

JLC Position Paper  
**Burial Vaults for Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries**

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To appropriate \$36,000 so that burial vaults may be provided for resale at cost at Virginia state veterans cemeteries.
  
2. **BACKGROUND:**
  - A burial vault is an in-ground protective concrete shell into which a casket is placed.
  - Burial vaults are required at state and national veterans cemeteries.
  - Burial vaults are provided at no cost at national cemeteries.
  - At Virginia's state veterans cemeteries, veterans must purchase a burial vault from a funeral home, at a cost of \$800 to \$1,200.
  - Vaults can be "pre-placed" (installed in large numbers on a prepared foundation) or individually placed. Pre-placed vaults are used in relatively flat terrain, while individually placed vaults are used both in flat terrain and in hilly/sloping terrain.
  - The Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin will be constructed using federal grant funds and will have 2,750 pre-placed burial vaults. These vaults will be provided to veterans free of charge.
    - Because they do not currently have pre-placed vaults, the state veterans cemeteries in Amelia and Suffolk will continue to require veterans to purchase a vault.
    - Pre-placed vaults cannot be used in all sections of the Dublin because of topography.
  - DVS has requested federal grant funding to retrofit the Amelia and Suffolk cemeteries with pre-placed vaults. However, federal funding is uncertain and even if provided will not solve 100% of the problem.
    - Cemetery topography will not allow 100% use of pre-placed vaults, meaning that individually-placed vaults will still be needed.
    - Individually-placed vaults are also needed for oversize caskets, third burials (i.e. burial of an eligible child next to his/her parents) and in some other circumstances.
  
3. **DISCUSSION:**
  - Virginia state veterans cemeteries should provide the same level of service as national cemeteries, to include providing burial vaults at no cost
  - The state budget situation may prevent full funding of this initiative
  - As an interim measure, state veterans cemeteries can purchase vaults for resale at cost.
  - Approximately \$20,000 should be appropriated to purchase the first set of burial vaults. The cemeteries can purchase subsequent vaults using funds generated through vault sales. In addition, approximately \$16,000 in one time funding is required to purchase the specialized equipment needed to install the burial vaults.
  
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate \$36,000 to enable burial vaults to be resold at cost at Virginia state veterans cemeteries.