



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Senator Frank Simpson – Chair
Study on the
Honorable Interment of Veterans
Interim Study 15-63**



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Purpose

Provide an Information Briefing
To the Veterans Committee on
Senate Interim Study 15-63
Honorable Interment of Veterans



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Burial Benefits

National Cemetery Administration Memorial Affairs

- Most men and women who served in the military are eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery, as are their spouses and dependent children
- In 2013, nearly 125,000 veterans and dependents were buried in VA's national cemeteries
 - Headstones and markers provided nation wide: 352,000
 - Presidential Memorial Certificates issued nationwide: 407,000
- In 2013, more than 32,000 burials were conducted in state cemeteries

Source:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin., Fact Sheet - Oklahoma And the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Sep 2014)

www.okvets.ok.gov



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Burial Benefits

National Cemetery Administration Memorial Affairs - Oklahoma

- In 2013 there were 1,113 burials in the VA National cemeteries located in Oklahoma:
 - Fort Gibson: 682
 - Fort Sill: 431
 - Headstones and markers provided statewide: 5,104
 - Presidential Memorial Certificates issued statewide: 6,916

Source:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin Fact Sheet - Oklahoma And the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (Sep 2014)

www.okvets.ok.gov



Burial Benefits

What Burial Benefits Does A Veteran Qualify For?

- A Veteran may qualify for the following Burial Benefits:
 - Grave site in any VA National Cemetery with available spaces
 - Opening and closing of the grave
 - Headstone, Grave Marker, or Medallion
 - Military Funeral Honors
 - Burial Flag
 - Presidential Memorial Certificate
 - An allowance for other funeral monies to offset transportation cost to the National Cemetery
 - Plot allowance for a grave site outside a National Cemetery



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Burial Benefits

What Are VA Burial Allowances?

- VA burial allowances are flat rate monetary benefits
 - Generally paid at maximum amount authorized by law
- Eligible surviving spouses of record are paid automatically upon notification of the Veteran's death
- VA may grant additional benefits, (if family files for these benefits)
 - Including the plot or interment allowance and
 - Transportation allowance



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Burial Benefits

Veteran Eligibility for Burial

- Veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable
- In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met:
 - Veteran died as a result of a service-connected disability, OR
 - Veteran was receiving VA pension or compensation at time of death, OR
 - Veteran was entitled to VA pension or compensation, but decided instead to receive their full military retirement or disability pay, OR
 - Veteran died while hospitalized by VA, or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility, OR



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Burial Benefits

Veteran Eligibility for Burial (cont.)

- In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met:
 - Veteran died while traveling under proper authorization and at VA expense to or from a specified place for the purpose of examination, treatment or care, OR
 - Veteran had an original or reopened claim for VA compensation or pension pending at the time of death and would have been entitled to benefits from a date prior to the date of death, OR
 - Veteran died on or after October 9, 1996, while a patient at a VA–approved state nursing home



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Burial Benefits

Who is Eligible for Burial Expenses?

- VA will pay the surviving spouse or the first living person to file a claim of those listed below:
 - Veteran's surviving spouse; OR
 - The survivor of a legal union* between deceased Veteran and survivor; OR
 - The Veteran's children, regardless of age; OR
 - The Veteran's parents or surviving parent; OR
 - The executor/administrator of the estate of deceased Veteran

Note: *Legal union means a formal relationship between the decedent and the survivor that existed on the date of the Veteran's death, which was recognized under the law of the State in which the couple formalized the relationship and evidenced by the State's issuance of documentation memorializing the relationship



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Burial Benefits

How Much Does The VA Pay?

- Service-Connected Death (SC)
 - Veteran died on or after Sept 11, 2001
 - Maximum SC burial allowance is \$2,000
 - Veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery
 - VA may reimburse some or all of the cost of transporting the deceased Veteran's remains



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Burial Benefits

How Much Does The VA Pay?

- Non-Service-Connected Death (NSC)
 - Veteran died on or after Oct 1, 2014
 - VA will pay \$300 burial allowance and \$745 for a plot
 - If the death occurred while the Veteran was properly hospitalized by VA, or under VA contracted nursing home care,
 - Some or all of the costs for transporting the Veteran's remains may be reimbursed.

Note: If the Veteran dies while traveling at VA expense for the purpose of examination, treatment or care, VA will pay burial, funeral, plot or interment allowances, and transportation expenses



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Burial Benefits

Unclaimed Veteran Remains?

- VA works with Veteran service groups, funeral industry partners, public administrators and other concerned citizens to ensure the dignified burial of unclaimed Veterans
 - “Unclaimed Veterans” are defined as those who die with no next of kin to claim their remains and insufficient funds to cover burial expenses
 - VA pension or other compensation is no longer a pre-requisite for these “Unclaimed Veterans” to receive burial benefits

Note: There is still a reimbursable cost to the facility/organization that is coordinating the funeral arrangement

Source:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin., Unclaimed Veteran Remains (June 2015)

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Burial Benefits

Where are the VA Veteran Cemeteries In Oklahoma?

Fort Gibson National Cemetery

Ft. Gibson, OK



Fort Sill National Cemetery

Elgin, OK



Source:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin., <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/ftgibson.asp>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin., <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/ftgibson.asp>

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Burial Benefits

Where are the Oklahoma State Veteran Cemeteries?

Seminole Nation and Veterans Memorial Cemetery

Seminole, OK

(Under Construction)

VA Grant Funded Cemetery

***Not A USDVA Grant Funded Cemetery**

The State has not applied for and received a VA grant to establish, expand or improve this veterans cemetery. The cemetery is owned and operated by a state

Oklahoma Veterans Cemetery*

Also known as: Union Soldiers Cemetery

Oklahoma City, OK

Not USDVA Grant Funded Cemetery

Source:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Admin., <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/cems/allstate.asp>

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Questions

Vision:

The state of Oklahoma is a state known for the best Veterans care and services in the nation, where Veterans are provided tools that are readily accessible, while facilitating their needs and requirements to continue a quality life among the community in exchange for their service to the nation, which has been paid in advance.

www.okvets.ok.gov



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mission:

In partnership with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs, state and local agencies, and Veterans Services Organizations, the state of Oklahoma will facilitate in providing to the Veterans and eligible dependents residing in the state of Oklahoma the highest quality support and care available anywhere in the Nation.