

**HB**

**97**

<target><bill>HB 97</bill><subject>HB  
97</subject><comm>HMLV26</comm></target>

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Sponsor



Statement

**SESSION:**

Alaska State Capitol, Room 418  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 465-4457 Office  
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Fairbanks, AK 99701  
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## Representative David Guttenberg

### House Bill 97 – State Veterans' Cemetery & Fund

All Alaska veterans deserve access to a military cemetery that honors their service and recognizes their sacrifices while serving our country, usually under challenging conditions, and frequently in harm's way.

On a per capita basis, Alaska has more residents in active military service or who are veterans than all but one other state. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a total of 9,469 veterans reside in the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

The VA's long-term goal is to provide an operational veterans' cemetery within 75 miles of 90 percent of the veterans in the country. The nearest veterans' cemetery to Fairbanks is Fort Richardson National Cemetery, located 350 miles away in Anchorage. By the VA's own estimation, a facility in Fairbanks would greatly increase the number of veterans served by a veterans' cemetery.

Interior Alaska's veterans deserve a cemetery located in the Interior of the state. A state veterans' cemetery in the Interior would better serve the needs of veterans and their families, and provide a final resting place that is centrally located, honorable, and well maintained. An Interior veterans' cemetery will help families avoid the pain of burying a loved one far from home.

HB 97 seeks to establish a state cemetery similar to the Fort Richardson and Sitka National Cemeteries. It will provide a place in the Interior for soldiers to be laid to rest with full military funeral honors, including uniformed pallbearers, rifle team, and ceremonial folding and presentation of the United States flag.

HB 97 authorizes the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to establish and maintain a state veterans' cemetery with funds from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Cemetery Grants Program. Through this program, the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs may be awarded up to 100% of allowable costs for design, construction, and operating equipment for an approved project. To date, the VA has awarded 152 grants totaling more than \$264 million to establish, expand, or improve 65 veterans' cemeteries in 35 states, Guam and Northern Mariana Islands. There are now 65 operational cemeteries and four more under construction.

I urge you to support this legislation.

Representative.David.Guttenberg@legis.state.ak.us  
<http://guttenberg.akdemocrats.org>

## **FACT SHEET**

- AK has the highest number of veterans per capita in the nation.
- 9,469 vets in FNSB (McDowell Group Inc. 2005)
- 10,983 vets in Interior region of AK (McDowell Group Inc. 2005)
- 15% of Interior vets are 65+
- Federal grant program will pay 100% of costs for design, construction, & operating equipment
- Also available are follow-on grants for expansion & improvement of existing facilities
- Veterans Benefits Administration pays \$300 plot allowance to state per internment. (non-service related death)
- For service related deaths VBA pays up to \$2,000
- Access to Fort Rich Cemetery is sometimes restricted depending upon Army's security status.
- Only access to Sitka is by air or marine highway.

## **Notable Internments**

- 2 Medal of Honor recipients buried in AK (1 at Ft. Rich, 1 at Sitka)
- Major Kermit Roosevelt, son of Pres. Theodore Roosevelt is buried at Ft. Rich
- James Green Brady, Governor of the Territory of Alaska from 1897 to 1906, is buried in Sitka National Cemetery.
- Charles William Paddock, "The Worlds Fastest Human", two-time Olympic Gold Medalist, is buried at Sitka National Cemetery. (Former Marine Corp. Captain)

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has confirmed the following:

- No dollar amount is required:
  - To submit a preapplication for a state veterans cemetery through grants.gov
  - For the VA to acknowledge receipt of the preapplication to the State with a Federal Application Number
  - To rank the project for the FY 2010 Priority List of Pending Applications
  
- If the preapplication is submitted through grants.gov before the July 1, 2009 deadline, the project will be ranked on the FY 2010 Priority List.
  
- However, the \$250,000 in the capital budget for the Vet Cemetery will not be sufficient to rank the project in the highest possible ranking on the FY 2010 Priority List.
  
- If the VA does not have the certification of State matching funds in the amount of \$750,000 by the August 15, 2009 deadline, the project will not be high enough for a funding opportunity in FY2010.
  
- The VA will reimburse the State of Alaska for all allowable and approved expenses. Once the state submits the preapplication through grants.gov, the reimbursement of eligible costs will be considered and if deemed appropriate, approved.
  
- Reimbursement will be at 100% and will include the State's matching Architectural and Engineering fees, inspection fees, construction costs, and initial equipment. However, it will not include land acquisition.

# LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES  
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY  
STATE OF ALASKA

(907) 465-3867 or 465-2450  
FAX (907) 465-2029  
Mail Stop 3101


State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

## MEMORANDUM

April 11, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Sectional summary of CSHB 45(MLV)  
(Work Order No. 25-LS0230\C)

**TO:** Representative David Guttenberg  
Attn: Dana Krawchuk

**FROM:**   
Donald M. Bullock Jr.  
Legislative Counsel

You have requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill.

As a preliminary matter, note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents. If you would like an interpretation of the bill as it may apply to a particular set of circumstances, please advise.

**Section 1.** Allows the legislature to appropriate a portion of the money received for special request plates commemorating Alaska veterans to the Alaska veterans' cemetery fund created in sec. 3 of the bill.

**Section 2.** Adds gifts, donations, and grants received by the Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs for veterans' cemeteries to the list of program receipts in AS 37.05.146(c) that are accounted for separately; appropriations from these program receipts are not made from the unrestricted general fund.

**Section 3.** Creates the Alaska veterans' cemetery fund in the general fund; the fund is not exempt from the requirements of AS 37.07 (Executive Budget Act) and money in the fund is not dedicated for a specific purpose. Provides that the legislature may appropriate amounts from the fund to the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs for the construction, operation, and maintenance of veterans' cemeteries established under sec. 4 of the bill. Appropriations to the veterans' cemetery fund do not lapse under AS 37.25.010, and the unexpended and unobligated balance of an appropriation from the fund lapses back into the fund.

**Section 4.** Authorizes the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to establish and maintain Alaska veterans' cemeteries in the state. Allows the department to accept gifts, donations, and grants for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the cemeteries; land received by the department is owned by the state. Requires the department to consult

Representative David Guttenberg

April 11, 2007

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with the Alaska Veterans' Advisory Council when adopting regulations for determining eligibility for burial in a state veterans' cemetery, receive the plot or interment allowance on behalf of the state, comply with all requirements for a state veterans' cemetery grant established by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs, and apply for state veterans' cemetery grants from the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs. Authorizes the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to adopt regulations, enter into agreements for the operation of veterans' cemeteries, and solicit gifts, donations, and grants in addition to grants from the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs.

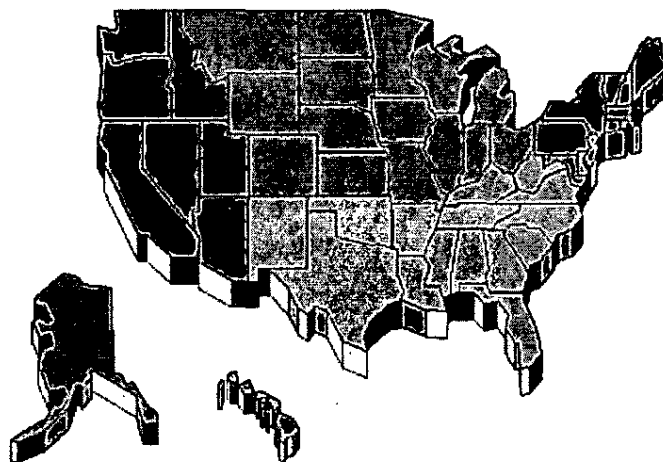
DMB:ljw  
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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### BURIAL & MEMORIALS

#### State Cemetery Grants Program/Grant Information Kit



[Applicant Eligibility](#) [Program History and Background](#) [Scope of the Program](#) [Availability of Funds](#) [Application Guidelines](#) [Application Content](#) [Selection Criteria](#) [Review Process](#)

#### Applicant Eligibility

1. State governments are eligible to receive grants to **establish, expand or improve** state veterans cemeteries. The term "state" means each of the several states, territories and possessions of the United States, including Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are also eligible to receive grants.
2. Counties, cities and other state subdivisions, including multi-agency organizations are not eligible for grants. Private organizations are not eligible to receive grants.
3. **Applicants must own the land** on which the cemetery is to be established. The state is responsible for the provision of land. Land may be purchased, transferred from another agency or donated.
4. Eligible applicants must provide assurance that they possess legislative authority and adequate appropriations to construct the project to be built with grant assistance.
5. Cemeteries must be operated solely for the interment of service members who die on active duty, veterans (as defined in Title 38, U.S. Code §101.(2 )), and their spouses and minor children. States may impose residency requirements for eligibility but are encouraged not to.
6. Grants may only be awarded to establish, expand or improve state-owned veterans cemeteries. Grants may not be awarded for maintenance or repairs.

7. New cemeteries must be capable of providing at least 20 years of service.

### **Program History and Background**

1. The federal government's system of national cemeteries was first established during the Civil War. The Army operated most of the cemeteries until 1973 when they were transferred to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Arlington National Cemetery is still operated by the Department of the Army. The National Park Service operates several historical national cemeteries such as Gettysburg and Vicksburg. An independent agency, the American Battle Monuments Commission, maintains cemeteries overseas for the dead of World War I and World War II. States have operated veterans cemeteries since the War with Mexico.
2. The VA State Cemetery Grants Program was established in 1978 to complement VA's network of national cemeteries. Funds were first appropriated for the program in 1980. As originally authorized, VA provided 50 percent of the cost and states provided 50 percent. The value of the state land dedicated to the cemetery comprised up to half of the state's share.
3. The program assists states in providing gravesites in those areas where the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) cannot fully satisfy veterans' burial needs.
4. 4. Public Law 105-368, which went into effect in 1999, authorized VA to provide up to 100 percent of the development cost for an approved project. VA can now provide for operating equipment for establishment of new cemeteries. VA does not provide for acquisition of land.
5. The administration, operation and maintenance of a VA-supported state cemetery are solely the responsibility of the state.
6. VA is authorized to pay a "plot allowance" of \$300 to a state for expenses incurred in the burial of an eligible veteran without charge.
7. Federal statutes authorizing the program are codified at 38 U.S.C. § 2408. Regulations are at 38 C.F.R. Part 39.
8. The State Cemetery Grants Program is described in the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* under "State Cemetery Grants" at 64.203.

### **Scope of the Program**

1. The State Cemetery Grants Program is intended to complement the service provided by the VA's system of veterans cemeteries operated by the National Cemetery Administration.
2. VA seeks to provide the service of a veterans cemetery within 75 miles of 90 percent of the veterans across the country. Data shows that a 75-mile radius defines the effective "service area" of a veterans cemetery.
3. Since 1973, VA has opened many new cemeteries, primarily in large metropolitan areas where veterans previously had no effective service. VA also works to expand existing national cemeteries to maintain current service. VA has more than doubled the acreage available in federal veterans cemeteries since 1973 and the burial rate at these cemeteries has also increased by more than 100 percent.
4. Smaller cities and rural areas located beyond the 75-mile service areas of these existing national cemeteries are ideal locations for state veterans cemeteries.

### **Availability of Funds**

1. Federal funds are appropriated each year for the State Cemetery Grants Program. VA requested \$37

million in funding for FY 2008 (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008).

2. Appropriated funds are available until expended.
3. If a state that has received a grant under this program ceases to operate the cemetery as a veterans cemetery, the federal government is entitled to recover the total of all grants made under this program to that state.
4. Funds must be expended in accordance with applicable guidelines, including Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments."
5. All grant costs must be "necessary, reasonable" and allocable to the project for which funds have been requested.
6. When all requirements for Federal funding have been met, VA will award grants providing sufficient funds are available.
7. If sufficient funds are not available, VA will award funds according to the priority established (see "**Selection Criteria**").

### **Application Guidelines**

1. A state seeking grant funding for a veterans cemetery project must apply to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in accordance with 38 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Part 39. The applicant must also conform with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, 38 CFR Part 43, known as the "Common Grants Management Rule."
2. The applicant must have clear legislative authority from the state to apply for the grant.
3. The applicant must have the funds necessary to begin design and planning work. Federal funds are awarded on the basis of the bids received for construction. **State funds are needed to prepare plans** and specifications prior to bidding. Once the successful bidder has been determined and VA has awarded the grant, the state may be reimbursed for allowable costs already incurred.
4. The applicant must provide written assurance that any cemetery established, expanded, or improved through a grant will be maintained and operated in accordance with the operational standards and measures of the National Cemetery Administration.
5. VA provides **no monetary assistance to operate, maintain, or repair state veterans cemeteries**. States must be aware of the commitment to operate the cemetery.
6. VA must receive applications by July 1 for projects to be funded in the next Federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).
7. Applications must be reviewed by the State "Single Point of Contact" under the Executive Order 12372 process.
8. Applications must be signed and dated by the authorized state representative, normally the director of the state veterans affairs agency.
9. Cemeteries established under the grant program must conform to VA-prescribed standards and guidelines for site selection, planning and construction.

### **Application Content**

1. Standard forms approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) must be used to apply for grants. Standard Forms are available on the [OMB Grants Management](#) website.

- The basic application form is SF (Standard Form) 424, titled "Application for Federal Assistance," and known as the "face sheet."
- The application must also include SF 424C, "Budget Information—Construction Programs."
- The applicant must also submit SF 424D, "Assurances—Construction Programs."
- The "Certificate of Compliance" with Federal drug-free workplace and debarment and suspension requirements is required.
- In addition, the applicant must submit the "Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loan and Cooperative Agreements," which certifies that the applicant will not use grant funds for lobbying. If grant funds are to be used for lobbying, they must be disclosed on the "Disclosure" form.

The applicant must submit written assurance that it possesses authority to establish and operate a state veterans cemetery and that it will maintain the cemetery in accordance with VA standards.

2. For all projects expected to cost \$100,000 or more, the applicant must submit a pre-application. The pre-application is intended to:
  - Establish communication between the grantor agency (VA) and the applicant;
  - Determine the applicant's eligibility;
  - Determine how well the proposed project can compete with applications from others;
  - Discourage proposals that have little or no chance of being funded.
3. Pre-applications must include the following:
  - The location of the cemetery. A specific site may be designated during the review phase of the application, but the pre-application must designate the area to be served and the preferred location of the cemetery;
  - A design concept that describes the primary features to be included in the project and the number of gravesites to be provided. Standard features include items such as the entrance gate, administration building, maintenance building, committal service facility, flag plaza and assembly area;
  - A needs assessment that explains the need for the project to establish, expand or improve the veterans cemetery. This should be concise and quantitative to the degree possible.

### **Selection Criteria**

1. Preapplications received by July 1, will be prioritized for funding in the following fiscal year.
2. Only preapplications which have met the requirements noted in the "Application Guidelines" and the "Application Content" sections will be prioritized. That is, applications must be properly completed on the appropriate forms. They must include the proper attachments and the applicant must have clear authority and adequate funding to begin the design process, as indicated by Department of Veterans' Affairs approved Costing Estimate for Architectural and Engineering Fees (Ref SF 424c, lines 4 and 5).
3. Preapplications meeting these basic requirements will be prioritized according to published criteria in 38 CFR 39.
4. VA will rank the preapplications and announce priorities by August 15. VA will rank applications according to priority and the date on which the application was received.

5. Prioritization follows these rules:

- o PRIORITY I – Projects needed to avoid disruption in burial service that would otherwise occur at existing veterans' cemeteries within 4 years of the date of the preapplication. Such projects would include phased expansion projects as well as improvement projects that are needed to continue interment operations.
- o PRIORITY II – Projects for the establishment of new veterans' cemeteries.
- o PRIORITY III – Planned phased developments prior to need.
- o PRIORITY IV – Other improvement projects.

Within priority groups 1, 2 and 3, highest priority will be given to projects in geographical locations that would provide **service to the largest number** of unserved veterans as determined by VA. Within priority group 4, projects will be ranked in order based upon VA's determination of the relative importance and necessity to operate.

### Review Process

1. In addition to the required forms, assurances, certifications and attachments, all projects must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. In many cases, especially with new cemeteries, the applicant will be required to perform an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine whether a more in-depth Environmental Impact Study (EIS) is required. The EA should progress toward a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI should be made available for public review and comment.
2. The National Historic Preservation Act requires VA to determine whether proposed projects will have any impact on historic or cultural resources. When a new cemetery is being established, it is normally necessary to perform an investigation of the site to determine whether any historic or cultural resources would be affected and, if so, what mitigation or protection may be afforded. The applicant then confers with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which renders an opinion of the project's impact. Depending on the opinion of the SHPO, VA may be able to approve the project.
3. Most states hire architect/engineer (A/E) firms to design major projects. In the case of major projects, including all establishment grants, VA requires a "pre-design conference" in which VA, state and A/E representatives meet to familiarize themselves with the site and VA design requirements.
4. VA requires a "master plan" for establishment of new cemeteries. The master plan should analyze the major factors affecting design of the cemetery—including climate, soil, hydrology, site constraints, views, and activity level. The plan should analyze alternative designs and address the ultimate "build-out" of the site and planned phases of development.
5. The design process then proceeds to "design development" or partial plans, sometimes called 40 percent or 50 percent drawings. Again VA must review these submissions and approve them.
6. The final design submission comprises the construction drawings and specifications. VA is required to approve these documents before the state advertises for bids. Cemetery plans must be complete, comprehensive and professional.
7. Based on construction bids, the state submits a new form 424 and 424C that reflects the actual construction amount rather than the estimated amount provided in the preapplication. Along with the forms, the state must submit a tabulation of bids and designate the contractor to whom the contract will be awarded. VA reviews these materials and then awards the grant. Once the state receives the Notification of Grant Award, they may request reimbursement for costs they have already incurred such as design costs.

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Reviewed/Updated Date: December 12, 2007



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## 64.203 State Cemetery Grants

### FEDERAL AGENCY:

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

### AUTHORIZATION:

Veterans Housing Benefits Act of 1978, Section 202, Public Laws 95-476, 98-223, 100-687, 103-446, and 105-368; 38 U.S.C. 2408.

### OBJECTIVES:

To assist States in the establishment, expansion, and improvement of veterans' cemeteries.

### TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:

Project Grants.

### USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:

Monetary assistance is provided under this program to construct, expand, and improve State veterans' cemeteries. Cemeteries must be State-owned and operated solely for the interment of eligible veterans and their dependents and/or spouses. Construction cost means the amount found necessary to convert a tract of land to an operational cemetery.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

#### Applicant Eligibility:

Any State may apply.

#### Beneficiary Eligibility:

The cemetery must be used solely for the interment of veterans, their wives, husbands, surviving spouses, minor children, and unmarried adult children who were physically or mentally disabled and incapable of self support: section 1.620 of 38 CFR.

#### Credentials/Documentation:

Costs will be determined in accordance with revised OMB Circular No. A-87 for State Governments, dated May 4, 1995, and further amended August 29, 1997.

### APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:

#### Preapplication Coordination:

Consultation or assistance is available from VA Central Office personnel (State Cemetery Grants Service) to aid in the preparation of an application. The standard application forms as furnished by VA and required by OMB Circular No. A-102 must be used for this program (Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance," with attachments). An environmental assessment is required. This program is eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the single point of contact in his or her State for more information on the process the State requires to be followed in applying for assistance, if

the State has selected the program for review.

**Application Procedure:**

Submit Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance for Construction Programs," with attachments, to the Director, State Cemetery Grants Service (401C), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-110.

**Award Procedure:**

Formal notification of the award to the State is made by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration.

**Deadlines:**

A deadline of July 1 is established for the filing of applications in the year prior to the fiscal year in which funding is requested.

**Range of Approval/Disapproval Time:**

From 30 to 60 days.

**Appeals:**

No application shall be disapproved until the applicant has been afforded an opportunity for a hearing.

**Renewals:**

Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

**Formula and Matching Requirements:**

The amount of the Federal contribution to a State is up to 100 percent of the cost of establishing, improving or expanding State Veterans Cemeteries. In the case of establishment grants, the cost of operating equipment may also be included. Land value is not included as an allowable cost for reimbursement under the grant.

**Length and Time Phasing of Assistance:**

Funds are provided by electronic transfer of funds and must be used within 3 years.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Reports:**

Outlay Report and Request for Reimbursement for Construction Programs, and Performance Reports are accomplished in accord with 38 CFR Part 43.

**Audits:**

In accordance with the provisions of OMB Circular No. A-133 (Revised, June 24, 1997), "Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations," nonfederal entities that expend financial assistance of \$300,000 or more in Federal awards will have a single or a program-specific audit conducted for that year. Nonfederal entities that expend less than \$300,000 a year in Federal awards are exempt from Federal audit requirements for that year, except as noted in Circular No. A-133.

**Records:**

Financial records, supporting documents, statistical records and all other records pertinent to a grant shall be retained for a period of 3 years. If any claim or audit is started before the expiration of the 3 year period, the records shall be retained until all litigation, claims or audit findings involving the records

have been resolved.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

**Account Identification:**

36-0183-0-1-705.

**Obligations:**

(Grants) FY 04 \$33,621,693; FY 05 est \$36,109,000; and FY 06 est \$32,000,000.

**Range and Average of Financial Assistance:**

\$4,305 to \$10,965,607. Average: \$1,533,992.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

For fiscal year 2005 the State Cemetery Grants Service has received requests totaling \$126,070,995. The State Cemetery Grants Service estimates approximately 5 to 10 applications to establish, expand, or improve State veterans cemeteries in fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:**

VA Regulations 38 CFR Parts 39 and 43, State Cemetery Grant Program; State Cemetery Grants Program Guide (PG 40-1); and, "Federal Assistance for Establishment, Expansion and Improvement of State Veterans' Cemeteries (State Cemetery Grants Program)" (VA Pamphlet 40-96).

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

**Regional or Local Office:**

None.

**Headquarters Office:**

Director, State Cemetery Grants Service, (41E), National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. Contact: Mr. William Jayne. Telephone: (202) 565-6152 or 565-6801. Fax: (202) 565-6141.

**Web Site Address:**

<http://www.va.gov>.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:**

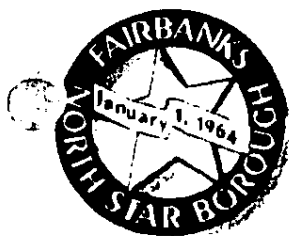
64.101, Burial Expenses Allowance for Veterans; 64.201, National Cemeteries; 64.202, Procurement of Headstones and Markers and/or Presidential Memorial Certificates.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:**

1) Construction necessary to convert a tract of land to an operational cemetery; 2) construction of a committal facility, administration/maintenance building, and improve storm drainage system; and 3) the expansion of cemetery acreage or building a committal shelter.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:**

Applications are prioritized and ranked with other projects in the order received. The priority system consists of six groups or categories. Examples: The extent to which States have adequate funds to match the Federal grant; and the extent to which a project involves additional gravesites necessary to keep the cemetery open. The availability of the Federal and nonfederal share of the project is a primary consideration.



## Fairbanks North Star Borough

### *Office of the Mayor*

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809 Pioneer Road • PO Box 71267 • Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-1267 •

Phone 907/459-1300 Fax 907/459-1102 Email [mayor@co.fairbanks.ak.us](mailto:mayor@co.fairbanks.ak.us)

12 February, 2007

Dear Committee Members,

This is a letter of **support** for **HB 45: State Veterans Cemetary** and a thank you to Representative David Guttenberg for his sponsorship of this valuable piece of legislation.

This legislation serves to better meet the need of our Alaskan Veterans and their families through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, State Cemetery Grants Program.

As the home of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (formerly the 172<sup>nd</sup> SBCT / now the 1-25 SBCT), and having recently emerged successfully from our efforts to challenge the BRAC recommendations to scale back the military presence in Alaska, we have no choice but to continue to provide adequate reason for the military to stay here. This bill does that.

I **fully support this legislation** which honors Alaskans who have served their country with dignity as well as their family members in our community.

Sincerely,

Jim Whitaker, Mayor - Fairbanks North Star Borough

By: Luke Hopkins  
Hank Bartos  
Introduced: 03/24/05  
Adopted: 03/24/05

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH  
RESOLUTION NO. 2005 - 15

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE CREATION OF A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY IN THE INTERIOR THROUGH LEGISLATION THAT ESTABLISHES AN ALASKAN VETERANS CEMETERY WITH FUNDS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) STATE CEMETERY GRANTS PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, Alaskan veterans deserve a cemetery that is located in the Interior that honors their service; and

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration, Alaska has more residents in the military on a per-capita basis than any other state. There are approximately 11,164 veterans living in the Fairbanks North Star Borough; and

WHEREAS, the nearest officially designated military cemetery is located in Anchorage at Fort Richardson Army base; and

WHEREAS, the VA National Cemetery Administration follows a 6-step process to build a new state veterans cemetery: site selection; environmental assessment; land acquisition; master planning and design development; construction documents preparation; and construction award and completion; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs can be awarded up to 100 percent of the development costs from the VA State Cemetery Grants Program for an approved project and the VA has awarded 137 grants to establish and improve veterans cemeteries around the country; and

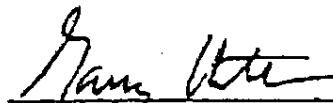
WHEREAS, a State Veterans' Cemetery in the Interior would better serve needs of the veterans and their families, and provide a place that is centrally located, honorable, and would provide a place in the Interior for soldiers to be laid with full military funeral honors, pallbearers, rifle team, flag folding, and flag presentation; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly supports the creation of a State Veterans' Cemetery in the Interior and recognizes veterans' sacrifices while serving our country.

46 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be  
47 forwarded to The Honorable Governor Frank Murkowski, the Alaska Interior Delegation,  
48 members of the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, Major General Craig E.  
49 Campbell Adjutant General/Commissioner, Military and Veterans Affairs, The Honorable  
50 Senator Ted Stevens, the Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski, the Honorable  
51 Congressman Don Young.

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PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 24<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2005.



Garry Hutchison  
Presiding Officer

ATTEST: :



Mona Lisa Drexler, GMC  
Municipal Borough Clerk

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Ayes: Romans, Bartos, Sattley, Rex, Williams, Hopkins, Aldridge, Frank, Hutchison  
Noes: None



## AMERICAN LEGION

C. RUSSELL HUBER POST #57

*"The Friendly Post" -- Home of Happy Bears*

1634 Cushman Street • Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Phone: (907) 452-5757 • Fax: (907) 452-8954

January 30, 2007

Representative David Guttenberg  
State Capital  
Room 418  
Juneau, AK. 99801

Reference: Veterans Cemetery in Fairbanks

Dear Representative Guttenberg:

As the 2007 Legislative session begins, Veterans organizations are again requesting Legislative support for the establishment of a Veterans Cemetery in Fairbanks. You will recall that the American Legion, Department of Alaska, at their 2005 State Convention in Kodiak voted unanimously in support of that cemetery. Most noteworthy is that the resolution calling for a new veteran's cemetery came from our Anchorage American Legion comrades who recognized the only existing veteran's cemetery in Alaska is located at Fort Richardson.

We have met with Federal Veterans Affairs officials, State Veterans Affairs personnel, American Legion Posts, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Alaska Native Veterans, members of the Order of The Purple Heart and other veterans organizations who all strongly support your bill to establish a second veterans cemetery to serve the desperate need for a final resting ground for those many who have served our country in times of war and peace.

The need for a new veteran's cemetery is urgent as the few veterans' sites available will soon be filled with no provision existing for veteran's grave anywhere in the interior.

Please share this letter with other members of the Legislature.

For God and Country,

Darrell Peterson, Commander

Disabled American Veterans  
Department of Alaska  
Resolution #2007-01

SUPPORT FOR A POLICY FOR A STATE VETERANS CEMETARY

WHEREAS, Alaskan veterans deserve a cemetery that is located in the Interior that honors their service; and

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration, Alaska has more residents in the military on a per-capita basis than any other state. The Fairbanks North Star Borough has approximately 11,164 veterans; Forty percent of families in the Fairbanks area have at least one veteran in their household and sixteen percent have at least one woman in the household who is a veteran; and

WHEREAS, A State Veterans' Cemetery in the Interior would better serve needs of the veterans and their families and provide a place that is centrally located, honorable and well maintained; and

WHEREAS, The nearest officially designated military cemetery is located 350 miles North of Anchorage at Ft. Richardson; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administrations' goal is to provide eligible veterans reasonable access to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) burial options; and

WHEREAS, The VA provides a burial and funeral expense allowance of \$300 and a plot-interment allowance of \$300; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration follows a six-step process to build a new state veteran cemetery; site selection; environmental statement; land acquisition; master planning and design development; construction document preparation; and construction award and completion; and


WHEREAS, The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs can be awarded up to 100% of the development costs from the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration for an approved project; and

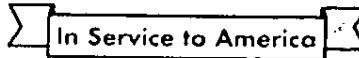
WHEREAS, To date, the Veterans Administration has awarded 137 grants totaling more than \$200 million to establish, expand or improve sixty-two veterans cemeteries in thirty-two states, plus Guam, Fifty-six cemeteries in twenty-one states and Guam are now operational; and

WHEREAS, According to the Division of Motor Vehicles from FY03 to FY05, \$45,040, has been generated from both the Federal and Commemorative Veterans license plate programs. The monies collected from the state license plate program currently goes into the general fund; and

WHEREAS, The construction of a state veterans cemetery in the Interior would be a great benefit to the friends and families of veterans in our community and would provide a place in the Interior for soldiers to be laid with full military funeral honors, pallbearers, rifle team, flag folding and flag presentation; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the Disabled American Veterans, Department of Alaska, That support be given in the creation of a veterans state cemetery, as proposed in HB45, open to all veterans in the state and recognizes the veterans sacrifices while serving our cemetery.

  
Tom Schanrock,  
Department Commander



## ALASKA STATE COUNCIL

February 12, 2009

Rep David Guttenberg  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK

Rep Guttenberg

It is again a privilege to stand with you in your continuing efforts to establish a state veteran's cemetery in Fairbanks, Alaska. As we testified last year in both the House and Senate, the Alaska State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America – the statewide Vietnam Veterans organization – fully and completely supports the establishment of this new state veteran's cemetery.

We are very impressed with your ability to get a commitment from Governor Palin through her Commissioner of Military and Veterans Affairs for an appropriation to initiate the VA process that should significantly underwrite the development of this new cemetery. Your persistence and integrity in this effort are finally showing success. There is no reason any state legislator should oppose this effort to establish a state veterans cemetery in Interior Alaska.

As the State Council President, I often stand with the surviving families or Alaskan veterans as they say their final farewell at our National Cemetery in Anchorage. Unless we build a state veterans cemetery in Fairbanks these families will have to travel hundreds or even thousands of miles to visit their lost warrior. This is not only inconsistent with the wishes of Alaska's veterans and their families; it is also not consistent with the commitment of our state and its citizens to stand guard for America.

Although I am in Wash DC for this hearing, I wanted to ensure you had this letter of unqualified support for HB97.

Please share this with the members of your committee and ensure that it is formally entered into the committee hearing record.

It is an honor,

Ric Davidge  
President



# ALASKA VETERANS FOUNDATION

February 14, 2009

Rep David Guttenberg  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

Rep Guttenberg;

As you know the Alaska Veterans Foundation, Inc. is the only statewide veteran service foundation. We claim almost 80,000 members as veterans and another 35,000 active duty, National Guard, and Reserve. When you add these heroes together and multiply that by at least two family members in Alaska, this community of citizens, who understand service to our nation, represents about a third of our state's population.

It is unconscionable that after all these years of statehood, of Alaskan sacrifice to stand guard for America; we do not yet have a veteran's cemetery in Interior Alaska. This means that the families of our fallen heroes must either not put them to rest in a veteran cemetery or that they must travel hundreds, even a thousand miles to say their final farewell or visit the gravesite.

Your continuing efforts to bring this issue forward have engendered a great admiration by our veterans and their families. Your efforts during the last legislative session are well known to us and the refusal by one Senator to allow this priority legislation not to become law, will be remembered.

We stand with you again in total unqualified support for HB97 and ask Chairman Gatto of the House Special Committee on Veterans Affairs to move this legislation forward with strong bipartisan support.

It is time we formally recognized the service and sacrifice of all Alaskan's who have stepped forward to stand guard for America.

Please ensure a copy of this letter is provided to the members of the House Committee for the hearing February 17<sup>th</sup> and feel free to express our hope that finally we can see this small but essential statement by our state – that we honor the men and women who have served and who choose to spend the rest of eternity in Alaska.

It is an honor.

Ric Davidge  
Chairman



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February 16, 2009

The Honorable Carl Gatto, Chair  
House Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 108  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

HB 97 (Guttenberg)—Support

Dear Chair Gatto:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we urge you and your colleagues on the House Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee to support HB 97, authored by Representative David Guttenberg and co-sponsored by Representatives Berta Gardner and Beth Kerttula.

HB 97 would establish a fund for the maintenance of and development of future veterans' cemeteries in Alaska. As you know, the only veterans' cemeteries are in Anchorage and Sitka yet the Fairbanks area alone has over 11,000 veterans, many of whom are AARP members. Certainly veterans and their families would like to have a cemetery closer to where they live.

Burial in a veterans' cemetery is one of the last honors we can offer our fellow citizens who have served in the Armed Forces. We think it is a well-deserved tribute to these men and women who served our country. It is a proper thank-you to the veterans and their families.

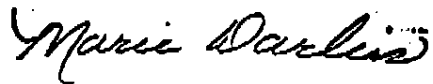
Undoubtedly there may be some costs associated with a new cemetery. HB 97 does provide some provisions for partial funding although additional funding might be required. Our veterans didn't weigh the costs when they joined the armed services. Surely we can bear the costs of this final thank-you to them.

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote on HB 97.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Marie Darlin, Coordinator  
AARP Capital City Task Force  
415 Willoughby Avenue, Apt. 506  
Juneau, AK 99801  
586-3637 (voice)  
463-3580 (fax)

CC: Representative John Harris  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Kurt Olson  
Representative Jay Ramras  
Representative Bob Buch  
Representative Scott Kawasaki  
Representative David Guttenberg

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Alaska House of Representatives  
David Guttenberg



District 8

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MEMO

To: **Representative Carl Gatto, Chair**  
House Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee

From: Representative David Guttenberg

Date: February 9, 2009

Re: Hearing request for HB 97, An Act authorizing the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to establish and maintain Alaska veterans' cemeteries, establishing the Alaska veterans' cemetery fund in the general fund, and authorizing appropriation of income from fees for special request plates commemorating Alaska veterans to that cemetery fund.

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I respectfully request that HB 97 be scheduled for a hearing in the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee at your earliest Convenience.

Included you will find:

- The current version of HB 97
- Sponsor statement

I look forward to discussing the merits of this bill in the House Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee. My staff, Chris Birdsall, is assigned to this legislation if there are any questions, 465-4708. Any additional materials we wish to place before the committee will be submitted no later than 24 hours prior to the scheduled hearing.

Anderson • Cantwell • Chena • Denali Park • Ester • Geist • Goldstream • Healy • Pike  
University Campus • University Hills • University West  
Representative\_David\_Guttenberg@legis.state.ak.us

Attn: Sandra Wilson

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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## Representative David Guttenberg

Date: February 16, 2009

To: Representative Carl Gatto, Chair  
House Military and Veteran Affairs

From: Representative David Guttenberg

Re: HB 97

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I respectfully request that you make the following documents available to committee members for the hearing on HB 97

Enclosed are:

1. Fact Sheet
2. Information from the VA concerning the preapplication process for state veterans cemeteries
3. Sectional summary of HB 45 from the 25<sup>th</sup> Legislature (identical to HB 97)
4. Support Materials