

**SB**

**172**



## Burial & Memorial Benefits

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*Veterans Benefits & Services*

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### State Cemetery Grants Program Establishing a State Veterans Cemetery

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#### Determine Need

Analyze existing service provided by national cemeteries and other state cemeteries. Consider service life of existing cemeteries. Provide data on veteran population, including age.

#### Investigate Availability of Suitable Land

Suitable land should be easily accessed by road, free of limitations such as rock, steep slopes and wetlands, uncompromised by incompatible land uses near by, and appropriate for cemetery use. Land already owned by the state, county or municipality is usually the best choice. The state must have title to the land.

#### Assess Impacts

Analyze possible negative environmental and historic preservation impacts the cemetery location may have. Can such limitations be overcome?

#### Encourage Support

Veterans service organizations should be informed of the project and be in support of an effort to establish a state veterans cemetery. Local governments should also be supportive. Ultimately, the state legislature must pass necessary legislation authorizing the state cemetery and appropriating funds for establishment and operation.

#### Complete Application

Apply to the Department of Veterans Affairs for federal assistance with a grant for establishing a state veterans cemetery. For forms and other guidance, see OMB Grants Management and the Catalog of Federal Domestic

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## State Cemetery Grants Program

- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA's national cemeteries.
- The program assists states in providing gravesites for veterans in those areas where NCA cannot fully satisfy their burial needs
- Grants may be used only to establish, expand or improve veterans cemeteries that are owned and operated by a state. Aid is granted only to states, not to private organizations, counties, cities, or other government agencies.
- VA can provide up to 100 percent of the development cost for an approved project. For establishment of new cemeteries, VA can provide for operating equipment as well. VA cannot pay for acquisition of land.
- Cemeteries established under the grant program must conform to the standards and guidelines pertaining to site selection, planning, and construction prescribed by VA.
- Cemeteries must be operated solely for the interment of service members who die on active duty, veterans (as defined by federal law), and their eligible spouses and dependent children. States may impose residency requirements and other limitations to eligibility in addition to those imposed by federal law. State eligibility requirements, however, may not be less stringent than Federal requirements.
- The administration, operation, and maintenance of a VA-supported state cemetery is solely the responsibility of the state.
- VA is authorized to pay a "plot allowance" of \$300 to a state for expenses incurred in the burial of certain eligible veterans.
- VA has awarded grants totaling more than \$215 million to establish, expand or improve 62 veterans cemeteries in 32 states and the Commonwealth of Guam.
- In fiscal year 2003 NCA-supported state cemeteries provided more than 19,246 interments.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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4/21/05

### Sponsor Statement

**SB 182 – “An Act authorizing the Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs to establish and maintain Alaskan veterans’ cemeteries; and establishing the Alaska veterans’ cemetery fund in the general fund.**

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SB 182 authorizes the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs to establish and maintain state veterans’ cemeteries in our state to serve state veterans and spouses and eligible dependents of state veterans. This legislation enables the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs to accept gifts, donations, and grants, including land, for the purposes of establishing and maintaining an Alaska veterans’ cemetery. Land received by the department for an Alaska veterans’ cemetery shall be owned by the state.

The U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs, State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement the Veteran’s Affairs national cemeteries. The program assists states in providing gravesites for veterans in those areas where the National Cemetery Administration cannot fully satisfy their burial needs.

The U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs can provide up to 100 percent of the development costs for an approved project, as well as, operating equipment for the establishment of new cemeteries. The U.S. Veterans Affairs cannot pay for the acquisition of the land. The administration, operation, and maintenance of a Veterans Affairs supported state cemetery is solely the responsibility of the state.

Over the next few years there is estimated to be a 21 percent increase in the number of burials nationwide due to the advancing age of our World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans.

Demographically, there is a need for a veterans’ cemetery in the Interior. Currently in Alaska, there is a National Cemetery in Sitka, which has no room to expand, and the National Cemetery in Fort Richardson is 350 miles away. The Fairbanks North Star Borough has approximately 11,164 veterans and forty percent of families in Fairbanks have a least one veteran in their household. According to the U.S. Veterans’ Affairs, a cemetery in Fairbanks would increase the number of veterans served by a veterans’ cemetery.

This Legislation would put in place the mechanism for the U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs in conjunction with the State of Alaska, to establish a veterans cemetery where our soldiers can be laid to rest with full military funeral honors, pallbearers, rifle team, flag folding and flag presentation.

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## Facts About the National Cemetery Administration

### MISSION

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) honors veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials that commemorate their service to our nation.

### NCA STATISTICS

- NCA currently maintains more than 2.6 million gravesites at 120 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as in 33 soldier's lots and monument sites.
- Approximately 300,000 full-casket gravesites, 65,000 in-ground gravesites for cremated remains, and 35,000 columbarium niches are available in already developed acreage in our 120 national cemeteries.
- There are approximately 14,200 acres within established installations in NCA. Just over half are undeveloped and—with available gravesites in developed acreage—have the potential to provide more than 3.6 million gravesites.
- Of the 120 national cemeteries, 60 are open to all interments; 22 can accommodate cremated remains and family members of those already interred; and 38 are closed to new interments, but may accommodate family members in already occupied gravesites.
- Since 1973, annual interments in VA national cemeteries have increased by more than 150 percent, from 36,400 to more than 93,000 in fiscal year 2004. Interments are expected to increase annually until 2008.
- Of the more than 93,000 interments conducted in fiscal year 2004, 72.8 percent were in the 20 busiest national cemeteries: Riverside, Calif., Calverton, N.Y., Florida, Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Fort Snelling, Minn., Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Willamette, Ore., Fort Logan, Colo., National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona, Fort Rosecrans, Calif., Houston, Texas, Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, Tahoma, Wash., San Joaquin Valley, Calif., Massachusetts, Abraham Lincoln, Ill., Indiantown Gap, Pa., Long Island, N.Y., Puerto Rico, and Ohio Western Reserve National Cemeteries.

- As of Sept. 30, 2004, eight national cemeteries each contained more than 100,000 occupied gravesites, collectively accounting for 43.1 percent of all NCA gravesites maintained: Long Island, N.Y., Calverton, N.Y., Fort Snelling, Minn., Riverside, Calif., Jefferson Barracks, Mo., Golden Gate, Calif., Willamette, Ore., and Fort Sam Houston, Texas, National Cemeteries.
- Largest National Cemetery: Calverton (N.Y.) 1,045 acres.  
Smallest National Cemetery: Hampton VAMC, (Va.) .03 acres.  
Oldest National Cemetery: 14 established in 1862 (12 are maintained by VA).  
Newest National Cemetery: Fort Sill opened in November 2001.
- Since 1973, NCA has provided more than 8.8 million headstones and markers. In fiscal year 2004, NCA provided more than 349,000 headstones and markers.
- NCA provided more than 435,000 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased veterans in fiscal year 2004.
- Since 1980, NCA's State Cemetery Grants Program (SCGP) has obligated over \$215 million to 32 states and Guam for the establishment, expansion or improvement of 62 state veterans cemeteries. In fiscal year 2004, NCA-supported state cemeteries provided more than 19,200 interments.
- Volunteers donated approximately 364,000 hours at national cemeteries during fiscal year 2004.
- Over 8.7 million people visited VA national cemeteries in fiscal year 2004.
- In 1999 and 2003, with the passage of two laws, Congress directed VA to establish 12 new national cemeteries. One has been opened in Oklahoma. The rest – one in Alabama, two in California, three in Florida, one in Georgia, one in Michigan, two in Pennsylvania and one in South Carolina – will be located near large populations of veterans who currently do not have access to a burial option.

### **VETERAN STATISTICS**

- Veterans' deaths are expected to peak at 676,000 in 2008. VA estimates that more than 662,000 veterans died in 2004. Historically, about 11 percent of U.S. veterans choose to be buried in VA national cemeteries. This percentage will increase with the opening of new national cemeteries.

February 2005

## FAIRBANKS VETERANS CEMETERY WORKSHEET OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS<sup>1</sup>

Demographic Factors	Data	Notes
Veterans in four areas	11,164	Fairbanks/North Star and 3 adjoining areas
Avg. annual death rate	149	2005-2026 VA figures
Usage factor	0.50	50% will choose cemetery
Dependents factor	1.50	1 dependent per 2 veterans
Annual burial rate	112	[Death rate x usage] x dependents factor
Graves per acre (gross)	600	Rule of thumb
Min. gravesites needed (20 yr.)	1,676	[Annual burials x 0.75] x 20
Min. burial acreage needed	2.79	One of four is a "second interment"
Gross acreage recommended	20.00 <sup>2</sup>	Min. gravesites/600 see note below
<b>Personnel Factors</b>		
<b>Data</b>		
Admn. Workers (230 Inter. Per FTE)	0.49	Based on NCA estimates
Field workers		Cumulative
Interments (250 per FTE)	0.45	Includes PT, temp., etc.
Gravesites (7,844.4 per FTE)	0.21	Rises over time
Acres Maint. (10.7 per FTE)	0.26	Burial acres used/developed acres may vary
Field Workers Subtotal	0.92	
Employees	1.41	Admn. & field workers
Cem. Director		NCA Costs
(GS 9--\$36.7 x 1.3 for fringes)	\$47,652.80	1.0 Full Time Equivalent Employee (FTEE)
Equip. Operator		
(WG-8--\$28 x 1.3)	\$36,142.60	1.0 FTEE
<b>Total Salary</b>	<b>\$83,795.40</b>	
<b>Operations Factors</b>		
<b>Data</b>		
Utilities & communications	\$1,117.50	Phone, water, electricity, gas (\$400 x acres)
Supplies & materials	\$2,095.31	Fuel, fertilizer, etc. (\$750 x acres)
Contractual services	\$1,187.34	Janitorial, security, irrigation (\$425 x acres)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$4,400.16</b>	
<b>Total Annual Operations   \$88,195.56</b>		
<i>Maintenance and Repairs           extra</i>		
<i>Equipment Replacement           extra</i>		

<sup>1</sup> The standard usage factor is 25% but we have increased the factor to 50% in this case because of the difficulty in projecting usage in this area. While 50% usage may be high, it would be better to estimate a higher number at this point rather than a lower number.

<sup>2</sup> The model assumes a suitable site with easily developed cemetery land. In this case, it would be better to acquire as large a parcel as possible in order to assure suitable land and the ability to buffer surrounding land uses. At least 20 acres should be considered.