

## **VETERAN BURIAL AND MEMORIAL BENEFITS AS OF DECEMBER 2018**

A U. S. military veteran or spouse does not have an all-expenses paid funeral and burial benefit. Further, the U. S. Department Veteran Affairs (V.A.) nor other government agency does not conduct or arrange funeral services. A private licensed funeral director must be contacted and selected by the veteran such as prior contract agreement or by individual responsible for the estate of the veteran, normally the spouse.

Prior planning for a funeral is highly recommended. As a minimum document the following: Honorable Discharge documentation (DD214), type of funeral, cemetery, wake service, designated person to handle funeral as well as knowledgeable as to desires of veteran or spouse wishes, etc. Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in V.A. National Cemetery V.A. Form 40-10007 is available to verify you are eligible. Submit to location on form. Eligibility for family of veteran is complex and limited to specific criteria as well as proper supporting documentation. Verify in advance to confirm if eligible.

Funeral Directors normally are aware of criteria and do all arrangements for a funeral once informed and are given needed documentation for a specific funeral.

Veteran or spouse who elect and are eligible for burial benefits can receive some services, partial financial reimbursement as well as a burial plot at a National or State Cemetery when selected at time of death. Plot can be for casket or urn (columbarium). Both the eligible veteran and spouse utilizing the same plot regardless of who dies first.

Not all veterans qualify for burial allowance. Therefore the family must be aware of eligibility. Time in service along with criminal conviction impacts eligibility. Reservist and National Guard normally do not qualify unless veteran is entitled to Dept. of Defense (DOD) retirement or died on active duty.

Amount of financial allowance for funeral and civilian burial plot is based on whether cause of death is service-connected. Therefore, type of disability documented by the V.A. i.e. receiving compensation from the V.A. needs to be on hand. In addition, the death certificate must list the named disability as contributing to cause of death i.e. proof service-connected death.

Grave-site military burial honors may be provided when requested for an eligible veteran. Normally the funeral director contacts the appropriate branch of the veteran's service after receiving a copy of honorable discharge documentation showing veteran is eligible.

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National Cemetery for New England is located at Bourne MA. MA State Cemeteries for MA residents are in Agawam and Winchendon, MA. Federal and State Cemeteries have a few different requirements. Again, prior planning is suggested. Neither provides transport. That cost is the responsibility of the estate along with related fees, etc.

National Cemetery does not charge for the grave-site, grave-liner, opening and closing the grave, a marker and perpetual care of the site. Burials are not conducted on weekends or national holidays. Grave-sites cannot be reserved. Marker is ordered by cemetery V.A. staff, based on information provided to them by the funeral director or next of kin.

The National Cemetery will accept the interment of cremated remains in a columbarium. Normally designated locations are constructed for cremated remains. Marker is normally much smaller and normally placed on the front of the cubicle securing the container.

The additional entitlements that follow can be provided if requested and veteran qualifies. Normally the funeral director makes arrangement.

- 1.) U. S. Flag
- 2.) Military Funeral Honors. Normally, Two Person Military Detail who fold and present the U. S. Flag. One member plays Taps prior to folding.
- 3.) Presidential Memorial Certificate.
- 4.) Marker application for placement in private cemetery. Estate pays for installation.
- 5.) Wake Honor Guards for veteran who is member of fraternal or veteran group.
- 6.) Application for spouse entitlement, if applicable, provided by the V. A. (see below)
- 7.) Social Security entitlement.

Whether you are veteran or non-veteran do not overlook insurance policies, pensions, financial accounts etc. when planning. Estate needs listing etc. prepared in advance by veteran or other.

The above is not all inclusive. Further information is available at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or [www.massvetsadvisory.org](http://www.massvetsadvisory.org)

Note each veteran who is receiving disability payment from the V. A. should have a current Declaration of Status of Dependents on file with the V. A. Utilize VA Form 21-686C. Form date as of this writing is June 2017. Subject to change. This data will activate activity by V. A. upon their receipt of notification of death of veteran.

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