

**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**National Cemetery Administration**

Communications & Outreach Support Division (41C2)  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-6240  
FAX (202) 273-6698

[www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov)  
[public.inquiry@va.gov](mailto:public.inquiry@va.gov)

## Burial Flags

### Why Does VA Provide a Burial Flag?

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased Veteran who served honorably in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a Veteran's military service to his or her country. VA will furnish a burial flag for memorialization for each other than dishonorably discharged:

- Veteran who served during wartime
- Veteran who died on active duty after May 27, 1941
- Veteran who served after January 31, 1955
- peacetime Veteran who was discharged or released before June 27, 1950
- certain persons who served in the organized military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines while in service of the U.S Armed forces and who died on or after April 25, 1951
- certain former members of the Selected Reserves



### Who Is Eligible to Receive the Burial Flag?

Generally, the flag is given to the next-of-kin, as a keepsake, after its use during the funeral service. When there is no next-of-kin, VA will furnish the flag to a friend making request for it. For those VA national cemeteries with an Avenue of Flags, families of Veterans buried in these national cemeteries may donate the burial flags of their loved ones to be flown on patriotic holidays.

### How Can You Apply?

You may apply for the flag by completing VA Form 27-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes. You may get a flag at any VA regional office or most U.S. Post Offices. Generally, the funeral director will help you obtain the flag.

### Can a Burial Flag Be Replaced?

The law allows us to issue one flag for a Veteran's funeral. We cannot replace it if it is lost, destroyed, or stolen. However, some Veterans' organizations or other community groups may be able to help you get another flag.

### How Should the Burial Flag Be Displayed?

The proper way to display the flag depends upon whether the casket is open or closed. VA Form 27-2008 does provide the correct method for displaying and folding the flag. The burial flag is not suitable for outside display because of its size and fabric. It is made of cotton and can easily be damaged by weather.

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## Presidential Memorial Certificates

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is a gold-embossed paper certificate bearing the official signature of the President of the United States. It honors the memory of a deceased honorably discharged Veteran and expresses the country's grateful recognition of his or her service in the Armed Forces.

### HISTORY

This program was initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy and has been continued by each subsequent President.

### ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers the PMC program through the National Cemetery Administration.

### ELIGIBILITY

Eligible recipients include the deceased Veteran's next of kin, relatives and friends, or an authorized service representative acting on their behalf.

### REQUESTS

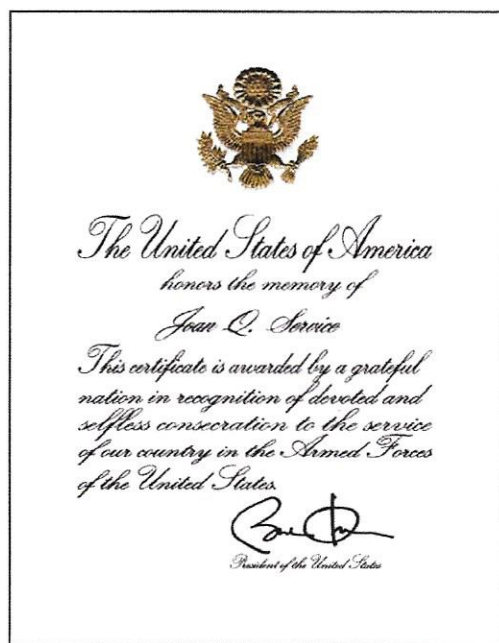
A copy of the deceased Veteran's military discharge document along with a copy of the death certificate must be provided when requesting a PMC. Eligible recipients may request a PMC in person at any VA Regional Office, by U.S. mail or by toll-free fax.

A request form is available on the National Cemetery Administration website, [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).

By Mail:  
Presidential Memorial Certificates (41A1C)  
5109 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

By Toll-Free Fax:  
(800) 455-7143

To check on the status of a request that is more than 16 weeks old, call (202) 565-4259.



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## Medallion Benefit

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a medallion, by request, to be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a Veteran.

This device is furnished in lieu of a traditional Government headstone or grave marker for those Veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker.



The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches. Each medallion is inscribed with the word "VETERAN" across the top and the branch of service at the bottom.

Once a claim for a medallion is received and approved, VA will mail the medallion along with a kit that will allow the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the device to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover.

**Important:** This benefit is only applicable if the grave is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. In these instances, eligible Veterans are entitled to either a traditional Government-furnished headstone or marker, or the new medallion, but not both.

To request a medallion, please use VA Form 40-1330M, *Claim for Government Medallion for Placement in a Private Cemetery*, which is available on the National Cemetery Administration website at: <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm/hmorder.asp>.



Department of Veterans Affairs

### PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE REQUEST FORM

**RESPONDENT BURDEN:** Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average two minutes per response. Statutory authority for the Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) Program is 38 U.S.C. 112. The information requested is approved under OMB Control Number 2900-0567, and is necessary to allow eligible recipients (next of kin, other relatives or friends) to request additional certificates and/or replacement or correct certificates on receipt of the original PMC.

The National Cemetery Administration does not give, sell or transfer any personal information outside of the agency. VA may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. Responding to this collection is voluntary. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspects of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to VA Clearance Officer (005G2), 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420. **SEND COMMENTS ONLY.** Please do not send applications for benefits to this address.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** When inserting the veterans name below, **DO NOT** include nickname, military rank, or civilian title. Complete a new VA Form 40-0247 for each additional name and/or mailing address.

NAME OF VETERAN	NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF PERSON REQUESTING CERTIFICATE
NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES REQUESTED	
HOME OR WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER <i>(Include area code and do not insert spaces between numbers)</i>	SIGNATURE OF REQUESTOR

**RETURN COMPLETED FORM ALONG WITH A COPY OF THE DISCHARGE DOCUMENTS TO:**

Presidential Memorial Certificates (41A1C)  
National Cemetery Administration  
5109 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

Or

Fax To: 1 (800) 455-7143

## **Military Funeral Honors**

### **"Honoring Those Who Served"**

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing military funeral honors. "Honoring Those Who Served" is the title of the DOD program for providing dignified military funeral honors to Veterans who have defended our nation.

Upon the family's request, Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible Veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony, to include folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of "Taps." The law defines a military funeral honors detail as consisting of two or more uniformed military persons, with at least one being a member of the Veteran's parent service of the armed forces.

The DOD program calls for funeral home directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the Veteran's family. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration cemetery staff can also assist with arranging military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Veterans organizations may also assist in providing military funeral honors.

The Department of Defense began the implementation plan for providing military funeral honors for eligible Veterans on Jan. 1, 2000.

The military funeral honors Web site is located at [www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil](http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil). Questions or comments concerning the DOD military funeral honors program may be sent to the address listed below:

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
(Military Community and Family Policy)  
4000 Defense Pentagon, Room 5A726  
Washington, DC 20301-4000

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## **The National Cemetery Administration**

In the summer of 1862, George F. Root was putting the finishing touches on the words and music of the "Battle Cry of Freedom" that would be adopted as a national anthem (in different versions) by both the Union and the Confederacy. It was the second summer of a terrible war that few had believed would last more than several months. Thousands had already died at places like Wilson's Creek, Bull Run, Shiloh, and Fort Donelson.

On July 17 of that year, Congress enacted legislation that authorized the President to purchase "cemetery grounds" to be used as national cemeteries "for soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country." Fourteen cemeteries were established that first year, including one in the sleepy Maryland town of Sharpsburg where 4,476 Union soldiers were laid to rest after the one day of terrible slaughter that was the Battle of Antietam. (By way of comparison, approximately 3,000 Americans, British and Canadians died on June 6, 1944, in the invasion of Normandy).

By 1870, the remains of nearly 300,000 Union dead had been buried in 73 national cemeteries. Most of the cemeteries were located in the southeast, near the battlefields and campgrounds of the Civil War. After the war, Army crews scoured the countryside to locate the remains of soldiers who had died in battle. They were buried with honor in the new national cemeteries, which were enclosed by brick walls and entered by means of ornate gates. Tragically, however, the identities of nearly half of those who died in service to the Union and are buried in national cemeteries are unknown.

The National Cemetery Administration has evolved slowly since the initial period of great challenge associated with the Civil War. All honorably discharged Veterans became eligible for burial in 1873. Cemeteries associated with military posts on the western frontier, such as Fort McPherson, Nebraska, were added to the system in the late 19th century.

In the 1930s, new national cemeteries were established to serve Veterans living in major metropolitan areas such as New York, Baltimore, Minneapolis, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Antonio. Several, closely associated with battlefields such as Gettysburg, were transferred to the National Park Service because of their value in interpreting the historical significance of the battles. In 1973, Public Law 93-43 authorized the transfer of 82 national cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration, now the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Joining with 21 VA Veterans cemeteries located at hospitals and nursing homes, the National Cemetery System comprised 103 cemeteries after the transfer.

On Nov. 11, 1998, the President signed the Veterans Programs Enhancement Act of 1998 changing the name of the National Cemetery System (NCS) to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

In 1999 and 2003, Congress passed two laws directing VA to establish 12 new national cemeteries. One has been opened in Oklahoma, two in Pennsylvania, one in Michigan, one in Georgia, one in Alabama, one in South Carolina, two in California and three in Florida.

Today, there are 147 national cemeteries in all. VA, through its National Cemetery Administration, administers 131 of them. Two national Cemeteries – Arlington and Soldiers Home – are still administered by the Army. Fourteen national cemeteries are maintained by the Department of the Interior.

Nearly 4 million people, including Veterans of every war and conflict – from the Revolutionary War to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan – are honored by burial in VA's national cemeteries. More than 19,000 acres of land from Hawaii to Maine, and from Alaska to Puerto Rico are devoted to the memorialization of those who served this nation. More than 350 recipients of the Medal of Honor are buried in VA's national cemeteries.

In January 2010, VA opened its 131st cemetery – Washington Crossing National Cemetery. Of the 131 national cemeteries, 72 are open to all interments; 18 can accommodate cremated remains and the remains of family members for interment in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member; and 41 will perform only interments of family members in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member.

In addition to providing a gravesite and a graveliner, VA opens and closes the grave, provides a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, a U.S. Flag, and perpetually cares for the grave at no cost to the Veteran's family.

Today, there are more than 22 million living Veterans who have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery. Veterans with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. Those who die on active duty may also be buried in a national cemetery.

For more information or to confirm eligibility, please contact the nearest national cemetery, VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000, or check the NCA web site at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).

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## **Arranging Burial in a VA National Cemetery**

- Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Their spouse, widow or widower, minor children, and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities, may also be eligible for burial. Eligible spouses and children may be buried even if they predecease the Veteran. Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or while performing training duty, or were eligible for retired pay, may also be eligible for burial.
- Gravesites in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance. However, families are encouraged to prepare in advance by discussing cemetery options and setting aside copies of any discharge documents.
- VA will provide – at no cost to the Veteran's family – a gravesite, headstone or marker, Presidential Memorial Certificate, U.S. flag, perpetual care of the gravesite and will open and close the grave. Fees for services provided by funeral directors and other related costs must be paid for by the Veteran's family.
- VA's Veterans Benefits Administration pays a burial and plot allowance for those Veterans who are eligible by law. For information, please contact the nearest VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000.
- To establish eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery, the family should provide: the Veteran's discharge document; report of casualty; or the Veteran's full name; military rank; branch of service; dates of entry and discharge; serial, Social Security, and/or VA claim numbers; date and place of birth; and date of death.
- If the discharge document is not available, a copy may be obtained from the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records Office, 1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138. This should be done prior to the time of need. Additional information about requesting military personnel records is available at the National Archives Website, [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

- At the time of need, a funeral director or the next of kin should contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office. Fax all discharge documentation to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-866-900-6417 and follow-up with a phone call to 1-800-535-1117. It is important to have all eligibility documentation available prior to calling the Scheduling Office.
- If you have no eligibility documentation, Scheduling Office agents will assist you with the verification process. Requests for eligibility determination when no military discharge documents are available may require 48 hours or more for verification. Scheduling Office personnel will contact you within 48 hours of the initial process with verification results or an explanation of the delay.
- The same procedures should be followed to determine the eligibility of a Veteran's spouse or dependent. In most cases, one gravesite is provided for the burial of all eligible family members, marked by a single headstone or marker. When both spouses are Veterans, two adjacent gravesites and two headstones or markers may be provided, if requested.
- The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing military funeral honors. The DOD program "Honoring Those Who Served" calls for funeral directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the Veteran's family. Veterans' organizations may assist in providing military funeral honors. Additional information is available on the Internet by visiting [www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil](http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil).
- Formal funeral services are not held at national cemeteries, but a final committal service may be performed at the cemetery. For safety reasons, these services are held in committal shelters located away from the gravesite. Burial will take place following the committal service. Immediate family members may be allowed to witness the interment only if arrangements have been made in advance with the cemetery director.
- National cemeteries do not normally conduct burials on weekends or federal holidays. However, weekend callers may schedule burials for the upcoming week.
- A limited number of floral arrangements may accompany the casket or urn and will be placed on the grave after burial.

**AVAILABLE EMBLEMS OF BELIEF FOR PLACEMENT  
ON GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**



(1) CHRISTIAN



(2) BUDDHIST



(3) JUDAISM  
(Star of David)



(4) PRESBYTERIAN  
CROSS



(5) RUSSIAN  
ORTHODOX CROSS



(6) LUTHERAN  
CROSS



(7) EPISCOPAL  
CROSS



(8) UNITARIAN  
(Flaming Chalice)



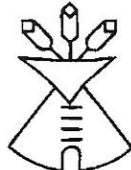
(9) UNITED  
METHODIST



(10) AARONIC  
ORDER  
CHURCH



(11) MORMON  
(Angel Moroni)



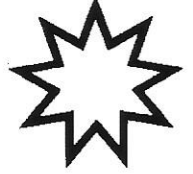
(12) NATIVE AMERICAN  
CHURCH OF NORTH  
AMERICA



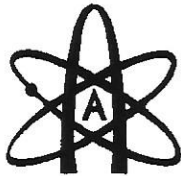
(13) SERBIAN  
ORTHODOX



(14) GREEK CROSS



(15) BAHAI  
(9-Pointed Star)



(16) ATHEIST



(17) MUSLIM  
(Crescent and Star)



(18) HINDU



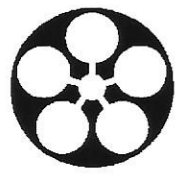
(19) KONKO-KYO  
FAITH



(20) COMMUNITY  
OF CHRIST



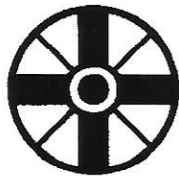
(21) SUFISM  
REORIENTED



(22) TENRIKYO  
CHURCH



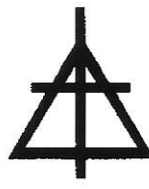
(23) SEICHO-NO-IE



(24) THE CHURCH  
OF WORLD  
MESSIANITY



(25) UNITED CHURCH  
OF RELIGIOUS  
SCIENCE



(26) CHRISTIAN  
REFORMED  
CHURCH



(27) UNITED  
MORAVIAN  
CHURCH



(28) ECKANKAR



(29) CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH



(30) CHRISTIAN  
& MISSIONARY  
ALLIANCE



(31) UNITED  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST



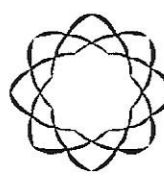
(32) HUMANIST  
EMBLEM OF  
SPIRIT



(33) PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH (USA)



(34) IZUMO  
TAISHAKYO  
MISSION OF HAWAII



(35) SOKA GAKKAI  
INTERNATIONAL  
(USA)



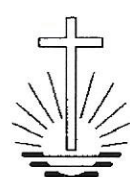
(36) SIKH  
(KHANDA)



(37) WICCA  
(Pentacle)



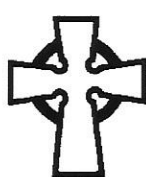
(38) LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
MISSOURI SYNOD



(39) NEW  
APOSTOLIC



(40) SEVENTH DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH



(41) CELTIC  
CROSS



(42) ARMENIAN  
CROSS



(43) FAROHAR



(44) MESSIANIC  
JEWISH

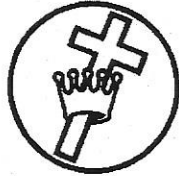
## AVAILABLE EMBLEMS OF BELIEF (CONTINUED)



(45) KOHEN HANDS



(46) CATHOLIC  
CELTIC CROSS



(47) FIRST CHURCH OF  
CHRIST, SCIENTIST  
(Cross & Crown)



(48) MEDICINE  
WHEEL



(49) INFINITY



(51) LUTHER  
ROSE



(52) LANDING  
EAGLE



(53) FOUR  
DIRECTION



(54) CHURCH  
OF NAZARINE

Emblem (98) MUSLIM (Islamic 5-Pointed Star) is not shown due to copyright.