

# VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration

**NATIONAL VA CEMETERY LOOKUP WEBSITE:** <httpswww.cem.va.govfind-cemetery>

## **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 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.

In 2011, Congress passed another law directing VA to establish five more new national cemeteries; two in Florida, one in Colorado, one in Nebraska, and one in New York.

In March 2017, the Dept. of Army transferred 10 cemeteries to NCA pursuant to Executive Order 13781 renaming them VA national cemeteries.

Today, there are 166 national cemeteries in all. The VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) administers 153 of them, 82 of which are open to all interments, and an additional 20 which are open to interments of cremated remains only. Two national cemeteries – Arlington and the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery – are administered by the Army. Fourteen national cemeteries are maintained by the Department of the Interior.

Nearly 4.9 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 22,000 acres of land from Hawaii to Maine, and from Alaska to Puerto Rico are devoted to memorializing those who served this nation. More than 350 recipients of the Medal of Honor are buried in VA's national cemeteries.

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 who have met minimum active duty service requirements, as applicable, and with discharges other than dishonorable, and 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. Reservist who are called to active duty and fulfill the term of service for which they were called and those who retire with pensions are also eligible.



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## Arranging for Burial in a VA National Cemetery

- Burial in a VA national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements, as applicable, and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or who die while on training duty under certain circumstances are also eligible for burial, as are service members and former service members who were eligible for retired pay at the time of their death. Reserve members who were called to active duty and fulfilled the term of service for which they were called are eligible. An eligible Veteran's 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.

- VA provides determinations of eligibility for burial in a national cemetery prior to the time of need to assist Veterans and their families with end-of-life planning. Interested individuals may submit VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, along with a copy of supporting documentation of military service such as a DD 214, if readily available, by: fax at 1-855-840-8299; mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151 or apply online at <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/pre-need-eligibility/>.

- 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. Additional information about requesting military personnel records is available at the National Archives website: [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

- Gravesites in VA national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance of need. 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 and press Option 1. Have all eligibility documentation available prior to calling.

- At the time of need, 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.

•The 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. <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/veterans-burial-allowance>.

Updated January 2021

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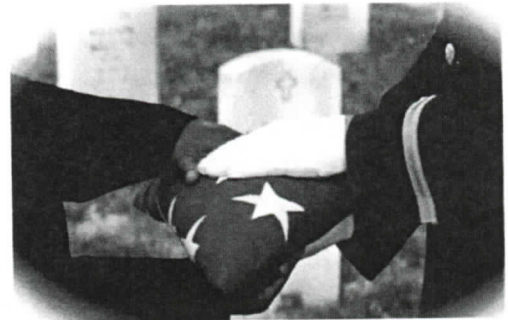


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## Burial Flags

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. military. It is furnished to honor the memory of a Veteran's military service to our country.

- 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. The Avenue of Flags is a display of respect for the service performed by our nation's Veterans, and usually lines the main entrance way of a national cemetery on Memorial Day, Veterans Day or other days of national significance. Whenever possible, the flags used in the display are casket flags donated by families of Veterans who rest in the cemetery.

### How Can You Apply?

You may apply for the flag by completing VA Form 27-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes. U.S. Post Offices are the primary issuing point for burial flags. Generally, the funeral director can help you obtain a flag. Call and confirm with the post office in advance. Not all local post offices have burial flags on hand but they should be able to direct you to the closest issuing post office. Regional VA Offices can also help identify local issuing points.

### 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?

For a full description of the proper use and display of the flag read VA Form 27-2008. You can find the form at [http://www.cem.va.gov/burial\\_benefits/burial\\_flags.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/burial_flags.asp).





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## Presidential Memorial Certificate

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 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.

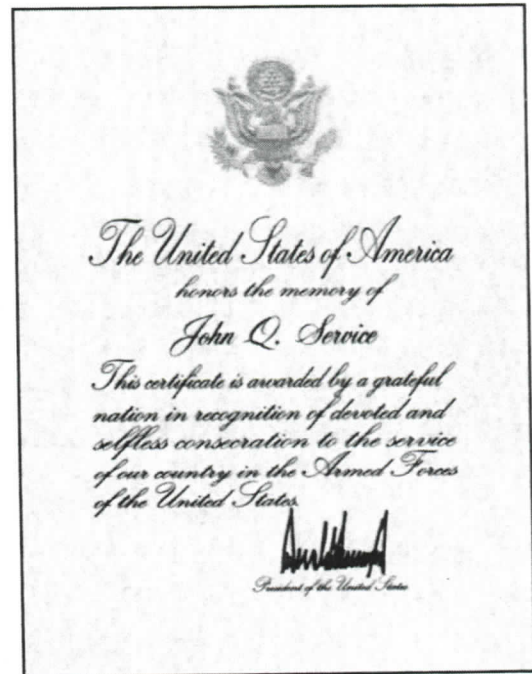
### REQUESTS

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, <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-0247.pdf>.

By Mail:  
Presidential Memorial Certificates (41B3)  
5109 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

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



**To check on the status of your request please call (202) 632-7300.**



## PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE REQUEST FORM

**RESPONDENT BURDEN:** Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average three minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather the necessary data, and complete and review the collection of information. The obligation to respond is voluntary and not required to obtain or retain benefits. 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 PMC.

The National Cemetery Administration does not give, sell or transfer any personal information outside of the agency. The Department of Veterans Affairs (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 (005R1B), 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420. **SEND COMMENTS ONLY.** Please do not send applications for benefits to this address.

### SECTION I - INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING VA FORM 40-0247, PRESIDENTIAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE REQUEST FORM

**Military/Discharge Documents:** VA recommends that you attach photocopies of readily available supporting documents so that we can make the determination quickly. Documents may include the most recent discharge document (DD Form 214) showing active duty service records other than for training purposes, or active duty for a minimum of 24 continuous months for enlisted Servicemembers after September 7, 1980; for officers, after October 16, 1981, or the full period for which the person was called to active duty. If you are unable to locate copies of military records, apply anyway, as VA will attempt to obtain records necessary to make a determination.

**Name of Veteran:** DO NOT include nicknames, military rank or civilian title(s).

**Name and Mailing Address of Person Requesting Certificate:** Provide the full name and complete mailing address to avoid delays in delivery.

We strongly recommend you complete this form online (<http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.asp>) and print and sign before you submit your request.

**Complete a new VA Form 40-0247 for each additional address where certificates will be mailed to.**

**Privacy Act Information:** VA considers the responses you submit confidential (38 U.S.C. 5701). VA may only disclose this information outside the VA if the disclosure is authorized under the Privacy Act, including the routine uses identified in the VA system of records, 175VA41A published in the Federal Register.

### SECTION II - VETERAN/SERVICEMEMBER INFORMATION

1. NAME OF VETERAN <i>(First, Middle, Last)</i>		2. VETERAN SSN OR SERVICE NUMBER OR VA FILE NUMBER <i>(Required)</i>	
3. RACE OR ETHNICITY <i>(You may select more than one. Information will be used for statistical purposes only.)</i>			4. SEX <i>(Information will be used for statistical purposes only.)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	<input type="checkbox"/> HISPANIC OR LATINO	<input type="checkbox"/> WHITE	
<input type="checkbox"/> ASIAN	<input type="checkbox"/> NOT HISPANIC OR LATINO	<input type="checkbox"/> MALE <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE	
<input type="checkbox"/> BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	<input type="checkbox"/> NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER		
5. DATE OF BIRTH	6. DATE OF DEATH		

### SECTION III - PERSON REQUESTING CERTIFICATE INFORMATION

7. NAME OF PERSON REQUESTING CERTIFICATE		8. MAILING ADDRESS OF PERSON REQUESTING CERTIFICATE	
9. HOME OR WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER <i>(Include area code)</i>			
10. REQUESTOR EMAIL ADDRESS		7. NUMBER OF CERTIFICATES REQUESTED	

### SECTION IV - CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE

**CERTIFICATION:** I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the decedent has never committed a serious crime, such as murder or other offense that could have resulted in imprisonment for life, has never been convicted of a serious crime, and has never been convicted of a sexual offense for which he or she was sentenced to a minimum of life imprisonment.

11. SIGNATURE OF PERSON REQUESTING CERTIFICATE *(Required)*

### SECTION V - MAILING ADDRESS AND FAX NUMBER

**PLEASE SEND ANY MILITARY DOCUMENTS AND SIGNED FORM TO:**

Presidential Memorial Certificates (41B3)  
 National Cemetery Administration  
 5109 Russell Road  
 Quantico, VA 22134-3903

Or

Fax To: 1 (800) 455-7143

*(The blocks below are for official use only)*

9. CASE MANAGER NAME	10. PMC ID NUMBER	11. CASE MANAGER EMAIL
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