

Students prepare for fall registration
Page 2



Playboi Carti releases new album
Page 4



Women's Basketball lose in first round
Page 6

SOUTHERN NEWS

WWW.THESOUTHERNNEWS.ORG | MARCH 26, 2025 | VOL. 63 — ISSUE 19

Students gather to write to state senators

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

In a time when marginalized communities urgently need their voices to be heard, the Student Government Association (SGA) is stepping up to inspire action.

SGA hosted a "From Campus to Capital," a powerful event designed to equip students with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for undocumented communities facing ongoing challenges.

"It's important that we advocate on their behalf," Jonathan De Los Santos, SGA's board of student experience, a junior, said. "We should know how to advocate for ourselves and others who can't."

Students had the opportunity to write letters to state senators and legislators about immigration policies.

They were able to learn from guest speakers Cynthia Stretch, Chairperson of the English Department, Yanahi Román, CEO of La Casa Del Inmigrante and Josh Elliott, Connecticut State Representative, on how they can make their voices heard and directly engage with their legislators.

Joseph Merly, SGA's board of outreach and communications, a junior, said that he hopes students will take full advantage of the space to actively engage and get involved in the cause.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Marketing major Thomas Gilbertie, a senior, psychology major Pierce Kozlowski, a junior and computer science major Crossby Dessalines, a junior are conversing.

"Students have the opportunity to learn how to write letters, learn what numbers to call and know several methods to make a change," Merely said.

In a world where change begins with conversation and resistance, this event provided students with the opportunity to learn, act and contribute to rights for undocumented individuals.

Communication and history major, Jace Flanagan-Bonilla, a freshman, said that he came to this event to advocate for immigrants.

"I feel it's important as a country to allow others to come in when they are being persecuted," Flanagan-Bonilla said. "It can show that as a country we have empathy for others."

Flanagan emphasized that adopting more lenient immigration policies would allow the country to become even more diverse and inclusive.

"In reality we're a melting pot of people and were not meant to be a nation of one color," Flanagan-Bonilla said.

Similarly, De Los Santos said that undocumented students and individuals can enhance the community.

"Undocumented students and families provide a wealth of cultural knowledge, experience to our own culture," De Los Santos said.

De Los Santos also said that they have a right to be here, similar to generations before them.

"Most have issues back at home and come here to make a better life for themselves," De Los Santos said. "Just like how our parents and grandparents had those opportunities, they should too."

Through workshops of writing letters and including personal stories and statistics, De Los Santos said he hopes that students leave with a deeper understanding of how they can support immigrants and overall become a better advocate.

"I want them to know that their voice matters and we dictate how our future actually goes," De Los Santos said.

Additionally, De Los Santos stressed that advocacy is not something confined to a single event or moment but is an ongoing effort that students must carry with them.

He encouraged attendees to recognize that the work of supporting immigrants and standing up for justice extends far beyond the workshop itself.

"Advocacy doesn't stop here, it starts with you and you take it wherever you go," De Los Santos said.

Veteran jobs are in danger due to DOGE

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

As President Trump's administration and Elon Musk push forward with efforts to dismantle key components of the federal government, military veterans are also being caught in the crossfire.

Musk's proposed initiative, Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), aims to cut government operations.

"VA is conducting a department wide review of its organization operations and structure," Doug Collins, secretary of VA, said, in a response to DOGE. "Central to these efforts is a pragmatic and disciplined approach to eliminating waste and bureaucracy, increasing efficiency, and improving health care benefits and services to veterans."

This sparks concerns about its potential impact on essential services for veterans that the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, VA, provides.

To carry out this plan, Collins outlined a clear strategy for reducing the department's workforce while maintaining healthcare and other benefits to veterans and VA beneficiaries.

"Our goal is to reduce VA employment levels to 2019 end strength numbers roughly 398,000 employees–from our current level of approximately 470,000 employees," Collins said.

With a 15% cut, this left many veterans feeling uneasy.

One of these people is Britt Conroy, a coordinator veteran and military and adult Learning support. Conroy, who served in the U.S. Air Force for seven years, said she is nervous about the implications these cuts could have.

"The idea of veterans losing their jobs is concerning," Conroy said. "There's also been a fair amount of outrage from veterans."

The VA announced on Feb. 24 the dismissial of over 1,400 employees in non-essential positions. These roles include DEI-related positions and other roles.

According to the Associated Press, The Department of Veterans Affairs is planning to cut over 80,000 jobs that provide services for veterans.

Despite this, Conroy said she remains optimistic that the VA will continue to honor its commitment to providing benefits to those who have served, especially student veterans.

"They've been pretty stern about not having cuts to services and compensation, so I'm hoping that students are able to utilize their VA benefits, which includes education and healthcare," Conroy said.

With limited information displayed by the VA, Conroy said she hopes the organization will take the right steps in addressing the situation.

"There still isn't a lot of specifics, so I think because there's so much so quickly it adds to the level of uncertainty," Conroy said.

For veteran students or family members of veterans who are concerned about the potential impact of these changes, Conroy said that she is a resource students can turn to for guidance and support.

"I recognize that there is a lot of uncertainty and with that comes a level of fear," Conroy said. "I'm here for them, if they have questions or want to talk."

Conroy's office, located in the Veteran Center in Engleman Hall, Room A 012 offers tailored support for veterans and their families.

Conroy said the center is able to connect veterans with access to various services, resources and people.

"It's a place for them to come and be in a community with one another," Conroy said.

The Veteran Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. monday through friday.

"The military connected students have that shared experience, and the center is available for them to socialize and relate to each other," Conroy said.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Coordinator Veteran, Military and Adult Learning Support Britt Conroy.



PHOTO | DANIEL OBERHAUS

Elon Musk has been running DOGE since President Trump was sworn in on January 20, 2025.