

Final Rest, Perpetual Honor for America's Veterans

(NAPSA)—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a variety of memorial benefits to veterans, including burial space, Presidential Memorial Certificates, a burial flag and a headstone or marker.

VA's National Cemetery System (NCS) is building new national cemeteries where the need for burial space for veterans is greatest and expanding other cemeteries when possible. NCS recently opened two new national cemeteries near Pittsburgh and Detroit. Currently, nine other new national cemeteries are planned or under construction in Atlanta; Philadelphia; Miami; Jacksonville, Florida; Sacramento, Calif.; Sarasota, Fla.; Bakersfield, Calif.; Birmingham, Ala.; and Columbia, S.C. Today, approximately 80 percent of all U.S. veterans live within 75 miles of a national cemetery. These new cemeteries will increase that to 89 percent.

The growing demand for national cemeteries is due to the aging population of World War II veterans. Nearly 1,800 veterans die each day, 1,100 of whom are World War II veterans.

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

VA provides Presidential Memorial Certificates to the next-of-kin of and loved ones of deceased veterans. The gold embossed certificates honor the memory of honorably discharged veterans. They are inscribed with the veteran's name



The Department of Veterans Affairs operates a system of 122 national cemeteries.

and bear the President's signature.

VA provides a U.S. flag to drape the casket of deceased veterans that is presented to the next-of-kin. For burials in national cemeteries, NCS provides the burial flag. If burial is in a private cemetery, a burial flag can be obtained at any VA Regional Office or U.S. Post Office.

Funeral home directors can help submit necessary application forms to request burial in a national cemetery, a burial flag, a headstone or marker and the memorial certificate.

VA offers grants to states to build and equip state veterans cemeteries. The state then operates and maintains the cemetery. State veterans cemeteries have eligibility requirements and provide benefits similar to VA national cemeteries.

Any deceased veteran discharged from the U.S. armed forces under other than dishonorable conditions may be eligible for VA burial benefits. Find out more about VA memorial benefits on the NCS Web site at www.cem.va.gov or call toll-free 1-800-827-1000.