



The Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations

Leticia Van de Putte, R.Ph.
Chair
Eliot Shapleigh
Vice Chair

Suite No. 345, Sam Houston Building
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711-2068
Voice: (512) 463-2211
Fax: (512) 463-7683
Dial 711 For Relay Calls

Members:
Wendy Davis
Craig Estes
Joan Huffman

March 16, 2010

Dear Colleague:

As you know there are a number of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, some of them on their first deployment and others on multiple deployments. Unfortunately, upon their return, several of our military personnel are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Often PTSD can manifest itself into substance abuse, domestic violence, and anger issues. However, not only are our Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans afflicted with PTSD so too are our veterans of Vietnam, Korea, and even World War II.

During the 81st Legislative Session, Senator Rodney Ellis and Representative Allen Vaught introduced legislation to authorize counties to create veterans' courts. Modeled after drug and mental health courts, veterans' courts would ensure that veterans and military personnel with combat-related mental health issues get the treatment they need. Additionally, men and women who serve our country would not be hindered with a criminal conviction that would negatively impact their ability to get a job, housing, and provide for their families. Fortunately, Senator Ellis and Representative Vaught were successful in amending their "veterans' court" legislation to Senate Bill 1940, which I authored. As Chair of the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs & Military Installations, the committee has worked diligently to create avenues where our veterans can receive the mental health care they so rightly deserve. I was happy that the bill could be a conduit for this very important legislation.

Senator Ellis, Representative Vaught, and I, in partnership with the Texas Veterans Commission, are hosting a *Veterans Court Forum* on **Tuesday, March 30, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** at the **Capitol Auditorium (E1.004)**. We invite you to join us to learn more about the importance of establishing veterans' courts. Members of the Harris County Veterans' Court will be in attendance to share their insight and experience in establishing the first court in Texas. It is our goal to inform county officials, legislators, and their staff on the needs of our veterans, the benefits of a veterans' court, and provide a forum to address how to implement a veterans' court.

We look forward to your participation. It is my sincere hope that you or a member of your staff are able to attend this forum so that together we can increase the momentum in establishing veterans' courts across Texas. Our veterans deserve no less. Please contact Jenee Margo Gonzales, Committee Director, at 512-463-2211 or via email at jenee.gonzales@senate.state.tx.us to confirm your availability to attend by **Thursday, March 25th**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leticia Van de Putte". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Leticia Van de Putte, R.Ph.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Ellis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Rodney Ellis

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen R. Vaught". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Allen R. Vaught

"Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifice."
~President Harry S. Truman