

**NINETY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Cincinnati, Ohio
August 30, 31, September 1, 2016**

Resolution No. 181: National Cemetery Administration

Origin: Georgia

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) was established by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to provide for the proper burial and registration of graves of Civil War dead; and

WHEREAS, NCA is currently comprised of 134 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as, 33 soldiers' lots and monuments; and

WHEREAS, More than 3 million Americans including veterans of every war and conflict are buried in VA's national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, More than 24 million veterans and Reservists and National Guard members have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Annual internments in national cemeteries have annually increased and are projected to increase for the next several years due to an aging veteran population; and

WHEREAS, Appropriate land acquisition is a key component to providing continued accessibility to burial options; and

WHEREAS, Operations, maintenance, renovation, and construction funding must continually be adjusted to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, NCA administers a program of grants to states, U.S. territories, and federally recognized tribal governments to assist them in establishing or improving state-operated veterans cemeteries in locations where there are no nearby national cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Congress must provide sufficient major construction appropriations to permit NCA to accomplish its stated goal of ensuring that burial in a national or state cemetery is a realistic option by locating cemeteries within 75 miles of ninety percent of all veterans; and

WHEREAS, In addition to providing a grave site, NCA provides a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial certificate, a U.S. Flag, Medallion, and perpetual care for the grave; and

WHEREAS, The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act eliminated the then-headstone allowance of \$85, which was paid to all eligible veterans in lieu of a government-provided headstone or marker and now directly provides a standard government headstone or grave marker to eligible veterans anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, VA pays a burial allowance of \$2,000 for veterans who die of service-related causes and for veterans who were receiving VA compensation or pension, VA pays \$722 for burial and funeral expenses and \$722 for a plot; and

WHEREAS, The plot allowance would still be payable to state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran passes away in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary, or in an institution at which the individual was receiving hospital or nursing care at the expense of the United States at the time of death, VA will pay for the cost of transporting

the remains to the place of burial; however, a veteran who passes away in a State Veterans Home is not allowed transportation cost for the remains to the place of burial by VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion support the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent and petition Congress to provide required operations and construction funding to ensure Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) burial in a national or state veterans cemetery is a realistic option for veterans and their eligible dependents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) § 2302 and 2303 be increased from \$722 to at least \$1,500; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service-connected condition as set forth in 38 USC § 2307 be increased from \$2,000 to at least \$4,000; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion should support legislation for the restoration of the Pre-1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act criteria to provide eligibility for a government-furnished headstone or marker allowance and restoration of the burial plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support action to provide, when an eligible veteran dies in a state veterans hospital or nursing home, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial determined by the family.