

DAILY REPORT

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Gift From Grad Guarantees Aid for Veterans at UGA Law

KATHERYN TUCKER |

With a gift from a well-known graduate, the University of Georgia law school has announced it will guarantee financial aid to veterans.

“Thanks to the generous support to date, the School of Law has reached the point where every veteran currently enrolled in the entering class will receive financial aid,” UGA Law Dean Peter “Bo” Rutledge said in a statement to be released Tuesday. “What better way to honor military women and men for their service than to provide them monetary support for their education.”

Rutledge added, “I am grateful to renowned trial attorney and 1977 law school alumnus Jim Butler for supporting this initiative. After serving our



James E. Butler Jr., Butler Wooten & Peak

PHOTO: JOHN DISNEY/ALM

country, just as Jim’s father did, these men and women are seeking to build their careers. It is an honor to be able to support them in their efforts to become lawyers and to obtain justice for others.”

Rutledge called the new initiative “the Butler Commitment.”

He did not disclose the amount of the gift, but he said it would guarantee financial aid to 100 percent of veterans starting law school in Athens, beginning in 2019.

The number of veterans starting at UGA law school has increased in recent years—

from three in 2017 to eight in 2018, Rutledge said. He added that he expects more next fall.

“Not only will these service men and women be receiving first-rate legal training, they will also have the opportunity to assist former veterans through work in the Veterans Legal Clinic,” Rutledge said.

The clinic opened in June 2018, funded by a lead gift from Butler, who is a 1977 law school alumnus and founding partner of Butler Wooten & Peak of Columbus, Atlanta and Savannah. The gift was made in memory of his father, Lt. Cmdr. James E. Butler Sr., who was a fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy. Butler Sr. also was the grandfather of James “Jeb” Butler III, a 2008 graduate of the law school.

The youngest Butler is a founding partner of Butler Tobin in Atlanta.

The clinic is staffed by law students who work under the supervision of Director Alexander Scherr, who was associate dean for clinical programs and experiential learning. The clinic works with veterans and their dependents to help ensure access to benefits and services, especially for those with mental or physical disabilities resulting from their time in the military.

“The clinic is already having a tremendous impact on the veteran community and on the law students who are learning what it means to serve a client,” Rutledge said. “Thanks to Jim’s generous support, the law school will now build upon this success

by guaranteeing financial aid to every veteran who accepts the school’s offer of admission and chooses to attend this fall.”

UGA law also participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program, Rutledge said, which allows institutions of higher learning to make additional money available to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the tuition and fees covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Under the program, the Department of Veterans Affairs matches school aid contributions made to eligible veterans.

Katheryn Hayes Tucker is an Atlanta-based reporter covering legal news for the Daily Report and other ALM publications.