

BURIAL BENEFITS

REIMBURSEMENT OF BURIAL EXPENSES

Changes in the law governing payment of burial expenses and plot allowances have created confusion for veterans and survivors in determining if they will be entitled to any benefits at the time of death. Unfortunately, every war-time veteran is no longer entitled to a burial and plot allowance

WHO IS ENTITLED TO A BURIAL BENEFIT?

The Department of Veterans Affairs will pay up to \$300.00 of a veteran's burial expenses if he or she had been entitled to VA pension or compensation at the time of death. Eligibility is also established when death occurs in either a VA facility to which the veteran was properly admitted or in a contract nursing home for which VA is paying. Also eligible are military retirees who are receiving retired pay in lieu of VA compensation.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO A PLOT ALLOWANCE?

The Department of Veterans Affairs will pay up to \$300.00 (\$150 for deaths prior to 12/1/2001) toward the purchase of a plot or interment expenses in a private cemetery. The plot allowance is payable only under the same criteria as the burial allowance listed above. This allowance is not payable if a veteran is buried in a National Cemetery.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO BURIAL IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY?

Service members who die while on active duty and veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. With certain exceptions, service beginning after September 7, 1980, as an enlisted person, and after October 16, 1981, as an officer, must be for a minimum of 24 consecutive months or the full period for which the person was called to active duty. Reservists and National Guard members are eligible if they were entitled to retired pay at the time of death, or would have been entitled had they not been under the age of 60.

Persons convicted of a Federal or State capital crime, and sentenced to death or life imprisonment without parole, are barred by law from being buried or memorialized in a VA national cemetery or in Arlington National Cemetery.

Spouses and minor children of service members and eligible veterans also may be buried in a national cemetery. Minor children are those under 21 years of age, or under 23 years of age if pursuing a course of instruction at an approved educational institution. Unmarried adult children of eligible persons who are physically or mentally disabled and incapable of self-support also are eligible for burial. If a surviving spouse of an eligible veteran marries a non-veteran, and that subsequent marriage was terminated by the non-veteran's death or dissolved by annulment or divorce, the surviving spouse is eligible for burial in a national cemetery.

Gravesites in national cemeteries cannot be reserved. The funeral director or the next of kin makes interment arrangements for an eligible veteran or dependent at the time of need by contacting the national cemetery in which burial is desired. Reservations made under previous programs are honored. VA normally does not conduct burials on weekends. However, weekend callers will be directed to one of three VA cemetery offices that remain open during weekends to schedule burials for the following week at all national cemeteries.

Most funeral directors are familiar with the National Cemetery System and will assist in this matter.

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery is operated by the Department of the Army. Eligibility for burials is more limited than at other national cemeteries.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO AN AMERICAN FLAG AT THE TIME OF BURIAL?

VA provides a United States flag to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who:

1. served in any war;
2. died while on active duty;
3. served after Jan. 31, 1955;
4. served at least one enlistment or had been discharged or released from active service for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty;
5. was entitled to retired pay for service in the National Guard or Reserves at the time of death, or would have been entitled to retired pay, but for being under 60 years of age.

Veterans separated from the service must have been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. After the funeral service, the flag may be given to the next of kin, close friend or associate of the deceased veteran. Burial flags may be obtained at VA regional offices, national cemeteries and local post offices.

Only one flag is authorized for each veteran. Funeral directors will obtain this flag from the local Post Office or nearest Department of Veterans Affairs office at the time of death.

WHERE DO THE FLAG HOLDERS AT THE GRAVE SITE COME FROM?

The County Veterans Service Commission in many counties provide a bronze flag holder denoting the service period of each deceased veteran buried within their county. If no flag holder has been placed at the grave site of your loved one, please inform your local Veterans Service Office. They will be pleased to help you obtain one so that the veteran's honored military service will not go unremembered.



**HOW DO I ARRANGE
FOR MILITARY HONORS?**

Upon request, the Department of Defense will provide military funeral honors for the burial of military members and eligible veterans. A basic military funeral honors ceremony consists of the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of Taps by a bugler, if available, or by electronic recording. A funeral honors detail to perform this ceremony consists of two or more uniformed members of the armed forces, with at least one member from the service in which the deceased veteran served. Military members on active duty or in the Selected Reserve are eligible for military funeral honors. Also eligible are former military members who served on active duty and departed under conditions other than dishonorable, former members of the Selected Reserve who completed at least one term of enlistment or period of initial obligated service and departed under conditions other than dishonorable, and former military members discharged from the Selected Reserve due to a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty. Family members should inform their funeral directors if they desire military funeral honors for a veteran. VA national cemetery staff can help arrange for honors during burials at VA national cemeteries. Veterans service organizations or volunteer groups may help provide honors. For more information, visit the military funeral honors Web page (<http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil>).

**WHO IS ENTITLED TO
A PRESIDENTIAL
MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE?**

Widows or other survivors may request a Presidential Memorial Certificate to commemorate the veteran's military service by writing their local VA Regional Office or calling the national toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.

There is no pre-printed form to complete or time limit for requesting these certificates, but requests should include a copy, not the original, of the deceased veteran's discharge document and clearly indicate to what address the certificate should be sent.

Greene County Veterans' Services
571 Ledbetter Road
Xenia, Ohio 45385
(937) 562-6020

**WHO IS ENTITLED TO A
FREE GOVERNMENT MARKER?**

A headstone or marker is available free of charge for the grave of all veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable. Veterans with service that began after September 7, 1980 and did not complete at least 24 months of the original enlistment may not be eligible for this benefit unless discharged for disability, hardship or convenience of the government. When a veteran is buried in a National Cemetery, such a government marker is provided automatically for the veteran and each eligible dependent buried there. Applicants or interested persons may call 1-800-697-6947 for information about the Department of Veterans Affairs headstone and grave marker program or to check the current status of a marker application.

SETTING GOVERNMENT MARKERS

Many cemeteries provide services to set government markers in a concrete base. If you desire the marker to be set in a base other than concrete, you must make arrangements for it to be done. Some counties will reimburse a portion of the cost of setting a government marker.

**TYPES OF MARKERS AVAILABLE FOR THE
UNMARKED GRAVE OF A VETERAN**

UPRIGHT HEADSTONE: Lightly veined American white marble or light gray granite.

FLAT STONE MARKER: Lightly veined American white marble or light gray granite.

FLAT BRONZE MARKER: Flat brown background with bronze lettering and highlights. (A smaller flat bronze niche marker is also available for columbarium interments)

SPECIAL UPRIGHT STONES: Specially designed upright marble headstones are furnished for the graves of Civil and Spanish-American War veterans.

MEDAL OF HONOR: Monuments for deceased Medal of Honor recipients are inscribed with an enlarged replica of the medal.

NOTE: A more detailed description of the available markers is included on VA form 40-1330.

ADDITIONAL INSCRIPTION ITEMS

VALOR AWARD INSCRIPTIONS: The VA can now provide free inscriptions on a government marker for the following awards: Purple Heart, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, Air Force Cross and Silver Star.

NON-REGULATION ITEMS: Additional text only inscription items that meet standards of good taste may be added to a government marker, if space permits. This may include the survivor's name and date of birth, with room reserved for the date of death.

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**OHIO STATE
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTY VETERANS
SERVICE OFFICERS**