

1-1 By: Van de Putte, Davis S.B. No. 1538
1-2 Shapleigh

1-3 (In the Senate - Filed March 9, 2009; March 17, 2009, read
1-4 first time and referred to Committee on Veteran Affairs and
1-5 Military Installations; April 27, 2009, reported adversely, with
1-6 favorable Committee Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 5,
1-7 Nays 0; April 27, 2009, sent to printer.)

1-8 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 1538 By: Van de Putte

1-9 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
1-10 AN ACT

1-11 relating to establishing veterans resource centers at certain
1-12 institutions of higher education.

1-13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-14 SECTION 1. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by
1-15 adding Subchapter D to read as follows:

1-16 SUBCHAPTER D. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS

1-17 Sec. 434.151. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

1-18 (1) "Commission" means the Texas Veterans Commission.

1-19 (2) "Education regions" means the education regions in
1-20 this state established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating
1-21 Board.

1-22 (3) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning
1-23 assigned by Section 61.003, Education Code.

1-24 Sec. 434.152. VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS. The commission
1-25 shall administer a veterans resource center in at least one
1-26 institution of higher education in each region specified in Section
1-27 434.153 to:

1-28 (1) provide a centralized place for veterans to find
1-29 assistance and information while enrolled at an institution of
1-30 higher education;

1-31 (2) deliver innovative, cost-effective programs to
1-32 attract veterans and family members of veterans to attend public
1-33 institutions of higher education;

1-34 (3) enable institutions of higher education to create
1-35 veteran-friendly environments;

1-36 (4) encourage veterans to take advantage of government
1-37 educational programs; and

1-38 (5) assist veterans in applying to public institutions
1-39 of higher education.

1-40 Sec. 434.153. LOCATIONS OF CENTERS. The commission shall
1-41 operate 15 veterans resource centers throughout the state with at
1-42 least one veterans resource center located in each of the following
1-43 higher education regions:

1-44 (1) High Plains Region;

1-45 (2) Northwest Texas Region;

1-46 (3) Metroplex Region;

1-47 (4) Upper East Texas Region;

1-48 (5) Southeast Texas Region;

1-49 (6) Gulf Coast Region;

1-50 (7) Central Texas Region;

1-51 (8) South Texas Region;

1-52 (9) West Texas Region; and

1-53 (10) Upper Rio Grande Region.

1-54 Sec. 434.154. DUTIES OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.
1-55 Each institution of higher education that has a veterans resource
1-56 center shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the
1-57 commission. The memorandum of understanding must require the
1-58 institution of higher education to provide and bear the cost of the
1-59 following:

1-60 (1) office space on the campus of the institution of
1-61 higher education that is accessible to disabled persons and
1-62 complies with any applicable federal and state law; and

1-63 (2) office equipment, telephone equipment and
1-64 service, computer equipment, and Internet access.

2-1 Sec. 434.155. PROGRAM MANAGER. The commission shall employ
2-2 a program manager to administer the veterans resource center
2-3 program. The program manager shall:
2-4 (1) provide leadership, training, support, and
2-5 overall management of the veterans resource center program;
2-6 (2) evaluate the effectiveness of veterans resource
2-7 centers in identifying the services required by veterans to
2-8 optimize the success of veterans and their families in obtaining a
2-9 college education and in providing those services;
2-10 (3) supervise the regional veterans resource
2-11 counselors;
2-12 (4) prepare an annual budget;
2-13 (5) monitor the outcomes of the veterans resource
2-14 center program;
2-15 (6) using data provided by the Texas Higher Education
2-16 Coordinating Board, produce an annual report on veterans'
2-17 attendance at public institutions of higher education;
2-18 (7) apply to private organizations and foundations for
2-19 grant funding or other support that complements the objectives of
2-20 the program; and
2-21 (8) perform any other task as required by the
2-22 commission.

2-23 Sec. 434.156. REGIONAL VETERANS RESOURCE COUNSELORS.
2-24 (a) The commission shall employ a regional veterans resource
2-25 counselor for each education region to oversee the veterans
2-26 resource center or centers located in the region.
2-27 (b) A regional veterans resource counselor shall maintain
2-28 an office at a veterans resource center at an institution of higher
2-29 education located in the region served by the veterans resource
2-30 counselor.
2-31 (c) Each regional veterans resource counselor shall:
2-32 (1) visit the institutions of higher education located
2-33 in the education region served by the veterans resource counselor;
2-34 (2) work with those institutions of higher education
2-35 to:
2-36 (A) create a hospitable and supportive
2-37 environment for veterans;
2-38 (B) enhance awareness of and encourage
2-39 participation in veterans educational programs and commission
2-40 programs providing other services to veterans, including
2-41 employment and claims assistance services;
2-42 (C) develop programs providing ancillary
2-43 assistance to veterans based on the unique needs of veterans and
2-44 their families;
2-45 (D) ensure that veterans successfully complete
2-46 their education; and
2-47 (E) promote the establishment of a student
2-48 veterans group on each campus in the region;
2-49 (3) work with local, state, and national veterans
2-50 groups, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American
2-51 Legion, to promote educational opportunities and benefits to the
2-52 veteran population in the education region;
2-53 (4) work with local workforce development boards to:
2-54 (A) ensure that veterans counselors are aware of
2-55 available nontraditional educational opportunities, including
2-56 on-the-job training programs and apprenticeships; and
2-57 (B) advise employers in the region of potential
2-58 opportunities to create on-the-job training programs for veterans;
2-59 (5) work with education services officers at military
2-60 installations to encourage active duty members of the armed forces
2-61 of the United States and veterans to use federal and state
2-62 educational benefits;
2-63 (6) create and manage publicity campaigns in concert
2-64 with the commission and institutions of higher education in the
2-65 education region to promote the use of education benefits under the
2-66 federal Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (38
2-67 U.S.C. Section 3301 et seq.), the Hazlewood tuition exemption
2-68 program for veterans and their dependents under Section 54.203,
2-69 Education Code, and any other education benefit for veterans or

3-1 their dependents under federal or state law;
3-2 (7) support programs to assist combat veteran students
3-3 in readjusting and reintegrating into a noncombat environment;
3-4 (8) maintain statistical information regarding
3-5 demographics of veterans assisted, application success, program
3-6 completion rates, drop-out rates, and reasons for success or
3-7 failure, as appropriate; and
3-8 (9) perform other activities, as assigned by the
3-9 commission, to enhance the educational opportunities of veterans
3-10 and their family members in the education region and throughout the
3-11 state.

3-12 Sec. 434.157. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY. The commission may
3-13 adopt rules to implement this subchapter.

3-14 SECTION 2. This Act does not make an appropriation. A
3-15 provision in this Act that creates a new governmental program,
3-16 creates a new entitlement, or imposes a new duty on a governmental
3-17 entity is not mandatory during a fiscal period for which the
3-18 legislature has not made a specific appropriation to implement the
3-19 provision.

3-20 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
3-21 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
3-22 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
3-23 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
3-24 Act takes effect September 1, 2009.

3-25 * * * * *