

# WORD FROM WASHINGTON

## National Cemeteries Meet Growing Need

(NAPSA)—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is in the midst of the largest expansion of America's veterans cemeteries since the Civil War. Eleven new national cemeteries are under construction around the country.

The additional burial space is needed to meet increased demand for burial from the aging population of World War II veterans. Nearly 1,800 veterans die each day. Of those, approximately 1,100 are World War II veterans.

"We want these shrines to become focal points for neighborhoods, communities, towns and cities to help preserve America's heritage and honor those who have given so much," said John W. Nicholson, VA under secretary for memorial affairs.

VA is building new national cemeteries near veteran population centers not served by a national or state veterans cemetery. Today, 75 percent of veterans live within 75 miles of an open national cemetery. After current construction, 89 percent will live within the 75-mile radius.

New national cemeteries are under construction near Sacramento and Bakersfield, Calif.; Detroit; southern Florida; Jacksonville and Sarasota, Fla.; Atlanta, Ga.; Greenville/Columbia, S.C.; Birmingham, Ala.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Philadelphia.

VA provides additional burial space for veterans through its State Cemetery Grants Program. VA offers funds to build and equip the cemeteries, and then turns them over to the states, which operate and maintain them. VA also provides other burial benefits.

A U.S. burial flag drapes the veteran's coffin and is presented to the next of kin. Funeral directors can help submit the necessary flag application form to VA. Flags are available at U.S. Post



Offices and VA Regional Offices and are automatically provided for burials at national cemeteries.

Presidential Memorial Certificates honor a veteran's service to the United States. The gold embossed certificate is inscribed with the veteran's name and bears the president's signature. The certificate may be requested in person at any VA Regional Office or by writing to the Memorial Programs Service (41A1C) Department of Veterans Affairs, 5109 Russell Road, Quantico, Va., 22134-3903. Requests must include a copy of the veteran's military discharge papers and death certificate.

VA also furnishes upon request, at no charge, a government headstone or marker for the grave of an eligible deceased veteran at any cemetery throughout the world. These headstones and markers are shipped free of charge. Most private cemeteries charge for setting the headstone or marker. National cemeteries do not.

Any deceased veteran discharged from the U.S. armed forces under other than dishonorable conditions, may be eligible for VA burial benefits. For more information about veteran burial benefits, call the VA at 1-800-827-1000 or go to the National Cemetery Administration Web site at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).