Hurricane Ike. In the Army, a soldier can turn to another soldier and ask for help knowing that help will be received. For all military veterans who are attending the University of Houston, I want you to know that there is a place that will provide support and assistance so you will not have to experience what I have experienced. That place is the VSO at the University Center. Their phone number is 713-743-5490.

Welcome Charlene Simmons, VSO’s first intern from the School of Communication. As an intern, Charlene coordinates the Veterans History Project videotaping. She is also a student-veteran counselor.

Registration Cont’d

Charlene Simmons

VETERANS COLLEGIATE SOCIETY

MEETING

Monday, April 6, 2009
9:00—10:00 a.m.
University Center, Rodeo Room 264

For all military veterans who are attending the University of Houston, I want you to know that there is a place that will provide support and assistance...
We’d like to help you celebrate this milestone in your life. If you’re graduating this semester, let us know so that we can recognize you in the next issue of The Reveille. In addition, do you have words of wisdom that you’d like to pass on to the student-veterans you are leaving behind? If so, let us know in 300 words or less. Suggested topics:
- If I Knew Then What I Know Now
- What I Learned in the Military That Has Helped in College (or Civilian Life)
- How the UH Veterans’ Services Office Has Assisted Me
- My College Experience As the Dependent of a Military Veteran

Keep in touch with the VSO after graduation. We’d like to know how you’re progressing with your career so that we can spotlight your successes and use them to encourage others. To be considered for inclusion in the next issue, submit article at least three weeks prior to the first day of the scheduled publication month. Article should be in MS Word format and sent to the Veterans’ Services Office e-mail address.

The Reveille is pleased to make the first graduation announcement for the dependent of a military veteran. Racquel Bouie* 
BBA Degree—May, 2009
Major: Finance