

News Release

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Contact: Anne Atkins
(804) 371-0441

State-operated veterans cemeteries to provide outer burial containers at cost

RICHMOND—Legislation passed by the 2010 General Assembly will offer veterans and their families the option to purchase outer burial containers – a concrete enclosure in which a casket is placed – at cost at Virginia’s two state-operated veterans cemeteries. The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery is located in Suffolk and the Virginia Veterans Cemetery is located in Amelia. The Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery is under construction in Southwest Virginia near Dublin.

House Bill 479, sponsored by Delegate Bill Carrico, will bring services provided by the two existing state-operated veterans cemeteries closer in-line with the services offered by national cemeteries, which provide outer burial containers at no cost. HB 479 was passed unanimously by the General Assembly and was approved by Governor Bob McDonnell on April 11, 2010.

A third state-operated cemetery is under construction in Southwest Virginia near Dublin. The construction grant provided by the National Cemetery Administration, a division of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, for construction of the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery includes funding for 2,700 preinstalled outer burial containers. When the new cemetery opens in 2011, most veterans and their family members will be provided an outer burial container at no cost. In limited cases, such as when a veteran or family member has an oversized casket, an outer burial container will have to be purchased.

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), which operates the veterans cemeteries, has applied for a \$5.8 million grant to retrofit the cemeteries in Suffolk and Amelia with preinstalled outer burial containers; however, it could take two years or more for the grant to be awarded. As an

interim measure, HB 479 enables the Commonwealth to provide outer burial containers and placement services to veterans and their families at cost. While an outer burial container is required, it does not have to be purchased from the Commonwealth. Veterans will still have the option to purchase an outer burial container and placement services from their funeral home or other source.

DVS will start providing the outer burial containers on August 30. They will cost \$400.

Service members who were honorably discharged qualify for burial in a Virginia state-operated veterans cemetery. A grave site, opening and closing of the grave for the veteran, placement of a government grave marker, and perpetual care of the site are provided to the veteran at no charge. Veterans' spouses and eligible dependent children may be interred for a small fee, currently \$300.

For more information about the outer burial containers provided by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, visit www.VirginiaforVeterans.com and click Cemeteries.

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