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By: Dwight Winkler

1. **CONTACTS:** To help you obtain information about claims or other needs:

- **VETERANS CRISIS LINE:** Veterans and loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 24/7 and then press 1 with total anonymity to speak to a professional counselor. A Houston Vet Center counselor, **James Bailey**, is available in Don Montoya's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Don's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey. See forms on my desk for information.
- **Dwight Winkler**, 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435; (979) 335-4464; lerwinkdd@aol.com
- **Don Montoya**, Wharton County Veterans Service Officer, 1017 N. Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488; (979) 532-1311, don.montoya@co.wharton.tx.us; **NEW OFFICE HOURS:** M, TUES, THUR (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; FRI (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon by appointment only & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (Administrative time); On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway**, (Congressman **Blake Farenthold's** Veteran Advocate), (361) 894-6446, Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov. **NOTE: Vanessa Hicks-Callaway will work with you if you have problems with FEMA or any other government agency as you deal with Hurricane Harvey issues.**
- **Matt Minor**, (Texas State Representative **Phil Stephenson's** Veteran Advocate), (281) 232-7900, Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us
- **VA COMPLAINT HOTLINE:** New VA complaint hotline number is (855) 948-2311. Be courteous and be able to answer WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY about "wrong doing at the VA." *Veterans are manning the hotline now.*
- **NEW VA PHONE NUMBER TO CALL 1-844-698-2311;** This new national toll-free number is a go-to source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as **myVA311**.

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2. **PBS SERIES ON VIETNAM:** On Sunday, September 17, 2017, the Public Broadcasting System or Service (PBS) will start showing a series on the Vietnam War that has been in the works for many years. . The series is by **Ken Burns**, a well known historian. Go to <http://www.pbs.org/video/3001104790> for a 25 minute preview of the series. (Source: Retiree Activities Bulletin, August 1, 2017, page 86)

3. **DISASTER STEPS:** STEP ONE (Immediately After)- If you have been directly affected by hurricane Harvey or any natural disaster, call 2-1-1 or visit www.211.org for information on emergency shelter, food, or water; STEP TWO (You have shelter, food, and water but need other assistance)- Go to www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/ Click on the icon called **DISASTERASSISTANCE.gov** and follow the prompts; STEP THREE (You have been flooded out)- Go to www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/ and Click on the LOANS icon for (a) LAND LOAN, 7.25%, \$150,000, 5% down, fixed 30 yrs., at least one acre; (b) HOME LOAN, 3.62% (3.12% discounted for 30% or more disability rating), \$424,100, 15/20/25/30 yrs. fixed; (c) HOME IMPROVEMENT LOAN, 3.62% (3.12% discounted for disability rating of 30% or more), \$50,000 for 20 yrs. or \$10,000 for 10 yrs.

Sources: STEP ONE: www.military.com/military-report/hurricane-harvey-help
 STEP TWO: www.glo.texas.gov/vlb/
 STEP THREE: THE SCUTTLEBUTT, Aug 2017, pg. 7. <http://myscuttlebutt.com/>

4. **VA UNVEILS CLAIMS SUBMISSION OPTION THAT PROMISES TO COMPLETE CLAIMS WITHIN 30 DAYS:** The VA has unveiled the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) initiative, a disability claims submission option with accredited Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) that "promises to deliver faster claims decisions to Veterans and their families." The DRC is currently limited to claims for increased compensation (commonly known as claims for increase) and requires veterans to ensure that all supporting evidence, such as medical exams, military service records, etc., is included with the claim submission. "The advance preparation by the VSO's allows claims to be assigned immediately to claims processors for a quick decision." **MY COMMENT: The work formerly done by the VA, such as gathering medical records and exams etc., will now be assigned to the VSO. More work for the VSO and less work for the VA. Thus, supposedly speeding up the VA's decision.**

(Source: veteransaffairs@public.govdelivery.com)

www.VVA1069.org is the web site of my Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1069.