

H.R. 1247, THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL; H.R. 1476, THE NATIONAL CEMETERY ACT OF 1999; H.R. 1484, AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS PROJECTS; H.R. 1603, THE SELECTED RESERVE HOUSING LOAN FAIRNESS ACT OF 1999; H.R. 1663, THE MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL ACT, AND H.R. 2040, THE VETERANS' CEMETERY ASSESSMENT ACT OF 1999

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JUNE 16, 1999

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ANS' CEMETERY ASSESSMENT ACT OF 1999**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 1999

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:30 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Jack Quinn (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Quinn, Gibbons, Filner, Reyes, Berkley, and Evans.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN QUINN

Mr. QUINN (presiding). Good morning. We have at least six bills for us to hear this morning, and we've got our work cut out for us. Starting at 10:30 this morning, there may be an opportunity for us to have to be called over to House for votes, so we'd like to begin as soon as we can.

We have got some of our colleagues here this morning who also have busy schedules, so I would just like to welcome everybody for the hearing on at least six bills that are part of the subcommittee's agenda, that Bob Filner and others and I have planned for this session.

We did receive testimony last week on six other bills last Wednesday, which brings us to a total of at least a dozen veterans' benefits bills on which we would like to begin some legislation.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our friends J.D. Hayworth and Ray LaHood who chaired the last couple of hearings for me, along with Bob. I've been detained in some markups over in another committee and was not able to be here.

We have a number of distinguished panels this morning so we would like to ask our witnesses to summarize their oral testimony

in about 5 minutes or so, as we do for all of our hearings. Your written statements, of course, will appear in the record, in full.

Before we begin testimony this morning, let me just briefly summarize the bills we will be discussing this morning.

H.R. 1247 would expand the fundraising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission and would expedite the establishment of the World War II memorial here in the District of Columbia.

H.R. 1476 would direct the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish three additional National cemeteries for veterans, given the increased burials that we expect through the year 2008.

H.R. 1484 would authorize appropriations to the Department of Labor of \$50 million for Fiscal Years 2000 through 2004 for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program.

H.R. 1603 would provide permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans' housing loans.

H.R. 1663 would designate as a National memorial the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, CA, to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor.

Finally, this morning, H.R. 2040 would require the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to contract for an independent, comprehensive assessment of National cemeteries,

As we mentioned before, it is a number of bills. We have four panels, but before we get there, I would like to yield to my colleague, Bob Filner, for any opening statement he may have before we get to our colleagues at the witness table. Bob?

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB FILNER

Mr. FILNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome back.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you. Glad to be here.

Mr. FILNER. I think your colleagues also like to have you back because they had to deal with me without your help.

Mr. QUINN. For the record, I missed you dearly, Bob. But, I'm very happy to be back. (Laughter.)

Mr. FILNER. The one thing I've learned being in the minority is to let the chairman have the last word.

Let me welcome the panels and welcome our colleagues here this morning. I just want to speak briefly on one bill, H.R. 1484, which is a bill I introduced to reauthorize the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project, which is known as HVRP, to an annual funding level of \$50 million.

There is, I think, virtually no disagreement that more than one-third of the homeless men in this country are veterans. Approximately 60 percent of those are veterans of the Vietnam era. In my hometown of San Diego, where I served on the city council and tried to grapple with this problem, close to 50 percent of the homeless served in our armed forces. That means that, on this very evening, as we are comfortably ensconced somewhere, more than 275,000 veterans who served our country with honor will sleep on America's streets. I think that is a shameful and troubling image, and we should deal with that reality.

Since 1987, the HVRP has been a cost-effective program which has been designed to help homeless veterans re-enter and succeed in the job market. I think it has proven it's worth. More than

46,000 homeless veterans have received help and support from community-based organizations funded under this program, and the cost of placing them in jobs was less than \$1,500 per veteran.

I think few government programs can claim to have achieved this result with so little money. It is now fully authorized at \$10 million, and that, in itself, is an underfunding. Beyond that, the Administration recommended only \$5 million for its funding level, and, although this is an increase from past years, it is still inadequate.

The Department of Labor—and we will hear from a representative today—estimates that \$5 million will enable grantees to assist more than 6,000 veterans, and will actually place 3,500 homeless veterans in jobs. If we funded this program at the \$50 million level that I recommend in H.R. 1484, more than 35,000 homeless veterans would be given the assistance they need to be given economic self-sufficiency and independence.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for including H.R. 1484 on the list of bills today. It is a very troubling issue, I think, for this Nation. I hope we can have a discussion of it and how we might do better for those who have served our Nation so well.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Bob, and thanks for your leadership on this issue from the very beginning. I would also like to offer our ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Lane Evans, a welcome here this morning, and see if he has an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LANE EVANS

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I have an opening statement that I would like to include in the record.

Mr. QUINN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. EVANS. I want to thank you for holding this hearing. We will be covering several bills, and I look forward to hearing the testimony on each and every one of them.

I want to draw particular attention to two bills, H.R. 1476, the National Cemetery Act of 1999, and H.R. 1603, the Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999.

H.R. 1476 would require the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish three new additional National cemeteries. Each of these would be established in an area of the country, determined by the Secretary, to be most in need of cemetery space to serve veterans and their families.

Although VA statistics show that the demand for burial benefits will increase sharply in the near future, with interments increasing 42 percent from 1995 to the year 2010, the Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 VA budget proposal did not include funding for any additional National cemeteries. Unless new cemeteries are established soon, the VA will not be able to meet the needs of our veterans, particularly in the metropolitan areas. In response to this situation, I have introduced H.R. 1476.

H.R. 1603 would provide for permanent eligibility for veterans' housing loans for members of the selected reserve who complete 6 years of service. Last year, Public Law 105-368 extended guard and reserve eligibility for VA housing loans, which were set to expire this year, through the year 2003.

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States pointed out, however, that this benefit cannot be used as a recruiting tool, because reservist recruits must serve in the selected reserve for 6 years before they may participate in the VA housing loan program. Under current law, a recruit enlisting today will not be eligible for a VA loan before the authority of those loans expires. H.R. 1603, would make the home loan permanent, and will give the selected reserve the incentive they need to recruit the best and the brightest. I am very pleased that Chairman Bob Stump has joined me as an original cosponsor of this legislation.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Lane. Thank you very much.

Mr. Reyes, opening statement?

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SILVESTRE REYES

Mr. REYES. Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, and I want to welcome our colleagues here, and thank them on behalf of this committee for the work they do in this area. I want to associate myself with the comments of you and my colleagues on the Democratic side, and, also, want to highlight three additional bills.

H.R. 1247, the World War II Memorial, and I appreciate the work you are doing on that. H.R. 1663, or recognition of the Medal of Honor winners, and H.R. 1487, dealing with our homeless veterans.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Reyes.

So, we move to our first panel. Thank you all, gentleman. Certainly, we are pleased to have you with us, all three of you. Ms. Brown, Mr. Doyle, members of the full committee here, we appreciate and value your work during the year on all of our subcommittee work. Mr. Calvert is joining us also here this morning. We mentioned that we would like to keep our oral statements to about 5 minutes or so. The members here may have some questions when we finish.

Ms. Brown, why don't we begin with you?

STATEMENTS OF HON. CORRINE BROWN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA; HON. MICHAEL F. DOYLE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA; HON. BOB BARR, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA, AND HON. KEN CALVERT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

STATEMENT OF HON. CORRINE BROWN

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and ranking members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of H.R. 1628, my bill that would require the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish a National veterans' cemetery in the Miami, FL, metropolitan area.

The bill would also require the secretary to report to Congress on a construction schedule, and provide a cost estimate. I am distressed that VA continues to ignore the veterans' cemetery needs of South Florida. In both 1987 and 1994, the Miami area was des-

ignated by Congressional mandate report as one of the top geographical areas in the United States in need of veterans' burial space.

Yet, as late of August 1998, VA strategy plans indicate nothing more than a willingness to continue evaluating the needs of nearly one million veterans in the greater South Florida service area. Last month, my Oversight and Investigative Subcommittee held a hearing on veterans' cemeteries. Mrs. Higgins, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, testified that each month a number of deceased veterans make the 5 hour trip from South Florida to the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, alone. In the cases where family members go with the remains, they cannot continue to visit that area.

I agree with Mrs. Higgins conclusions that we must bury those veterans with the honor they deserve, close enough to their homes and their families so that they will not be forgotten.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I also cosponsored H.R. 1476, The National Cemetery Act of 1999, that will require VA's to establish three National cemeteries, each to be built in an area in the country most in need of veterans' cemetery space. I am confident that Florida veterans would get a new cemetery under this bill.

I am also disappointed that Congress had to propose such legislation. An initiative like this should come from VA, in light of the staggering projection needs for veterans' burial spaces over the next 20 years.

Further, Mr. Chairman, I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 2040, the Veterans Cemetery Assessment Act of 1999, introduced last week by Chairman Stump. This bill would require an independent study to assess, among other things, the number of additional National cemeteries needed for veterans who die after 2010.

Such a study would better identify the critical needs of, not only the whole State of Florida, but the entire Nation.

Throughout America, Mr. Chairman, 90 percent of eligible veterans are not buried in a State or National veterans' cemetery. Ninety percent, Mr. Chairman. Another important matter required to be studied by H.R. 2040 would be improvement to veterans' burial benefits to better serve veterans and their families. The legislation specifically mandates consideration of proposals to increase the amount of plot allowances benefits.

At a recent subcommittee hearing on veterans' cemeteries, veterans' organizations and state directors of veterans' affairs testified that it is their concern for a high operational costs that keeps many States from seeking a VA grant to build and equip a State veterans' cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, I must tell you that I am appalled that the Fiscal Year 2000 performance plan program objective of the National Cemetery Administration is to provide only 80 percent of America's veterans with their burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence. A goal that does not provide 20 percent of American veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence is not acceptable to me, nor should it be acceptable to this Congress.

Yesterday, I introduced a House resolution that would reaffirm that National commitment to providing reasonable burials in a vet-

erans' cemetery to the men and women who have honorably served the country in the Armed Forces. My resolution calls on the Department of Veterans Affairs, vested with the responsibility of providing a final resting place for American heroes, to commence, without delay, planning and construction of new National cemeteries and other activities to provide veteran's reasonable access to burial in a veterans' cemetery.

I ask that this subcommittee consider, as an amendment to H.R. 2040, language that would embody the intent of my resolution. Standing on the threshold of the new century, as we are, it is our obligation as members of the 106th Congress to again affirm America's solemn commitment to veterans, past, present, and future, and that they and their families will be provided an appropriate resting place of honor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs will fully carry out it's responsibility to this end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Congresswoman Brown appears on p. 62.]

Mr. QUINN. Very quickly, before we move to Mr. Doyle, your suggestion to amend or change H.R. 2040 is a great idea, as far as I'm concerned. Whether or not we can get that put together by the subcommittee markup tomorrow or not, I'm not certain, but certainly by full committee markup. I'll do everything I can to make sure we try to get that change done.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. I appreciate it very much. Mr. Doyle.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL F. DOYLE

Mr. DOYLE. Let me start my congratulating that wonderful hockey team in Buffalo in tying up the Stanley Cup, and wish them the best as they proceed, not that that would have anything to do with your consideration of my bill.

I want to thank you, and Ranking Member Filner, for extending the opportunities to members of the House to testify before the subcommittee today in regards to legislation that has been introduced that directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish a National cemetery in various regions of the country.

Considering the subcommittee's ambitious schedule this morning, I am particularly appreciative to be able to add my voice to this important and comprehensive discussion on matters concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration.

As many members of the subcommittee are already aware, I am supportive of the numerous initiatives that are before you today. I am a cosponsor of Chairman Stump's H.R. 2040, the Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act, and Ranking Member Evans' bill, H.R. 1476, The National Cemetery Act, as well as Representative Calvert's bill, H.R. 1663, which deals with the Riverside, California National Cemetery.

It is heartening to see an increased amount of attention paid to these issues, and, I again want to reiterate my thanks for accommodating those of us who care very strongly about these matters.

Recently I introduced H.R. 1973 which directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to build a National cemetery in the Pittsburgh

metropolitan area. I am pleased to report that my bill has already garnered the support of the entire Pennsylvania delegation, and that of Ranking Member Evans.

Before I begin the body of my remarks on this bill, I ask unanimous consent to have the numerous letters of support from prominent Western Pennsylvania affiliated veterans' service organizations to be included, along with my statement, as part of the record.

Mr. QUINN. Without objection, so ordered.

[Letters from AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Paralyzed Veterans of America appear at pp. 67 to 72.]

Mr. DOYLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today we receive letters of support from the American Legion Department of Pennsylvania, AMVETS, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the DAV, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the American Ex-Prisoners of War. Just as with all VA services and benefits, the demands placed on the National Cemetery Administration are overwhelming. Clearly, adequate funding levels and improved strategic planning would greatly improve the integrity of many VA programs, including the National Cemetery Administration.

Given the budgetary constraints imposed by years of flat-funded appropriations, I recognize that efforts are being made in relation to the new cemeteries that are slated to be opened later this year in Chicago, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Saratoga, and Cleveland.

The overwhelming need for a cemetery in Western Pennsylvania, however, continues to go unmet. This fact is quite frustrating, considering the demographics of this area, and the longstanding documented recommendations for construction by the National Cemetery Administration.

The Western Pennsylvania region is the second oldest population in the Nation, which includes a disproportionately large number of veterans. VISN 4, which includes the entire Commonwealth, is the fourth largest in the country, and comprises 1.6 million veterans.

It has been projected that by 2005, the overall number of veterans age 75 and older will increase by 37 percent, to 334,000 veterans. I have serious concerns about many VA healthcare related issues which will be impacted by this demographic imperative. But I also have an ever increasing concern about the growing need for a National cemetery in this area.

Given this factors, I am sure members of the subcommittee can understand my frustration with the rate at which National cemeteries are being constructed. Western Pennsylvania has been recognized as meriting a National cemetery since 1987, and recent reports from the Department of Veterans Affairs indicate that the Pittsburgh metropolitan area continues to be one of the top seven locales that has been identified as being in the greatest need of a National cemetery.

I do want to mention that Pennsylvania is fortunate to have National cemeteries some 200 miles away from Pittsburgh, in Annville and Philadelphia, but both face serious challenges. The 168 acres that are currently developed at the Annville cemetery are 75 percent filled, and the Philadelphia cemetery, which is only 13

acres in size, has no space for full-casket burials, and can only accept cremated remains.

Just as we should do all we can to improve the quality of life for our Nation's veterans, we should also afford their loved ones the ability to lay them to rest in an appropriate and respectable manner. In order for the families of these three river regions of Pennsylvania to be afforded this most basic of courtesies, the Department's effort must be accelerated.

It is my hope that today's subcommittee hearing, in concert with previous efforts by the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, will facilitate more timely completion and expanded construction of veterans' National cemeteries.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Doyle appears on p. 65.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Doyle. We appreciate your comments and your activity on our full committee, very, very much.

Mr. Calvert.

STATEMENT OF HON. KEN CALVERT

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today about H.R. 1663, the Medal of Honor Memorial Act.

I believe this bill is a fitting tribute to 3,413 men and women who have placed their lives on the line for their country, have taken risks above and beyond the call of duty, and, because of their extraordinary bravery and action during crisis, have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

This legislation designates the memorial currently being constructed at the Riverside National Cemetery, as a National memorial. Since this will be the only memorial honoring all 3,413 recipients, located in a National cemetery, I believe it is only fitting to identify it as a National memorial.

This designation will in no way diminish other memorials throughout the country honoring recipients of the Medal of Honor, but will instead bring National recognition and appreciation from the American people for those who have received our military's highest award.

I believe Riverside National Cemetery in California is the ideal location for this memorial. There are two Medal of Honor recipients buried there, 102 recipients of the Medal of Honor are originally from the State of California, and, at its capacity, the Riverside National Cemetery will inter approximately 1.4 million persons, making it the largest National cemetery in the entire National system; larger than Arlington National Cemetery.

This bill has received strong bipartisan support from members representing nearly every State in the Nation. Currently 75 of my colleagues have cosponsored the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act, including all 52 members of the California delegation, the chairman and ranking member of this subcommittee, I thank you, as well as over half of the Veterans' Committee members.

This memorial will be dedicated on November 5, 1999, during the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's 1999 National convention, which is being held in Riverside, CA. I hope you all can attend.

At this time, I would to personally extend that invitation to this subcommittee to join me in November to further honor our most distinguished soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen, by attending this National dedication.

I encourage my colleagues and all Americans to pay special homage to those men and women who have shown extraordinary bravery in battle, and support the Medal of Honor Memorial Act.

Again, I thank the chairman and members of this subcommittee. I also would like to place in the record a letter from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in support of this memorial, and also, they would like us to work together, with this subcommittee and full committee, to do some perfecting amendments before the full committee, and before we bring it to the Floor.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Calvert appears on p. 76.]

[The information follows:]

CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
CHARTERED BY THE CONGRESS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS,
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Statement of Paul Bucha, President, Congressional Medal of Honor Society

I am submitting this testimony as President and on behalf of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. The endeavor to bring national recognition to Medal of Honor Memorials is one that the Congressional Medal of Honor Society gratefully supports.

To further our objective of protecting the heritage of the Medal of Honor for posterity, Abraham Lincoln signed the law in 1861, establishing the Medal of Honor. Since that time 3,429 Medal of Honor have been awarded. In 1958 the Congressional Medal of Honor Society was chartered by Congress. The sole criteria for membership is being a recipient of the Medal of Honor. The purpose of the Society is to protect the heritage and integrity of the Medal of Honor. Today there are 155 living recipients of the Medal of Honor.

Congressional Medal of Honor Society believes the memorial being built in Riverside should be designated a "National Memorial". The Society also supports the designation of two other sites as "National Memorials", the memorial recently dedicated in Indianapolis and the museum at Patriot's Point.

Through conversations with Representative Ken Calvert, it is the understanding of the Society that H.R. 1663 will be amended to incorporate recognition of the two additional memorials. Once this is accomplished, the Society and all of its members will enthusiastically support this measure.

It is vital that recognition of Medal of Honor recipients be done in a coordinated fashion. The Society believes that these projects will bring full recognition to recipients and is hopeful that this will complete the system of memorials that recognize Medal of Honor recipients.

We look forward to working with Rep. Calvert, Chairman Stump and Quinn and members of this committee and subcommittee to modify this important legislation to recognize all three of these memorials.

We appreciate the committee giving us an opportunity to input on this matter of personal importance to the recipients of the Medal of Honor and the men and women with whom we served.

Respectfully,

PAUL W. BUCHA,
President.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you for your comments, Mr. Calvert. We are aware of the latest correspondence, and we've talked with staff from your office, as well as the subcommittee and the full committee, and we are hopeful that by the time this goes to full committee, we will be able to make some of those perfecting changes.

Mr. CALVERT. I would like to point out to the committee that it is vital that we move the bill, because, obviously, we are having this ceremony in November. One hundred and fifty-five of the living recipients we hope are all there, and we hope to have this concluded and a happy occasion in November, so I appreciate the chance.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much. With your help and advice on this, I'm certain we will have everything done on time.

Also, the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Barr, has joined us. Mr. Barr, we previously thanked all of our colleagues for taking time out of their busy schedules to be with us this morning, and we would entertain any comments you would have for us right now.

STATEMENT OF HON. BOB BARR

Mr. BARR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I do apologize for being late, and I hope the committee will bear with me. I will ask permission, Mr. Chairman, to insert my full remarks in the record.

Mr. QUINN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. BARR. Thank you. In deference to the committee's schedule and the other witnesses here today to speak about very important substantive matters, I would like to just summarize very briefly, if I could, the matter that brings me before this committee today, and that is to seek authorization for the building of a National cemetery in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

The Atlanta metropolitan area, Mr. Chairman, does not have a National cemetery. Georgia does not have a National cemetery available, located anywhere within its borders. For over 21 years, the Atlanta metropolitan area, which is home to several hundred thousand veterans, has been at the top of the list for needing a National cemetery to inter our veterans.

Right now, if a veteran's family or a veteran wishes to be buried in a National cemetery, that person has to go to another State, not that we have any problem with other States. There is a cemetery in Tennessee, one in South Carolina, and one in Alabama. But as the chairman and members know, studies have consistently indicated that if a National cemetery is located more than about 75 miles from the homeplace of the veteran and the veteran's family, including the surviving spouse, they are very unlikely to elect to be buried in that National cemetery, and the surviving spouse is much less likely to visit. Both of those things we like to encourage.

In recognition of the valor of our veterans, we like to give them a burial place in a National cemetery, and we also encourage family members to visit those sites because of the solemnity of them, not only for their veteran spouse and family member, but for others that are there as well.

We have, Mr. Chairman, done extensive work through our congressional office and through the offices of the other members of the Georgia delegation, to begin this process, and we would very much appreciate the support of this subcommittee.

For example, Mr. Chairman, earlier this year I introduced H.R. 1249, which has the support of the entire Georgia delegation, our Republicans and Democrats alike. Senators and members of Congress coming together in support of this matter, and, as the chair-

man knows, the very first step would be authorization for the cemetery, then, of course, the appropriated funds. As the chairman also knows, it takes approximately 5 years to develop a National cemetery, so, given the demographics and the projections for the deaths of our veterans coming up over the next decade, given the length of time that has transpired between World War II and now, the need for a National cemetery somewhere in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area is absolutely critical.

We would very much appreciate, on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families who live in the north Georgia area, and who have no National cemetery to look to, to honor their loved ones, their veterans, we would very appreciate the favorable consideration by this subcommittee and by the full committee to begin the process of authorizing, and then seeing built in the metropolitan Atlanta area, a veterans' cemetery for our fallen heroes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Congressman Barr appears on p. 73.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Barr. You clearly and succinctly outlined the need, and we are here to help you start part of that process. Unfortunately, it looks like 5 years or more projects for all of us. But, we're pleased to have your help and the support of all of the Georgia delegation in going forward.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the members of the subcommittee.

Mr. QUINN. Thanks very much.

I would also like to take just a minute or two before we dismiss our colleagues here to make sure that Ms. Berkley or Mr. Gibbons do not have any opening remarks or comments for the panel that is here. Ms. Berkley, anything?

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHELLEY BERKLEY

Ms. BERKLEY. I also want to thank you for being here. This is a very important issue for me, and I know I sound like a beating drum, but in my community, we've got the fastest growing veterans population in the United States, and we haven't enough resources to take care of them in any area of need that they have. Particularly, I would like to single out the need for cemeteries.

As I've stated in the past in this committee, we bury 120 veterans every month in the southern Nevada area, and, unfortunately, with our demographics and an aging veteran population, that number isn't going down.

I was witness to several veterans' meetings in my district where they spoke passionately and movingly about the needs that they had, and the fact that we don't have enough equipment to bury the veterans. We haven't enough manpower to bury our veterans. So, the need for a study on veterans' cemeteries is very important to me, because I know the need in southern Nevada, the area I represent, is going to be in need, and is in need now. So, I want to thank you for that. It is very important to me.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Ms. Berkley. Mr. Gibbons?

Mr. GIBBONS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to congratulate you on your leadership in holding these hearings, and welcome our colleagues today to this hearings, and, certainly, very

briefly, just say that I think that all of these are meritorious, well thought out pieces of legislation that this committee is going to look at very closely. I want to congratulate each of you for your commitment on these issues. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Gibbons. I think it is safe to say that all of the members here present at the subcommittee will take the opportunity, either on the Floor, or, as we see all four of our colleagues in and around our work, to make sure any of our questions are answered. Thanks very much for your time this morning.

We'll move to our second panel as our colleagues leave the room. Mr. Roger Rapp, the Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs; Judy Caden will be with him. Our friend, Honorable Al Borrego, and Major General John Herrling, retired, will also be part of our second panel. Please come forward and join us.

Good morning everybody, and thanks for joining us here this morning. I know that some of our witnesses, particularly here on the second panel, will speak to a wide range of issues, while others will speak to individual issues that we have before us this morning.

Acting Under Secretary Rapp, the committee has a good deal of interest in the memorial affairs program, and we heartily welcome you here this morning. I think just from some of the comments that you've heard while you've been in the room from some of the other four members who joined us here at the hearing table before you, I think there is a wide range of interest, not only on the subcommittee and the full committee, but across all members of Congress.

So, at this point in time, I would like to ask you to proceed. I don't think I have to say, but will for the record, that we would like you to keep your oral presentation to about 5 minutes or so, and any paperwork you have to submit to us will become part of the record. Sir?

STATEMENTS OF ROGER R. RAPP, ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; ACCOMPANIED BY JUDY CADEN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, LOAN GUARANTY SERVICE, VETERANS' BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION; ESPIRIDION "AL" BORREGO, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, AND JOHN P. HERRLING, MAJOR GENERAL (RET.), AND SECRETARY, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF ROGER R. RAPP

Mr. RAPP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be here this morning to provide the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs on several bills that affect important programs for veterans and their dependents or survivors.

Before I go too far, I want to introduce Ms. Judy Caden, Deputy Director, Loan Guaranty Service of the Veterans Benefits Administration, who will assist me today with any questions. I have an oral statement that summarizes some highlights regarding certain bills, and I request that my full written statement by submitted to the record.

Mr. QUINN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. RAPP. I will begin with H.R. 1476, establishment of additional National cemeteries. In 1987 and 1994, two separate reports to Congress identified a total of 13 sites that have large populations without a veterans' cemetery to serve them. Cemeteries have been built for two sites; San Joaquin Valley in California, in 1992, and Tahoma in Seattle-Tacoma, Washington, in 1997. Four other sites are currently under construction in the following areas: Saratoga, NY; Chicago, IL; Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX; and Cleveland, OH.

Although not reflected in the Fiscal Year 2000 budget, progress is being made on two other sites identified in those reports. In St. Louis, we have obtained land from our adjacent VA medical center, and a \$7.5 million expansion project is being planned and will be constructed.

In Oklahoma, we are proceeding with a contract award this summer to do master planning, preliminary design, and design documents for that cemetery.

This leaves five sites from the reports for future consideration. In alphabetical order, those sites are Atlanta, Detroit, Miami, Pittsburgh, and Sacramento. If VA were required by legislation to choose three sites for new National cemeteries it would be from this list of five. If that would be a difficult choice in light of the earlier panel where representatives from four different States provided testimony on cemetery issues. Each of those four States has been identified in the list that I just read.

Nevertheless, we do not believe that the report which would be required by this legislation is necessary, nor would it be cost effective, because we already have valid data regarding locations and costs and time frames for construction of new National cemeteries.

We, therefore, consider H.R. 1476 to be unnecessary, since we have this other information already, and do not support its enactment.

H.R. 1663, designation of National Medal of Honor Memorial. This bill would designate a memorial currently being built at Riverside National Cemetery as the National Medal of Honor Memorial. I heard reference in earlier testimony that correspondence has been received from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Basically, enactment of this bill would not affect VA operations. For that reason, we take no position on its merits. However, we recommend the committee solicit the views of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, as some may view the recently dedicated memorial this past Memorial Day in Indianapolis, as "the" National memorial. Perhaps the bill language can consider this additional information.

H.R. 2040, assessment of National cemeteries. VA does not object to some of the concepts embodied in the bill. We believe some of the provisions may be duplicative of what the NCA is already accomplishing, and we have some other concerns.

For example, while we believe a one-time snapshot of repairs needed in each National cemetery would be beneficial. In our planning process, the issue, in my view, has never been identifying suitable projects. Rather, the difficulty lies in funding them. Further, we have some concern that in assessing National cemeteries for the

future, that planning too far ahead can result in development of information that may not be useful, as it would be difficult to predict veteran migration patterns and State cemetery involvement 20 to 30 years in advance.

Mr. Chairman, as the committee considers the action it may take with respect to this bill, we urge that the potential for unnecessary duplication of effort, and other concerns we have noted in our written testimony, be recognized. In view of the concerns we have noted, we cannot support the enactment of H.R. 2040 in its present form.

H.R. 1484, Authorization of Appropriations for Homeless Veterans Projects. The Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project is a project that effectively maneuvers veterans out of homelessness. The Department of Labor has worked very closely with our department on this program. Several VA staffs are closely involved with these projects and we are pleased to support the continuation of this program at the level of the Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 budget request.

H.R. 1603, Housing Loan Entitlement for Reservists. Lastly, Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1603 would make permanent the entitlement for VA housing loan benefits currently given to persons whose only military service was in the reserves, including the National Guard. Accordingly, VA supports this benefit, but we are in the process of evaluating all of our programs. We will be better prepared to comment on this benefit, and its interaction with other VA benefits, after our evaluation of the loan program is complete.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my opening statement. I will be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rapp appears on p. 77.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Rapp, and for our other witnesses, I think what we will do is hear from the entire panel, and then check from all three of you to see if there are any questions from members who are here.

Mr. Borrego.

STATEMENT OF ESPIRIDION "AL" BORREGO

Mr. BORREGO. Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, thank you for the invitation to appear and testify on H.R. 1484, and to express our support for the reauthorization of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project.

I wish we didn't need this law. It would mean that all veterans were successfully reintegrated into civilian life and contributing to the growth of their families and communities. But, reality shows us that we need this law as much as ever.

You're familiar with the statistics, and they are heartbreaking. But behind those statistics are real people. People who we have helped become proud, productive citizens, just as they were proud and productive soldiers, sailors, and airmen and women and marines.

I have listened to their stories in shelters across the country. What they said over and over is that they need a fair chance and a good job. That is a promise that HVRP offers to them. Men like two homeless veterans we helped through the Volunteers of America in eastern Kentucky. One is a Vietnam veteran with social anx-

xiety phobia, who had been living in a dilapidated building. The caseworker, a disabled veteran, gained his trust. He now has a permanent job as a truck driver and is getting help to get the mental health services he needs.

The other veteran had been homeless for 10 years, even though he was an experienced carpenter and roofer. The HVRP service provider found people who needed carpentry services, transported the veteran to the jobs, even bought him some tools.

From 1984 through 1994, we helped almost 10,000 veterans gain their dignity and their productivity by placing them into jobs. This year we have \$3 million. That's enabled us to fund 22 modest grants, but we had 53 applications for urban grants, and 9 for rural grants. We had to make some difficult choices.

With limited resources and competing needs of the country, Congress and the Administration are faced with difficult choices in allocating funds for Fiscal Year 2000. Our request is for \$5 million. That would get 3,500 veterans into jobs. The key is partnerships with businesses and community-based organizations, and with other government agencies like Veterans' Affairs and HUD. In the same way this country has historically formed coalitions to defend freedom around the world, we must now build coalitions to defeat homelessness and expand opportunities for veterans without homes.

Our goal for the 21st century must be no new homeless veterans. Two hundred years ago, the English poet, William Wordsworth, witnessed a tragic irony of homelessness in England. He wrote, "and homeless, near a thousand homes I stood, and near a thousand tables, pined and wanted food."

On the eve of the 21st century, all America's veterans deserve a more optimistic legacy. In this land of plenty, it is within our power to achieve it.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and I am pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Borrego appears on p. 87.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Mr. Borrego.

We now move to Major General Herrling, sir.

STATEMENT OF JOHN P. HERRLING

Mr. HERRLING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to support legislation that will expedite our efforts to honor America's World War II generation.

With me is Mr. James Aylward, the Executive Director of the National World War II Memorial Project. I want to note that the views I express today, particularly those related to special borrowing authority in H.R. 1247, are those of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The Administration's position on H.R. 1247 was conveyed by the Department of Veterans Affairs in their written statement. In 1993, Congress authorized creation of the National World War II memorial here in Washington, and directed the American Battle Monuments Commission to raise the funds from private sources for its construction.

In 1997, we created a fundraising program that is accelerating and delivering excellent results. To date, the private sector has contributed \$57 million in just over 2 years. Many of our contributors, however, have pledged large gifts over a period of 4 or 5 years. These gifts, which are accounts receivable, cannot be applied to the requirement of the Commemorative Works Act, to have available, prior to construction, sufficient funds to complete the memorial.

The issue is not if the memorial will be built, but when. The goal of groundbreaking in the year 2000 was initially driven by the 7 year legislation deadline. This goal has become a public expectation. We are committed to keeping our fundraising efforts growing to make the memorial a reality before the World War II generation we honor passes into history.

H.R. 1247 will ensure that we achieve this goal. All the provisions of H.R. 1247, except one, were proposed by the Administration at the time our budget proposal was submitted. The one exception is the unique provision that would allow the American Battle Monuments Commission borrowing authority to meet the Commemorative Works Act requirement of having the full cost of construction, plus 10 percent for maintenance, available prior to groundbreaking.

While the private sector often issues bonds or borrows funds against pledges receivable, these options are not available to agencies of the Federal Government. Beginning construction before receipt of all necessary funds is often done in the private sector. One notable example is the Statue of Liberty Ellis Island project. Other examples are listed in my written statement, and in those cases, solicitation of contributions was not hampered.

Accordingly, the drafters of H.R. 1247 seek to grant the ABMC a similar authority by authorizing us to borrow from the treasury; In effect, granting us a line of credit. If we are given such an authority, the funds required for groundbreaking would be available, and construction of the memorial could begin next year.

Since Senator Bob Dole came on board as our National fundraising chairman in March of 1997, our fundraising has increased significantly, growing from \$5.5 million in 1997, to more than \$57 million by mid-June of this year. The support came from corporations, foundations, veterans' organizations, and more than 325,000 individual Americans.

As National awareness grows, we expect public response to be more positive. Tom Hanks, the star of Saving Private Ryan, appears in public service ads distributed this spring. Prior to Hanks' participation, our toll free number had received just over 5,000 calls. Since he became our National spokesperson, we have received over 100,000 calls, and the momentum continues to build.

We have now more than 100 corporate donors that have given a total of \$27 million, including 10 who have given \$1 million or more, and 13 that have given \$500,000 or more. Decisions from another 85 corporate solicitations are pending, and more than 200 donor prospects will be contacted in the next 3 months.

Twenty-seven private foundations have contributed almost \$4 million. Fifty-two requests are under consideration. Some will not provide support until actual construction has begun, or there is a

high certainty that financing, similar to borrowing authority, is available to complete the project.

We are taking advantage of a window of opportunity that opened as we approached the end of the 20th century. By developing cause-related marketing promotional concepts for corporate America, we are confident that donations via this marketing will reach \$6 million in 1999, and then \$8 million in the year 2000.

Millions of interested and committed Americans have contributed to the memorial through veterans groups led by a \$7.5 million commitment of the VFW. The American Legion has a \$3 million goal. The Non-Commissioned Officer's Association has established a goal of \$500,000, and we have received a \$500,000 gift from the Disabled American Veterans.

We have asked each State to contribute \$1 for each citizen who served in uniform during World War II. Fifteen States have passed legislation for a total of \$4.2 million. Twenty States and Puerto Rico introduced legislation in 1999 to contribute another \$6.9 million before the end of this year.

We have grassroots organizations and community organizations around the country who are aggressively supporting us in this campaign. Our direct mail program continues to provide a profitable return for each dollar invested. More than 325,000 Americans have responded, generating a net profit in direct mail of \$6 million.

Our fundraising campaign gains momentum with each day. We firmly believe that all the provisions of H.R. 1247 will enhance our project and our fundraising efforts, allowing us to keep faith with the World War II generation by groundbreaking for this memorial in the year 2000, while keeping faith with the Congressional direction that this memorial tribute be privately funded.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. Mr. Aylward would be pleased to answer any of the questions from your subcommittee.

[The prepared statement of General Herrling appears on p. 89.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much, General, and to all of our panelists. I don't have any questions, necessarily, for any of you, except a brief comment to General Herrling.

I think it goes without saying that all of us commend the work of you and the Commission and all of the members of the Commission for this comprehensive campaign, as you've just outlined for us, to raise these funds privately for the memorial, and I hope you will take back our congratulations and support to the other members of the Commission.

To think that our Nation's veterans' organizations have stepped up with these millions of dollars, and then the other areas that you are pursuing is not only commendable but extraordinary, if you ask me. It is really something to see, and I don't think, personally, that anything that we do, that we're looking to go forward with, with the borrowing authority, line of credit, if you will, will affect not by a penny your efforts and what you are doing out there. So, if we can help, as you say, your words in your testimony, enhance those efforts, I think that is exactly where we should be headed, and we appreciate the testimony from all of you this morning.

Mr. Filner, any questions?

Mr. FILNER. Just briefly, for Mr. Borrego. I wonder if you would put on the record your answers to the following? When we try to

talk to some of our colleagues or members of the public about increasing support for the HVRP, people say, "why do you need a program just for veterans? Why they can't they use whatever else we have?"

Related to that I quoted statistics about how cost effective your program was in terms of placing veterans. You might want to tell us how you do that. What accounts for that in the structure of the program that allows that cost effectiveness?

Mr. BORREGO. Mr. Filner, I think one of them is that we're employment focused, and the entire focus of the program is on jobs that make the veteran self-sufficient. The other is that we work with other organizations like Veterans' Affairs and HUD to make sure that they have support services for any problems that they made have, that they have housing, that they have linkages to our DVOPS and LVER's, so that they get good placement assistance, that if there are training programs that are available, that we have linkages to those, so that the small amount of money we have for HVRP is a tip of a huge iceberg of services that we bring together.

The other, I think, very successful component, is that we encourage the use of homeless veterans to do the outreach to other homeless veterans, because they know how to talk to those veterans that are homeless and bring them into the shelters, where we can give them that kind of support.

So, clearly, that ability to work with other government agencies and with other providers in the community to make sure that there is the support network, and it is that one piece that brings it all together and makes the veteran's who are homeless, self-sufficient.

Mr. FILNER. So, what do you say to the skeptics who say we don't need something just for veterans?

Mr. BORREGO. Mr. Filner, I feel very passionate about our program for homeless veterans; it is successful; it is working. It takes veterans who are outside the community and brings them inside the community where they are again productive citizens. It gets them jobs. It makes them self-sufficient. It gets them off the streets, and at the time in our country that there are jobs that are going begging for lack of skilled employees, we need this program.

Mr. REYES. Will the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. FILNER. Certainly.

Mr. REYES. I want to reiterate what Mr. Borrego was saying, because I have actually had an opportunity to be at a ceremony where he recognized a number of businesses that have worked with his program and have hired veterans and have been very successful. In fact, the testimony that we received that day in El Paso was that some of these veterans, as a result of Mr. Borrego's and the DOL's program, have been some of the most successfully placed government program-type individuals in the small business community experience.

I just wanted to put that as part of the record because I do believe that is a great program. It is something that we all should not only recognize, but support. Thank you, and I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. FILNER. Thank you. I see Mr. Borrego has been doing his work. He was in San Diego also. Has he been to the fastest growing community? (Laughter.)

Mr. QUINN. Has he been to the home of the Buffalo Sabres? Mr. Evans, any questions for the panel?

Mr. EVANS. Yes, sir, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Rapp, last year, when we agreed to enact legislation enhancing the State veterans' cemetery program, we received a firm commitment from the VA that this program would supplement the National Cemetery Program, not replace it. Based on that commitment, I expected the Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 budget for the VA to include funding for additional new National cemeteries, but that funding was not in the budget. As a result, I introduced H.R. 1476, The National Cemetery Act of 1999.

Mr. Rapp, keeping in mind the accelerating death rate of World War II veterans, in your personal opinion, can America meet it's commitment to veterans if additional National cemeteries are not established and established soon?

Mr. RAPP. Just a comment, and then I will answer the personal opinion part of your question. This is the 7th hearing I have attended this spring and I have seen, probably this year more than any other year, increasing interest in National cemeteries. This interest may be due to the end of the millennium or the aging World War II population embodied in the movie "Saving Private Ryan." It has been a record year, if you will, in terms of interest in National cemeteries.

Regarding statements made by me last year, I stand by those. I see the two programs, the State Cemetery Program and the National Cemetery Program as complementing each other. We have a list and there are a number of sites on that list that have not been addressed. You are correct in stating that they are not mentioned in the 2000 budget. In the next few weeks, we will begin internal development of the Administration's 2001 budget submission. I can tell you that I am championing the discussion of these issues, and I will continue to champion that discussion within the budget process. I think hearings like this, and testimony from the prior panel, help me bring information back to the Administration for their consideration.

I guess I intertwined my personal comments into that answer.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Rapp, I don't understand your reluctance to testify on H.R. 1603, The Selective Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999. We all agree that members of the selected reserve have more than earned their right to eligibility for this program. Additionally, I understand that the default rate with this group of individuals is relatively low. Why can't you simply support this measure?

Ms. CADEN. We do support the benefit, and I think we say that in the testimony, but there are a series of program evaluations going on within the VA. The Loan Guaranty Program is one that is scheduled. Since this doesn't expire until 2003, we would like to see that evaluation process first, and see how it fits in with everything else, and then comment on it in more detail.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Gibbons, questions for the panelists?

Mr. GIBBONS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Rapp, in the studies you cited in 1987 and 1994 with regard to National cemeteries, that is obviously a 12-year old study for 1987 and a 5-

year old study for 1994, we are still listing Atlanta, Georgia, alphabetically in your statement, as one of the top priorities of a National cemetery. I'm concerned that after 12 years of studying this, we still haven't gotten any closer to getting a cemetery into Atlanta, Georgia, and I'm wondering what your comments are with regard to how long you foresee that process taking for some of these cities that have these very, very urgent needs to establish a National cemetery?

Mr. RAPP. I've been involved with constructing six cemeteries during that 12 year period, so I guess I'm the corporate memory on the issue. I hope this is straightforward.

Virtually all six of these cemeteries had multiple appropriations spread out over a number of years, beginning with planning funds to do EIS review of land, and then acquisition funds to obtain land. This was followed by design and master planning funds, construction document funds, and, ultimately, construction dollars. For example, five separate appropriations, starting in Fiscal Year 1990 and ending in Fiscal Year 1997 were related to the Dallas-Ft. Worth project. One of those appropriations was included in the Administration's budget, and that was the biggest, and the last one for the construction dollars.

If I make a similar comparison with Saratoga, and I'll be brief, again, five separate appropriations, all of them provided by Congress, including the construction dollars.

So, to answer your question about how long it takes, I think it takes about 5 to 7 years, if the momentum is there, and the appropriations are there in a timely manner.

Mr. GIBBONS. General Herrling, have you ever found precedent that would permit this special borrowing authority for the establishment of the World War II memorial that you can rely on, that the Administration is now saying they're opposed to?

Mr. HERRLING. Mr. Gibbons, I don't think that precedent is in the Federal Government, but, it is certainly present in the private sector. Every private foundation for endowment can go out and borrow money; they can bond for the money. But, there is a disadvantage to a Federal agency that is trying to raise funds, and that is, if you are trying to build a project like the World War II memorial, you can't go out and borrow money, so I don't think, to answer your question specifically, I don't think there is another example in the Federal Government where borrowing authority has been approved.

Mr. GIBBONS. Now, the memorial cost is already part of the design, isn't it? In other words, you designed the memorial and then looked at the cost?

Mr. HERRLING. Yes, we have.

Mr. GIBBONS. I'm curious, Mr. Rapp. In your testimony, you say that the size of the project will be determined by the special borrowing authority and it would be out of control if you were allowed to have special borrowing authority. I'm not sure where that nexus is where you say the size of the project will escalate if you give them that project. They've already got a design. They've already got a cost estimate. Explain how your opposition to the special borrowing authority with relationship to your size fits in there.

Mr. RAPP. Perhaps a clarification on my testimony is appropriate. I learned about my opposition yesterday afternoon, as this testimony has a number of authors. Let me just offer that what I think that testimony is suggesting is that other memorials have scaled down after their initial design to reflect the actual dollars that were available. I think there are other concerns included in my written statement, that interjects some concerns related to the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

Mr. GIBBONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Reyes, you had an opportunity when Mr. Filner yielded earlier. Do you wish to question now, too?

Mr. REYES. Just one brief question to Mr. Borrego again. I understand that the job placement rate under HVRP is approximately 50 percent.

Mr. BORREGO. Yes, sir.

Mr. REYES. How does that compare with other Federal programs that also focus on job placement? Do you know?

Mr. BORREGO. I think that when we take a look at this program it is probably one of our more exemplary programs. We are probably doing better with this than a lot of the other programs, and I think that speaks to the dedication of the people that work in that program.

Mr. REYES. Can I ask you to look into that and give us the specific percentage so that we have some idea when we compare it with other Federal programs?

Mr. BORREGO. Absolutely.

Mr. REYES. That's all, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

Mr. QUINN. I might add, as Mr. Reyes asked for that information, Mr. Borrego, could you provide it to the full subcommittee staff as well?

Mr. BORREGO. Yes, sir.

Mr. QUINN. Ms. Berkley?

Ms. BERKLEY. Yes, thanks. I wanted to emphasize something that Congressman Filner said, but do it through my comments to you. I was one of those people that didn't understand why homeless veterans needed special programs until I started working with my homeless veterans, and I realized that they have unique emotional needs, unique socialization needs, and it was important to have a separate program, because they viewed themselves as separate from mainstream society, and in order to bring them in to get them jobs, to get them working so that they can mainstream, we need to do something extraordinary for them.

I am very supportive of this and I applaud your activities in this area. Twenty-seven percent of the homeless people in the southern Nevada area are veterans, so I know how important this is, and we have virtually no unemployment in Las Vegas, it is 3.7 percent, so I know that the need to bring them into a special program where we can combine job placement with counseling because of the myriad of drug abuse issues and alcohol that many of my homeless veterans have.

So, anything I can do to help, I will, and certainly supporting this measure is a first step towards that.

Mr. BORREGO. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. BERKLEY. You're welcome.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you all. I think that finishes up with questions this morning. We appreciate your information. We know you are somewhat on call for members if we have some specific information, and we'll take advantage of that. You've been most cooperative. Thank you all.

We're going to move to our third panel now. Mr. Peter Gaytan, Master Sergeant Michael Cline, Ms. Linda Boone, nice to see you all again, and John Vitikacs, will be joining us from The American Legion.

Good morning, we are losing some of our members and some of the audience at the moment. It doesn't mean anything. We save the best for last, is the way we organize around this place.

We're thrilled to have all of you with us this morning, and as we said before all of our panels, and as you are aware, because you've been here before, we're going to ask that your oral statements be about 5 minutes or so and we'll accept, of course, any written testimony that you have.

Peter, why don't we begin with you?

STATEMENTS OF PETER GAYTAN, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, AMVETS; MICHAEL P. CLINE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES; LINDA BOONE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOMELESS VETERANS, AND JOHN R. VITIKACS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

STATEMENT OF PETER GAYTAN

Mr. GAYTAN. Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony this morning on behalf of the members of AMVETS. The bills before us today will help ensure that America's veterans receive the entitlements earned through service to their country.

H.R. 1476, The National Cemetery Act of 1999, requires the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to establish National cemeteries in each of the three areas in the United States that the secretary determines to be most in need. The demand for space is expected to reach 620,000 by the year 2008. It is projected that from the years 1995 to 2010, the internment rate will have increased by 42 percent.

The need for additional cemeteries to serve veterans and their families is evident, and the National Cemetery Administration must have a clear strategic plan through 2010 to address the problem. AMVETS supports H.R. 1476 and we commend Congressman Evans for his foresight in proposing this bill.

H.R. 1247, the World War II Memorial Completion Act, seeks to expand the fundraising authority of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia, and to ensure adequate funds for repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial, and for other purposes. AMVETS is proud to be a major contributor to the World War II Memorial fundraising campaign. This memorial

is a long overdue tribute to the service men and women who served during the second World War. AMVETS supports H.R. 1247.

H.R. 1603, Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999, provides for permanent eligibility for former members of the selected reserve for veterans' housing loans. As fewer young people are choosing a career in the military, service recruiters are experiencing increasing difficulties in reaching their goals. We must provide benefits and incentives that can compete with the civilian job market. Since 1987, the military has seen a decrease of 800,000 service men and women. Although the number of personnel in the military continues to drop, the number of deployments has risen. From 1998 to today, our military has supported 32 separate deployments.

The unprecedented rate of downsizing and cutbacks experienced in the military in recent years has expanded the role of reservists. As a U.S. Air Force Reservist, I can say confidently that because the active duty is forced to do more with less, they're relying to a greater extent on the reserve forces for support.

AMVETS recognizes the efforts of reservists, and supports the provisions of H.R. 1603.

H.R. 1484 would authorize appropriations for Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. AMVETS has long supported homeless veterans' programs. At our National convention last year, members adopted a resolution seeking new funding for homeless veterans' programs. As Congressman Filner pointed out earlier, research shows that half of the homeless males in most cities and towns in this country are veterans, many of whom are disabled or chronically ill, and, therefore, unable to obtain employment.

A Department of Veterans Affairs study indicates that up to 20 percent of these disabled veterans have serious psychiatric illnesses associated with PTSD, a major obstacle to becoming employable. We must continue to provide reintegration programs for our veterans. By approving the resolution, members of AMVETS agreed to urge Congress to provide adequate funding for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program under the McKinney Act. AMVETS, therefore, supports H.R. 1484.

H.R. 1663, the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act, seeks to designate as a National memorial the monument being built at Riverside National Cemetery in California, to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor.

It is important for America to remember the sacrifices of our combat veterans, and their role in securing the freedom that we now take for granted. AMVETS supports H.R. 1663.

H.R. 2040, The National Cemeteries Act of 1999, seeks a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people gather Nationwide at our National cemeteries during Memorial Day and Veterans Day, to recognize the sacrifices made by our Nation's veterans. It is our responsibility to ensure that these cemeteries maintain a dignified and respectful setting. AMVETS supports H.R. 2040.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. On behalf of the members of AMVETS, I commend this committee on it's continued

efforts to secure the entitlements of our Nation's veterans, and we look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gaytan appears on p. 95.]

Mr. QUINN. Mr. Gaytan, thank you very much for your very informative testimony. It is very helpful for the committee to hear your position on the issues, as well.

We turn now to Sergeant Cline.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL P. CLINE

Mr. CLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving us the opportunity to present these views on behalf of the enlisted men and women of the Army and Air National Guard, and, in fact, all reservists.

I would like to thank Congressman Evans and Congressman Stump for introducing H.R. 1603. Mr. Chairman, I will keep my remarks brief. While we support all of the provisions being presented today, I will focus on H.R. 1603, VA home loan bill for guard and reserve members.

Mr. Chairman, the Veterans Administration, as you heard this morning, does not oppose this bill. In fact, it brings in some \$3 million a year into the VA annually, which helps to offset the cost of the active duty program. The Veterans' Transition Commission recommends extending this privilege to guard and reserve members. In fact, it was the only provision contained the Transition Commission's report concerning guard and reserve members.

The military coalition, 30 military and veterans' organizations, that represent over 5.5 million members, supports this program. The guard and reserve need it, and it is good for America. Up until 1996, the bill had generated \$5.2 billion in new loans. Of the 33,000 loans made prior to 1996, only 93 had been foreclosed upon, and of the 55,000 home loans that have been made to date, 67 percent of those 55,000 loans were for first-time home buyers.

As you're aware, the extension that was passed cannot be offered as a recruiting incentive for new recruits. You must serve 6 years in the National Guard or reserves to be eligible for this benefit. So, people joining the guard and reserve today are not eligible for this program unless it is extended.

The only thing left, Mr. Chairman, is to pass this bill. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cline appears on p. 98.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much. Ms. Boone.

STATEMENT OF LINDA BOONE

Ms. BOONE. Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, thank you for the opportunity to present our views here today.

On any given night, there are the equivalent of 17 infantry divisions on the streets of the great Nation, with no place to call home. This is approximately 275,000 men and women who have worn this country's uniforms, been trained at great expense in many of the most advanced technical skills, stood guard over all that we hold sacred and dear, and, in some cases, incurred physical and psychological injuries.

We have all heard the stories of their descent into homelessness. In many cases, these reasons could befall any of us. No matter what caused their homelessness, these veterans are usually highly skilled, intelligent, motivated men and women, who could be an asset to any business organization. Without a home, even a mailing address, a telephone, a place to dress and shower, how can they hope to find and keep a job?

Fortunately, there are organizations dedicated to helping veterans break the cycle of homelessness and hopelessness. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans is a coalition of community-based service providers in 43 States and the District of Columbia, dedicated to ending homelessness among veterans.

Work is the key to helping homeless veterans rejoin American society. As important as quality of clinical care and other supportive services and transitional housing may be, the fact remains that helping veterans get and keep a job is the most essential element in their final step to recovery and reintegration.

The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, under reauthorization consideration in H.R. 1484, is a job placement program begun in 1989 to provide grants to community-based organizations that employ flexible and innovative approaches to assist homeless, unemployed veterans re-enter the workforce.

HVRP programs work with veterans who have special needs, and are shunned by other programs and services: Veterans who have hit the very bottom, including those with long histories of substance abuse, severe PTSD, serious social problems, legal issues, and those who are HIV positive.

These veterans require more time consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals, and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with veterans seeking employment. HVRP is virtually the only program that focuses on employment of veterans who are homeless. Since other sources of funding that should be available to our member organizations to fund activities that result in gainful employment are not generally available, HVRP takes on an importance far beyond the very small dollar amount involved.

The problem is that the State and local agencies who distribute Federal resources for employment, training, and other vital services, feel that veterans are a Federal problem. Unless veterans are specifically and explicitly written into laws, regulations, and appropriations by the Congress, then veterans will be explicitly read out of any programs at the State and local level.

As just one example, in the program year 1995, only 2,052 homeless veterans received services from the JTPA Act, out of the many tens of thousands of dollars provided. This makes it all the more important for this small program to be authorized and funded at the modest \$50 million.

HVRP is an extraordinarily cost-effective program with a cost per placement of under \$1,500 per veteran. This is less than 25 percent of the cost of JTPA programs, which do not meet the special needs of homeless veterans, even in the rare instances where veterans can secure such services.

In at least some measure of this, HVRP is primarily used because it is a placement program, and not a lengthy training program. Due to the very small appropriations for this program, \$3

million for the last 2 years, only 22 programs in 11 States have received grants. For Fiscal Year 2000, the President's budget is only asking for \$5 million to be appropriated. This program has suffered since it's inception because it is small, and it is an easy target for elimination or reduced appropriations. Our coalition has spent the majority of it's advocacy efforts in the past 5 years in keeping this program alive, because it is so vital in ending homelessness among veterans. The alternatives to getting these homeless veterans back to work are to have them to continue to rotate through programs that don't include an employment component, long-term hospitalizations due to dealing with declined health issues caused by homelessness, to be a burden on State's welfare programs, and, finally, to death on our streets.

Last year, Congress passed two pieces of legislation that will significantly increase the amount of transition housing available for homeless veterans in the next few years. The availability of funding to service providers through the Veterans' Transitional Housing Opportunities Act, in which you had such a key role, Mr. Chairman, along with the increased funding for the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per diem Program, will increase the demand for employment placement funding.

Mr. Chairman, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans urges you and your colleagues to reauthorize and increase the amount for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program for the years 2000 to 2004. We also request that this committee work with the Appropriations' Committee, to ensure appropriations at the full authorization level. NCHV thanks Mr. Filner for introducing this bill, and we thank the rest of this committee for consideration of the vital employment and training needs of our veterans who are homeless. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Boone appears on p. 103.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Linda.
John.

STATEMENT OF JOHN R. VITIKACS

Mr. VITIKACS. Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, good morning. The American Legion welcomes the opportunity to comment on important legislation before the subcommittee this morning.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion places great value on the efforts and the mission of the National Cemetery Administration. We are a strong advocate for providing proper burial benefits to the Nation's veterans, and believe NCA has made great progress over the last decade in meeting this goal. The next several decades will be as important as the decade just ending in continuing to provide proper burial benefits to all eligible veterans and to their dependents.

The American Legion fully supports H.R. 2040, to require the secretary to conduct an independent study on improvements to existing National cemeteries, and to assess the need for additional National cemetery expansion.

Mr. Chairman, two previous independent studies of the National Cemetery Administration, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, provided extremely important evidence to verify not only the need for

additional National cemeteries, but in providing specific guidance on where to locate these new cemeteries. As a result, six new National cemeteries have been designed and constructed within the past decade.

The National Cemetery Administration will soon dedicate and activate the last four of these National cemeteries. Mr. Chairman, The American Legion hopes that the proposed study will not unnecessarily impede or delay the required expansion of new National cemeteries in areas identified in the recent 1994 contracted study.

Instead, we hope that prior to the beginning of the prior called for study, the needed future expansion of the National Cemetery Administration, beginning with 2010, and ending in the year 2030, that the priority areas already under consideration for new cemetery construction will go forward.

The American Legion respectfully suggests the scope of the proposed study be expanded to focus on the areas of greatest need for the development and expansion of both National and State veterans' cemeteries. The added focus on State veterans' cemeteries will help identify and encourage veterans' organizations to seek support from their respective State legislatures for the State Cemetery Grants Program.

On too many occasions, the National Cemetery Administration must wait on the initiative of the States in pursuing the development and construction of State veterans' cemeteries. Including the State Cemetery Grants Program in the study will help identify those States that have no veterans' cemeteries or no active applications, but where a State veterans' cemetery, as an alternative to a National cemetery, is justified.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion supports the intent of H.R. 1476, to establish new National cemeteries to serve the needs of veterans and their families. H.R. 1476 would limit the expansion of new National cemeteries to no more than three, and it does not identify the time period for the proposed expansion. Currently, there are at least six geographic areas in need of initial development of new National cemeteries. The American Legion believes these six areas should proceed to the design planning and construction phase without delay.

The next decade should witness the development of six new National cemeteries, and the expansion of existing cemeteries on par with the 1990s. Currently, the priority areas identified for new National cemetery development include Oklahoma City, OK, Sacramento, CA, Pittsburgh, PA, South Florida, Detroit, MI, and Atlanta, GA.

Mr. Chairman, we have also been asked to comment on four other bills under consideration this morning. The American Legion supports H.R. 1663, designating the building of a Medal of Honor memorial at the Riverside National Cemetery as a National memorial. We note, however, that this memorial should in no way diminish the importance of other similar memorials throughout the country.

The American Legion also supports H.R. 1247, to expand the fundraising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission, to expedite the establishment of the planned World War II memorial in the District of Columbia.

The American Legion strongly supports H.R. 1484, to authorize appropriations for Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Programs, under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program is the only Federally funded program that is focused strictly on preparing homeless veterans for employment, and on successfully placing them in jobs.

Lastly, The American Legion fully supports H.R. 1603, which provides for permanent eligibility for former members of the selected reserves for veterans' housing loans. Mr. Chairman, that completes my statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vitikacs appears on p. 108.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much, John. Thank you to everybody for your testimony this morning. We will proceed with questions now if any of the panel have them. Mr. Gibbons, anything for this panel?

Mr. GIBBONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to direct a question to Ms. Boone on the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program. What is the current projected budget prior to your request for additional funding? Do you have that?

Ms. BOONE. The authorization currently is \$10 million—

Mr. GIBBONS. So you're asking for an additional five?

Ms. BOONE. We're asking for the \$50 million per year. Now it is authorized at \$10 million per year.

Mr. GIBBONS. Okay.

Mr. QUINN. Would the gentleman yield for just one second?

Mr. GIBBONS. Yes.

Mr. QUINN. I don't want to argue numbers, that gets us into trouble. I think the request is \$10 million, but we've actually had appropriated \$3 million over the last 2 years.

Ms. BOONE. Right. The highest it has ever been appropriated is \$5.1 million, I believe it was.

Mr. GIBBONS. Alright. I can't recall, maybe one of the panel can help me, whether the Veterans' Administration supported your request? I didn't hear what their testimony was.

Ms. BOONE. I don't think they commented because it is a DOL program. They supported continuation, I believe their statement was.

Mr. GIBBONS. No further questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you. Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just kind of following up on that. Given the fact that HVRP, as we've all heard, is very successful, and I made mention earlier about the recognition that Mr. Borrego has given some of the businesses involved, I'd like to get a comment on why you think there is resistance to adequately funding this program? I realize that the request is for \$10 million, but, historically, it has never been funded at that level, and part of the frustration, and I'm not speaking for anyone except myself, because I can certainly empathize with the challenge that Mr. Borrego and his department have, knowing that they have a real first class program that really makes a difference in homeless veterans' plight and the ability to get them employed and becoming productive members of the community, I'm wondering, why do you think there is resistance to funding this program? In my mind it should be a no-brainer, but I've never seen—

Ms. BOONE. That is mine too. We see it as an investment program because you're putting people back to work and they're going to pay tax dollars. I believe some valid questions need to be asked. Why can't veterans access mainstream programs? Why can't they get help through some of the other mainstream programs that help other dislocated or disadvantaged workers?

Homeless people in general, and particularly veterans, face an enormous amount of barriers that take specialized care, so they need a special program, and I don't think that is often recognized, that all of the barriers homeless people, particularly homeless veterans, have to compete with.

Then you have to think about where the priorities are in the Administration and Congress for homeless veterans. Those are some of those issues. They're hard and the answers are very varied. There has been a resistance. There are only two specific homeless veterans programs funded by the Federal Government: the VA Grant and Per diem Program, and the Department of Labor HVRP program, and then otherwise, community-based providers that we represent, our organizations that we represent, are fighting and are in competition with other homeless providers in their communities. One reason is because there is not enough money, and because veterans are recognized as a Federal problem and they don't need any specialized priority in communities. When they sit down and divide up the money in communities, veterans come out at the bottom in many, many, many cases.

Where there are successful partnerships, and where you have successful programs, like American GI Forum in Texas, are very successful and have worked out very good collaborative partnerships. There are numerous examples where groups have worked out very good collaborative agreements and work well, but that is not consistent and it is very minimal.

Mr. REYES. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Just a comment. I don't have any questions, but as an answer, Sylvestre, to what you are talking about, I don't know that there is an answer, but Linda certainly is close. The success story for homeless veterans all around the country is a real collaborative effort. If you look at anything that has really worked, it is not just an amount of money from the Federal Government that says "go get it done," because of some of these serious problems and varied problems that the veterans have. Even if we wanted to have one-stop shopping, that usually isn't the solution, so it is varied, and, in my opinion, whenever you have the kind of needed approach, it is easy to become a target to not fund it or to cut it. Someone else is going to take care of it. Why don't you have the State do it? It's a Federal program, and so on, and so forth. So, it becomes an easy target, but, nonetheless, the combined approach is the approach that has to be taken. Again, in my opinion, I only learned what I have from all of you and what I've seen work in Texas and up in New York.

Certainly, \$3 million over 2 years is dismal. It is an embarrassment, in my opinion. Mr. Filner makes a terrific suggestion here. I think we have to realistically look at what we're able to get, possibly trying to phase in some money because we'll be able to show

success story after success story once we get this funded in one way or another. So, these next weeks we're going to talk about that.

Finally, I think that there is, whatever the reason happens to be why it is not funded, I think we have a responsibility to get the word out so that it does get funded. I mean, member to member, we have to take this thing to the streets, take it to the Floor over there, just like awareness has increased on cemeteries attention recently, for whatever reasons those are, as one of our witnesses said this morning.

If we are successful in taking it to these other members, I don't know how they can say no. I really don't, but that, to me, is a challenge for the subcommittee, a challenge for the full committee, and, individually, a challenge for those of us who care the most about veterans' needs. I'm not pointing any fingers. But you're absolutely right. You scratch your head and wonder why it is not funded. It is a no-brainer. It's just, I think, not everybody knows how much of a no-brainer it is. I think it is our job to educate them, our members, to educate them, both sides.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Chairman, maybe just one final question for Ms. Boone. What are the National statistics doing on homeless veterans? Are we able to identify the population? I know you say in your testimony 275,000, is it growing, staying even? What do we see in a National trend here?

Ms. BOONE. I would love to know that. We did an National estimate in 1994, and released a report to the Nation in 1994, but since that time there has been no general report or study to really count, so different locations rely on different methods of counting. So, there is no definitive answer. What we're concerned about is the growing number of younger veterans that are entering. The Persian Gulf era, those kind, that are showing up at our providers. Soon we'll be having some data. We're doing a survey of all of our member organizations, so we'll have some data later on this year. It would be very helpful if there was some way to enumerate how many homeless veterans for those Federally funded programs. There is no requirement to do that now.

Mr. GIBBONS. I think it would be very helpful, in light of what the chairman has talked about, in the funding aspect of it, to know where we're going in this Nation with regard to the numbers so that we can project the greater need for improved funding. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you. We've been called to a vote. It is a single vote on a rule. There is about 11 minutes left in that vote, so I'm going to just recess for a moment here. I will be back. I know other members have other places to go, but I've made a commitment to be back. So, we'll thank the third panel, and just have us all take a recess for a few minutes. I should be back in about 10 minutes.

[Recess.]

Mr. QUINN. Allow me to reconvene the subcommittee hearing for panel number four. I apologize for being late, and we're going to have enough time, I'm sure, to get through here and have some discussion if it is necessary.

Panel four, Joy Ilem, from the Disabled American Veterans. Harley, you were here last week for some hearings. You are back again for round two, or three, or four, whatever it takes. Sid and Mr.

Weidman, we appreciate you all being with us this morning. Let us begin. Joy, why don't you start, and we'll work our way across the table.

I need to say at the beginning, as you already know, we'll try to keep our oral presentations to about 5 minutes or so, and then anything that is submitted for the record we will, of course, accept.

STATEMENTS OF JOY ILEM, ASSOCIATE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS; HARLEY THOMAS, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR, PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA; SIDNEY DANIELS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, AND RICHARD F. WEIDMAN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

STATEMENT OF JOY ILEM

Ms. ILEM. Thank you. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee. I thank you for the opportunity to express the views of the Disabled American Veterans on the six bills under consideration today.

H.R. 1484 would increase Federal funding for homeless veterans' initiatives. It is estimated that 35 percent of the total homeless population in America are veterans. We believe there exists a critical need for homeless veterans' initiatives so that these veterans and their families have the opportunity to break the vicious cycle of homelessness.

Consistent with DAV resolution number 248, adopted by our members, we support legislation that would authorize increased funding for Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Projects. Mr. Chairman, we appreciate the subcommittee's serious consideration on this bill.

It is of equal importance to meet the burial needs of the veteran population, now and in the future. H.R. 2040 would provide for a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries, including a proposal to increase the amount of benefits for plot allowances. Our members adopted DAV resolution number 23, which supports legislation to increase both VA burial and plot allowances, to reflect a level at the inflationary impact of the intervening years. The amount payable for burial and plot allowances has remained constant for many years, in spite of inflationary spiral. An increase in the amount of both benefits is appropriate.

The provisions of H.R. 2040 require only an assessment, with a proposal to increase plot allowances, therefore, we request you also consider increasing the amount provided for burial allowance, as well.

The DAV has no official mandate from our membership on the remaining provisions of this bill. However, we do not object to their favorable consideration.

DAV previously voiced concern over the National Cemetery Administration's difficulty in maintaining the appearance of its National cemeteries. Budgetary shortfalls and reduction in personnel have forced the system to often defer preventative maintenance and infrastructure repairs. In the past, some National cemeteries

were not being properly maintained, with reported long-standing deficiencies. Part of NCA's mission is to provide veterans with an honorable final resting place, and to maintain its National cemeteries as National shrines. Veterans should be provided a final resting place that reflects the dignity and respect they deserve, and with appearance equivalent to the finest cemeteries in the world.

An independent study is appropriate to assess one-time repairs needed, and the feasibility of improving appearance of National cemeteries. The highest standard of care and maintenance at our National cemeteries should always be a priority, as well as providing adequate funding to ensure their proper upkeep.

Of equal concern is adequate long-range planning to meet the burial needs of the veteran population well into the future. H.R. 2040 provides that a study be conducted to assess the number of National cemeteries required between the years 2010 and 2030. We agree that studies beyond 2010 are essential to meeting the future burial needs of veterans, however, we are not yet satisfied that NCA is properly prepared to meet its responsibilities in the years preceding 2010, when the veteran interment rate is expected to peak.

We suggest the subcommittee consider an amendment to H.R. 2040, which would require NCA to provide an assessment of the appropriations necessary to establish the number of additional National cemeteries needed up to 2010 to meet the increased burial rate during the peak expected years.

The DAV does not have a mandate from our membership relative to remainder of the bills under consideration today. However, we are not opposed to their passage. H.R. 1476 would require the establishment of a National cemetery in three areas of the United States determined to be in most need of such a cemetery. It is recognized that there is a need for additional National cemeteries across the Nation. We believe this bill is a step in the right direction toward meeting the increased burial needs of the rapidly aging veteran population.

Of an equally pressing nature is the timely completion of the World War II memorial. H.R. 1247 would expedite the establishment of the memorial, and ensure adequate funds for its repair and long-term maintenance. With increasing mortality of World War II veterans, we see the need for expeditious completion of the monument, so that these veterans and their family members can witness the culmination of the Nation's gratitude.

DAV also recognizes the importance of our Nation's selected reservists. H.R. 1603 would provide permanent eligibility for veterans' housing loans to former members of the selected reserve. The current law limits eligibility for such loans. As a matter of fairness to all qualifying former members of the selected reserve, the amendment to delete the delimitating date appears appropriate.

Another important segment of the veteran population that deserves our recognition are Medal of Honor recipients. H.R. 1663 would designate a National memorial in Riverside, CA, to honor recipients of America's highest distinction for military valor. As a country, we acknowledge our everlasting gratitude and respect for these extraordinary individuals by providing this National memo-

rial in recognition of their selfless actions and honorable service to the Nation.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement, and I will be happy to address any questions you or members of the subcommittee may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ilem appears on p. 113.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much. Mr. Weidman.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD F. WEIDMAN

Mr. WEIDMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would ask that my statement be included in its entirety in the record.

Mr. QUINN. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. WEIDMAN. Thank you. I spend my time, my 5 minutes here, focusing specifically on 1484, if I may, sir. We very much favor the other ones, other bills, particularly 2040, and certainly would have no objection to including the intent and some language out of Ms. Brown's bill in markup.

Mr. QUINN. Excuse me for one second. And that was her comment earlier this morning?

Mr. WEIDMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. QUINN. Okay, thank you.

Mr. WEIDMAN. In regard to 1484, I think you succinctly stated it very well, Mr. Chairman, when you said that full funding for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program should be a no-brainer. It is astonishing to me that folks don't understand moving people from the welfare dole to the tax roles. It is just that simple. This is really an investment where more comes back to the treasury in the first year alone in the way of taxes than is laid out to help each individual obtain and sustain meaningful employment.

Furthermore, it is an investment that yields a successful outcome to the hundreds of millions of dollars that we put into substance abuse outreach programs, the mental health programs, etc., to get people right within 10 feet of the dock, and to not put the resources into helping them reach that dock and become part of gainful American society again, simply flies in the face of reason and fiscal prudence, never mind the human terms of people drowning within sight of the shore.

I must say that before the first of the year, we met, we, meaning the veterans' services organizations, with Deputy Secretary Higgins, and she assured us that the Administration would ask for the full \$10 million in the President's budget. For then this President to send both the VA and DOL up here today and request for authorization for this program for only \$5 million is nothing short of shameful. In that meeting, the way in which some of us in the veterans' organizations put it to Ms. Huggins was, if the President asks for full funding and the Congress does not provide it, then shame upon the Congress. But, if the President doesn't ask for full funding, then shame on this President and all of the people connected to him and his Administration. Frankly, to only request \$5 million is really shameful.

Why is it needed? That is a question that Mr. Porter asked, Mr. John Edward Porter, and the other members of the Subcommittee on Appropriations. The answer to that is really very simple, and very well articulated by Mr. Boone earlier this morning. There is

just no concern for veterans among JTPA actual service providers. Incidentally in New York and in Erie County, which I've worked very closely, with Brenda and other folks there, but it is not on their radar screen. It is not a question on the test to which they have to study. Therefore, they are not served. I would point out that the \$2.3 billion in Title III and Title IIa of the Job Training Partnership Act is \$2,300 million, and they managed to serve fewer homeless veterans than they \$3 million chump change in HVRP. That is a shameful record. That smacks to me of a pattern of discrimination that is clear and unmistakable, and something that really has to be addressed in a different way. Since the Labor and Education Committee clearly is not committed to doing so, I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that it then becomes incumbent to create a league of our own where the needs of veterans of this country, the men and women who have earned the right to have the opportunity to earn their own way within this society, are met properly. So, it makes sense on an investment basis. It comes right back within the same fiscal year. It yields effectiveness in terms of government performance and results. Of the hundreds of millions of dollars that have helped those people clean and dry and to the point where they are job ready, and, last but not least, if you just compare \$50 million to \$2,300 millions of dollars that one finds in the overall JTPA titles which are virtually inaccessible to homeless veterans, it makes sense just on a comparative basis.

So, we would urge you to look at that. For the future and not too far down the line, Mr. Chairman, we would also urge you to take up consideration of H.R. 364, which is a veterans' bill of rights for services and add some additional questions in there that have some teeth. This piece of legislation is largely modeled on a State statute in the State of New York, the Veterans' Bill of Rights for Employment and Training and Supportive Services, which, unfortunately, when we got it passed through the New York State Legislature, did not have any sanction in it and any accountability mechanisms, and we ask that those be added in the 364, and we move ahead and start holding those big "mainstream" programs accountable for whether or not they serve veterans and their families.

I see the orange light is on. I thank you very much for your leadership on this and so many other issues, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for inviting our views today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weidman appears on p. 118.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much. I do have a question, but I think I'll hold until all of the panelists are finished.

Mr. Daniels.

STATEMENT OF SIDNEY DANIELS

Mr. DANIELS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, with respect to the bills being considered by the subcommittee this morning.

Mr. Chairman, we support each of the six bills under consideration. First, I would like to offer comments on H.R. 1476, The National Cemetery Act of 1999.

We strongly support this legislation and believe it represents a measured response to the increased burial demands that will be

placed on the veterans' cemeteries over the next several years. As the veteran population ages, the VFW believes that expansion of the VA cemetery system is crucial to meeting the inevitable increased burial demands.

We believe that H.R. 1476 is a giant step in the right direction, and we urge that the measure be favorably reported out of subcommittee.

With respect to H.R. 1247, the VFW firmly supports enactment of H.R. 1247, the World War II Memorial Completion Act, which, if enacted, would primarily expand the fundraising authority of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

We are aware that there is some concern that the special borrowing authority contained in H.R. 1247 could have an adverse effect on overall fundraising efforts. We are satisfied, however, that the borrowing authority expressed in H.R. 1247 is consistent with sound business principles and urge passage of this measure in its entirety.

We strongly support H.R. 1484, which would authorize appropriations for Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Projects, under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. This measure calls for \$50 million appropriations for each of the next 5 fiscal years.

Mr. Chairman, we did not offer formal comments on H.R. 2040, but after reviewing that measure, we, nevertheless, support the measure in its entirety and urge its passage. This concludes my remarks.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Daniels appears on p. 122.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you very much. Mr. Thomas.

STATEMENT OF HARLEY THOMAS

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America, it is my pleasure to be here to make comments on the pending legislation. On a personal note, I would also like to thank you for returning. I even missed you. (Laughter.)

H.R. 1247, the World War II Memorial Completion Act. On behalf of more than 12,245,000 men and women that served during World War II, including more than 400,000 that gave the ultimate sacrifice, PVA believes that completion of the World War II Memorial, authorized by Congress under Public Law 103-32, is long overdue. Sadly, far too many World War II veterans will have passed long before completion of the memorial.

PVA fully supports the provisions in H.R. 1247 which would allow for special borrowing authority to assure that groundbreaking, construction, and dedication of the World War II Memorial are completed on a timely basis. Additionally, PVA fully supports provisions to allow for the commission to solicit and receive contributions to the memorial fund.

The National Cemetery Act of 1999, H.R. 1476. PVA fully supports the enactment of H.R. 1476, however, we feel the legislation falls far short of that which will be needed to meet the burial demands that will be placed on the National Cemetery Administration over the next 10 years. Conservative estimates indicate that burial demands will peak at approximately 107,000 in 2008. However, NCA has no strategic plan in place beyond Fiscal Year 2000. The demand for burial space comes at a time when space is at a

premium. There are 115 National cemeteries that fall under the jurisdiction of the NCA. Twenty-two are closed to new burials, and 36 are open only to cremated remains. Although the three new cemeteries that will be created under this legislation will help, there are no new plans for new cemeteries in high population areas, such as Atlanta, Miami, and Sacramento.

Since the Congressionally mandated study initiated in 1987, only 6 of the 10 areas identified have initiated construction of new cemeteries. PVA believes this chronic resource shortfall must be addressed and positive action taken with utmost urgency.

The Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999, H.R. 2040. The passage of this legislation may provide the urgent relief necessary for the NCA to provide adequate resources to our Nation's veterans. PVA supports the language in H.R. 2040.

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, H.R. 1484. PVA is in full support of amending Title 42 of the United States Code, adding the \$50 million for each Fiscal Years 2000 through 2004. We would like to thank Mr. Filner for his dedication and service to the veterans' issues.

I agree with Mr. Borrego. He has a wonderful program going on. I personally had the opportunity to participate in the Homeless Veterans Job Fair in the Denver area for several years, and it is a very worthwhile program.

Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999, H.R. 1603. PVA has no opposition to the amendment affecting the permanent eligibility for housing loans for former members of the selected reserve.

Lastly, the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act, H.R. 1663. PVA supports the designation of a National Medal of Honor Memorial to be set aside at the Riverside, California National Cemetery. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Thomas appears on p. 124.]

Mr. QUINN. Thank you all very much. This sort of picks up the last conversation before we were interrupted with the vote, for me.

Rick, because you used your time to talk about it, I had too long of an answer to Mr. Reyes' question, but, nonetheless, something that has been on my mind. So, we hear the testimony and we offer some solutions, and we leave the room today agreeing, and we come back tomorrow morning for another markup here in the subcommittee at 10:00. In the meantime, assuming we agree with everything you just said, Sylvestre's question is the right one, and I don't know if my answer was the right one, so I'm going to ask all of you as to what we may do as far as suggestions.

What's next? Is it member to member? Is it the subcommittee and full committee taking this information to the full body across the street and moving it over to the Senate and down Pennsylvania Avenue? Is that what is next? Because we can only get so much more of the facts.

Mr. WEIDMAN. Let me suggest several things, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. QUINN. Yes, you may.

Mr. WEIDMAN. The first thing is, is a stumbling block. The Administration created this havoc when 3 years ago it summarily ze-

roed out HVRP. Just zeroed it out, and in a very hectic session in appropriations, they thought they were adding it back it, and it wasn't there. So, some of the members thought it had been added back it, and it had not been, in one of those sessions at 3:30 in the morning when you are pulling your third overnighiter in a row, at any age, whether in college, or, for many of us, far-post college, things get a little fuzzy. So, the Administration didn't fight for it. They put in a pro forma recommendation 2 years ago for \$2.5 million and didn't help us, and when I say us, I'm talking about the veterans' community led by Linda Boone and the National Coalition for Homeless Vets, and with much help from many people on this committee, yourself included, were able to get it restored to \$3 million.

The following year, the Administration came back and asked for \$2.5 million again, which was nothing short of a failure of leadership on the part of the White House OMB and Labor. This year they finally asked for \$5 million after the session I described to you earlier, Mr. Chairman, but even that—the question is why.

Now, the biggest problem is the restoration has come on the House side out of Mr. Porter's committee. In the hiatus, Senator Specter, who is Chairman of the Labor HHS Committee on the Senate side, tried to put it back in the year it was zeroed out, and finally lost out in conference, and put it in higher year before last, and this year he went along with it to remain in a pre-cut deal, if you will.

So, the real key is on the House side. My suggestion to Mr. Reyes—I got so upset when I saw that testimony, I walked out for a minute, and Mr. Reyes and I had one of those remarkable men's room conversations about strategy from this point hence, and suggested that he go on his side of the aisle, and grab Al Borrego and other members of the Democratic Caucus, and go down and see Jacob Lui, and say, "this is wrong and this better come in at full funding, and why aren't you guys backing this program?" Which part of reinvention of government don't you understand? Which part of welfare to work extended to the veterans' community don't you understand, because we're talking about people who don't even qualify for welfare, and many who do, who are veterans, who won't apply for welfare because they're too embarrassed, and so they would rather live on the street.

The point is that this ought to be—that is one thing. The second thing is that within the Republican Caucus, I might suggest, Mr. Chairman, is that you could play this one off three ways. I would play it all three.

Secondly, within the Republican Caucus, is to get all of your colleagues and other folks who you can educate, to sign a letter to Mr. Porter requesting the full \$10 million. When they ask where is the offset? That is simple. Out of IIa in Title III, and I would suggest out of Title III, because there is money in New York State from Fiscal Year 1996 still churning around inside that system. All over the country. They don't spend it all. They claim they do, but they don't spend it all. They obligate it, but they don't really spend it, however.

Last but not least is a bipartisan open letter to the leadership, both Democrats and Republicans, signed by folks on both sides of

the aisle, just saying, "which part of getting people off of the welfare dole and onto the tax roles don't you understand?" This is a program that makes sense every single way you look at it. How can you be against people who want to overcome their barriers and work and be gainful members helping to grow the domestic economy? It just doesn't make any sense to not do it.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you. I think you already know, everybody should, if not, we'll say it again, that Mr. Filner and I are prepared to do either side of the aisle and both sides of the aisle, as you suggest in the three options you offer this morning. We always have done it, and I can say for Bob and I, each on our own and then together, and I asked the staff the question of who our contact is at the White House for these kinds of issues. It is likely that maybe they ought to be sitting at the table you are at this morning, rather than you who are our friends who have said what we want to hear, so my inclination will be to talk to Mr. Filner when we finish up here this afternoon, and I will make a request along with him to find out who to ask some of those same questions, and the people that can answer them.

Mr. WEIDMAN. Thank you.

Mr. QUINN. Either way. Even if it is bad news, I would rather know it, because then we can go out and find out how to overcome it. But, in the meantime, in the absence of any discussion, we don't have an adequate answer for Sylvestre's question. I don't, and we need one. So, thank you. We'll proceed along those lines and work both sides if we can, all sides, I guess, to try to get some solution to this. We appreciate your input on all levels, all of you. I think we're going to adjourned. Thanks.

[Whereupon, at 12:45 p.m. the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

1

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1247

To expand the fund raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II memorial in the District of Columbia and to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 24, 1999

Mr. STUMP (for himself and Mr. EVANS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To expand the fund raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II memorial in the District of Columbia and to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "World War II Memo-
5 rial Completion Act".

1 **SEC. 2. FUND RAISING BY AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS**

2 **COMMISSION FOR WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL.**

3 (a) **CODIFICATION OF EXISTING AUTHORITY; EX-**
4 **PANSION OF AUTHORITY.**—(1) Chapter 21 of title 36,
5 United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the
6 following new section:

7 **“§ 2113. World War II memorial in the District of Co-**
8 **lumbia**

9 “(a) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

10 “(1) The term ‘World War II memorial’ means
11 the memorial authorized by Public Law 103–32
12 (107 Stat. 90) to be established by the American
13 Battle Monuments Commission on Federal land in
14 the District of Columbia or its environs to honor
15 members of the Armed Forces who served in World
16 War II and to commemorate the participation of the
17 United States in that war.

18 “(2) The term ‘Commission’ means the Amer-
19 ican Battle Monuments Commission.

20 “(3) The term ‘memorial fund’ means the fund
21 created by subsection (c).

22 “(b) **SOLICITATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBU-**
23 **TIONS.**—Consistent with the authority of the Commission
24 under section 2103(e) of this title, the Commission shall
25 solicit and accept contributions for the World War II me-
26 morial.

1 “(c) CREATION OF MEMORIAL FUND.—(1) There is
2 hereby created in the Treasury a fund for the World War
3 II memorial, which shall consist of the following:

4 “(A) Amounts deposited, and interest and pro-
5 ceeds credited, under paragraph (2).

6 “(B) Obligations obtained under paragraph (3).

7 “(C) The amount of surcharges paid to the
8 Commission for the World War II memorial under
9 the World War II 50th Anniversary Commemorative
10 Coins Act.

11 “(D) Amounts borrowed using the authority
12 provided under subsection (e).

13 “(E) Any funds received by the Commission
14 under section 2103(l) of this title in exchange for
15 use of, or the right to use, any mark, copyright or
16 patent.

17 “(2) The Chairman of the Commission shall deposit
18 in the memorial fund the amounts accepted as contribu-
19 tions under subsection (b). The Secretary of the Treasury
20 shall credit to the memorial fund the interest on, and the
21 proceeds from sale or redemption of, obligations held in
22 the memorial fund.

23 “(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall invest any
24 portion of the memorial fund that, as determined by the
25 Chairman of the Commission, is not required to meet cur-

1 rent expenses. Each investment shall be made in an inter-
2 est bearing obligation of the United States or an obligation
3 guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United
4 States that, as determined by the Chairman of the Com-
5 mission, has a maturity suitable for the memorial fund.

6 “(d) USE OF MEMORIAL FUND.—The memorial fund
7 shall be available to the Commission for—

8 “(1) the expenses of establishing the World
9 War II memorial, including the maintenance and
10 preservation amount provided for in section 8(b) of
11 the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1008(b));

12 “(2) such other expenses, other than routine
13 maintenance, with respect to the World War II me-
14 morial as the Commission considers warranted; and

15 “(3) to secure, obtain, register, enforce, protect,
16 and license any mark, copyright or patent that is
17 owned by, assigned to, or licensed to the Commission
18 under section 2103(l) of this title to aid or facilitate
19 the construction of the World War II memorial.

20 “(e) SPECIAL BORROWING AUTHORITY.—(1) To as-
21 sure that groundbreaking, construction, and dedication of
22 the World War II memorial are completed on a timely
23 basis, the Commission may borrow money from the Treas-
24 ury of the United States in such amounts as the Commis-
25 sion considers necessary, but not to exceed a total of

1 \$65,000,000. Borrowed amounts shall bear interest at a
2 rate determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, taking
3 into consideration the average market yield on outstanding
4 marketable obligations of the United States of comparable
5 maturities during the month preceding the month in which
6 the obligations of the Commission are issued. The interest
7 payments on such obligations may be deferred with the
8 approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, but any interest
9 payment so deferred shall also bear interest.

10 “(2) The borrowing of money by the Commission
11 under paragraph (1) shall be subject to such maturities,
12 terms, and conditions as may be agreed upon by the Com-
13 mission and the Secretary of the Treasury, except that
14 the maturities may not exceed 20 years and such bor-
15 rowings may be redeemable at the option of the Commis-
16 sion before maturity.

17 “(3) The obligations of the Commission shall be
18 issued in amounts and at prices approved by the Secretary
19 of the Treasury. The authority of the Commission to issue
20 obligations under this subsection shall remain available
21 without fiscal year limitation. The Secretary of the Treas-
22 ury shall purchase any obligations of the Commission to
23 be issued under this subsection, and for such purpose the
24 Secretary of the Treasury may use as a public debt trans-
25 action of the United States the proceeds from the sale of

1 any securities issued under chapter 31 of title 31. The
2 purposes for which securities may be issued under such
3 chapter are extended to include any purchase of the Com-
4 mission's obligations under this subsection.

5 “(4) Repayment of the interest and principal on any
6 funds borrowed by the Commission under paragraph (1)
7 shall be made from amounts in the memorial fund. The
8 Commission may not use for such purpose any funds ap-
9 propriated for any other activities of the Commission.

10 “(f) TREATMENT OF BORROWING AUTHORITY.—In
11 determining whether the Commission has sufficient funds
12 to complete construction of the World War II memorial,
13 as required by section 8 of the Commemorative Works Act
14 (40 U.S.C. 1008), the Secretary of the Interior shall con-
15 sider the funds that the Commission may borrow from the
16 Treasury under subsection (e) as funds available to com-
17 plete construction of the memorial, whether or not the
18 Commission has actually exercised the authority to borrow
19 such funds.

20 “(g) VOLUNTARY SERVICES.—(1) Notwithstanding
21 section 1342 of title 31, the Commission may accept from
22 any person voluntary services to be provided in further-
23 ance of the fund-raising activities of the Commission relat-
24 ing to the World War II memorial.

1 “(2) A person providing voluntary services under this
2 subsection shall be considered to be a Federal employee
3 for purposes of chapter 81 of title 5, relating to compensa-
4 tion for work-related injuries, and chapter 171 of title 28,
5 relating to tort claims. A volunteer who is not otherwise
6 employed by the Federal Government shall not be consid-
7 ered to be a Federal employee for any other purpose by
8 reason of the provision of such voluntary service, except
9 that any volunteers given responsibility for the handling
10 of funds or the carrying out of a Federal function are sub-
11 ject to the conflict of interest laws contained in chapter
12 11 of title 18, and the administrative standards of conduct
13 contained in part 2635 of title 5, Code of Federal Regula-
14 tions.

15 “(3) The Commission may provide for reimbursement
16 of incidental expenses which are incurred by a person pro-
17 viding voluntary services under this subsection. The Com-
18 mission shall determine which expenses are eligible for re-
19 imbursement under this paragraph.

20 “(4) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to
21 require Federal employees to work without compensation
22 or to allow the use of volunteer services to displace or re-
23 place Federal employees.

24 “(h) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN CONTRACTS.—A con-
25 tract entered into by the Commission for the design or

1 construction of the World War II memorial is not funding
2 agreement as that term is defined in section 201 of title
3 35.

4 “(i) EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH ME-
5 MORIAL.—Notwithstanding section 10 of the Commemora-
6 tive Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1010), the legislative author-
7 ization for the construction of the World War II memorial
8 contained in Public Law 103–32 (107 Stat. 90) shall not
9 expire until December 31, 2005.”.

10 (2) The table of sections at the beginning of such
11 chapter is amended by adding at the end the following
12 new item:

“2113. World War II memorial in the District of Columbia.”.

13 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Public Law 103–
14 32 (107 Stat. 90) is amended by striking sections 3, 4,
15 and 5.

16 (c) EFFECT OF REPEAL OF CURRENT MEMORIAL
17 FUND.—Upon the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
18 of the Treasury shall transfer amounts in the fund created
19 by section 4(a) of Public Law 103–32 (107 Stat. 91) to
20 the fund created by section 2113 of title 36, United States
21 Code, as added by subsection (a).

1 **SEC. 3. GENERAL AUTHORITY OF AMERICAN BATTLE**
2 **MONUMENTS COMMISSION TO SOLICIT AND**
3 **RECEIVE CONTRIBUTIONS.**

4 Subsection (e) of section 2103 of title 36, United
5 States Code, is amended to read as follows:

6 “(e) SOLICITATION AND RECEIPT OF CONTRIBU-
7 TIONS.—(1) The Commission may solicit and receive
8 funds and in-kind donations and gifts from any State, mu-
9 nicipal, or private source to carry out the purposes of this
10 chapter. The Commission shall deposit such funds in a
11 separate account in the Treasury. Funds from this ac-
12 count shall be disbursed upon vouchers approved by the
13 Chairman of the Commission as well as by a Federal offi-
14 cial authorized to sign payment vouchers.

15 “(2) The Commission shall establish written guide-
16 lines setting forth the criteria to be used in determining
17 whether the acceptance of funds and in-kind donations
18 and gifts under paragraph (1) would—

19 “(A) reflect unfavorably on the ability of the
20 Commission, or any employee of the Commission, to
21 carry out the responsibilities or official duties of the
22 Commission in a fair and objective manner; or

23 “(B) compromise the integrity or the appear-
24 ance of the integrity of the programs of the Commis-
25 sion or any official involved in those programs.”.

1 **SEC. 4. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND RELATED ITEMS.**

2 Section 2103 of title 36, United States Code, is
3 amended by adding at the end the following new sub-
4 section:

5 “(1) INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND RELATED
6 ITEMS.—(1) The Commission may—

7 “(A) adopt, use, register, and license trade-
8 marks, service marks, and other marks;

9 “(B) obtain, use, register, and license the use
10 of copyrights consistent with section 105 of title 17;

11 “(C) obtain, use, and license patents; and

12 “(D) accept gifts of marks, copyrights, patents
13 and licenses for use by the Commission.

14 “(2) The Commission may grant exclusive and non-
15 exclusive licenses in connection with any mark, copyright,
16 patent, or license for the use of such mark, copyright or
17 patent, except to extent the grant of such license by the
18 Commission would be contrary to any contract or license
19 by which the use of such mark, copyright or patent was
20 obtained.

21 “(3) The Commission may enforce any mark, copy-
22 right, or patent by an action in the district courts under
23 any law providing for the protection of such marks, copy-
24 rights, or patents.

25 “(4) The Attorney General shall furnish the Commis-
26 sion with such legal representation as the Commission

1 may require under paragraph (3). The Secretary of De-
2 fense shall provide representation for the Commission in
3 administrative proceedings before the Patent and Trade-
4 mark Office and Copyright Office.

5 “(5) Section 203 of title 17 shall not apply to any
6 copyright transferred in any manner to the Commission.”.

○

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1476

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish additional national cemeteries for veterans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 1999

Mr. EVANS (for himself, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mr. COSTELLO, Ms. DANNER, Mrs. MEEK of Florida, Mr. BISHOP, Mr. DOYLE, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. STRICKLAND, Mrs. KELLY, and Mr. LIPINSKI) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish additional national cemeteries for veterans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "National Cemetery Act
5 of 1999".

6 **SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
8 shall establish, in accordance with chapter 24 of title 38,
9 United States Code, a national cemetery in each of the

1 three areas in the United States that the Secretary deter-
2 mines to be most in need of such a cemetery to serve the
3 needs of veterans and their families.

4 (b) REPORTS.—

5 (1) INITIAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—

6 Not later than the date that is 120 days after the
7 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
8 Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report
9 on the establishment of the national cemeteries
10 under subsection (a). The report shall set forth the
11 three areas identified by the Secretary for such es-
12 tablishment, a schedule for such establishment, and
13 an estimate of the costs associated with such estab-
14 lishment.

15 (2) UPDATES TO INITIAL REPORT.—Not later
16 than one year after the date on which the report de-
17 scribed in paragraph (1) is submitted to Congress,
18 and annually thereafter until the establishment of
19 the national cemeteries under subsection (a) is com-
20 plete, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a re-
21 port that updates the information included in the re-
22 port described in paragraph (1).

○

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1484

To authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 1999

Mr. FILNER introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Banking and Financial Services

A BILL

To authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR**
4 **HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION**
5 **PROJECTS.**

6 Section 738(e)(1) of the Stewart B. McKinney Home-
7 less Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11448(e)(1)) is amended
8 by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

2

1 “(H) \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2000
2 through 2004.”.

○

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1603

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans housing loans.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 28, 1999

Mr. EVANS (for himself and Mr. STUMP) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans housing loans.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Selected Reserve Hous-
5 ing Loan Fairness Act of 1999".

6 **SEC. 2. PERMANENT ELIGIBILITY FOR HOUSING LOANS**

7 **FOR FORMER MEMBERS OF THE SELECTED**
8 **RESERVE.**

9 Section 3702(a)(2)(E) of title 38, United States
10 Code, is amended by striking out "For the period begin-

2

1 ning on October 28, 1992, and ending on September 30,
2 2003, each veteran” and inserting in lieu thereof “Each
3 veteran”.

○

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1663

To designate as a national memorial the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 4, 1999

Mr. CALVERT (for himself, Mr. STUMP, Mrs. BONO, Mr. BROWN of California, Mr. LEWIS of California, Mr. PACKARD, Mr. DREIER, Mr. BOEHLERT, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. EVANS, Mr. CUNNINGHAM, Mr. COX, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. BILBRAY, Mr. MCKEON, Mr. ROYCE, Mr. THOMAS, Mr. GARY MILLER of California, Mr. DIXON, Mr. MATSUI, Ms. LEE, Mr. RADANOVICH, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. KUYKENDALL, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. HORN, Mr. POMBO, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. ROGAN, Mr. GALLEGLY, Mr. FILNER, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. CONDIT, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. WAXMAN, Ms. SANCHEZ, Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. WATERS, Mr. FARR of California, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. DOOLEY of California, Mr. STARK, Ms. WOOLSEY, Ms. PELOSI, Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Mr. OSE, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. BUYER, Mr. HERGER, Mr. DOYLE, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. SNYDER, Ms. MCKINNEY, Mr. GIBBONS, Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota, Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma, Mr. QUINN, Mr. BAKER, Mr. HANSEN, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. REYES, and Mr. UNDERWOOD) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To designate as a national memorial the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “National Medal of
5 Honor Memorial Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR**
7 **MEMORIAL.**

8 The memorial being constructed at the Riverside Na-
9 tional Cemetery in Riverside, California, to honor those
10 who have received the Medal of Honor for gallantry and
11 intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call
12 of duty, is hereby designated as a national memorial to
13 be known as the “National Medal of Honor Memorial”.

○

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2040

To provide for a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 8, 1999

Mr. STUMP (for himself, Mr. EVANS, Mr. QUINN, Mr. FILNER, Mr. EVERETT, Ms. BROWN of Florida, and Mr. MCKEON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To provide for a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Cemeteries
5 Assessment Act of 1999".

6 **SEC. 2. INDEPENDENT STUDY ON IMPROVEMENTS TO VET-**
7 **ERANS' CEMETERIES.**

8 (a) STUDY.—By not later than 180 days after the
9 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Vet-
10 erans Affairs shall enter into a contract with one or more

1 a proposal to increase the amount of the benefit for
2 plot allowances under section 2303(b) of such title,
3 to better serve veterans and their families.

4 (2) In presenting the assessment of additional na-
5 tional cemeteries required under paragraph (1)(C), the re-
6 port shall identify by five-year period, beginning with 2010
7 and ending with 2030, the following:

8 (A) The number of additional national ceme-
9 teries required during each five-year period.

10 (B) With respect to each five-year period, the
11 areas in the United States with the greatest con-
12 centration of veterans whose needs are not served by
13 national cemeteries or State veterans' cemeteries.

14 (c) REPORT.—(1) By not later than one year after
15 the date that a qualified organization enters into a con-
16 tract under subsection (a), the organization shall submit
17 to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs a report detailing the
18 results of the study conducted and conclusions of the orga-
19 nization with respect to such results.

20 (2) By not later than 120 days after the date a report
21 is submitted under paragraph (1), the Secretary of Vet-
22 erans Affairs shall transmit to the Committees on Vet-
23 erans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the

- 1 Senate a copy of such report, together with any comments
- 2 on the report that the Secretary determines appropriate.

○

1 qualified organizations to conduct a study of national
2 cemeteries described in subsection (b). For purposes of
3 this section, an entity of Federal, State, or local govern-
4 ment is not a qualified organization.

5 (b) MATTERS STUDIED.—(1) The study conducted
6 pursuant to the contract entered into under subsection (a)
7 shall include an assessment of each of the following:

8 (A) The one-time repairs required at each na-
9 tional cemetery under the jurisdiction of the Na-
10 tional Cemetery Administration of the Department
11 of Veterans Affairs, to ensure a dignified and re-
12 spectful setting appropriate to such cemetery, taking
13 into account the diversity of age, climate, and burial
14 options at individual national cemeteries.

15 (B) The feasibility of making standards of ap-
16 pearance of such national cemeteries commensurate
17 with standards of appearance of the finest ceme-
18 teries in the world.

19 (C) The number of additional national ceme-
20 teries that will be required for the interment and
21 memorialization in such cemeteries of individuals
22 qualified under chapter 24 of title 38, United States
23 Code, who die after 2010.

24 (D) Improvements to burial benefits under
25 chapter 23 of title 38, United States Code, including

**STATEMENT OF
CONGRESSWOMAN CORRINE BROWN
BEFORE THE
HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
JUNE 16, 1999**

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of H.R. 1628 -- my bill that would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national veterans cemetery in the Miami, Florida, metropolitan area. The bill also would require the Secretary to report to Congress on a construction schedule and provide a cost estimate.

I am distressed that VA continues to ignore the veterans cemetery needs of South Florida. In both 1987 and 1994, the Miami area was designated by congressionally mandated reports as one of the top geographic areas in the United States in need of veterans burial space. Yet, as late as August 1998, VA's strategic planning indicated nothing more than a willingness to continue evaluating the needs of nearly 800,000 veterans in the greater South Florida service area. Mr. Chairman, that is over 54 percent of the estimated state veteran population and 3.3 percent of the total U.S. veteran population.

Last month my Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee held a hearing on veterans cemeteries. Ms. Robin Higgins, Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs testified that each month the remains of a number of deceased veterans make the five-hour trip from South Florida to the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell. As she reported, all too often those remains are unaccompanied by any family members because of the long distance. I agree with Ms. Higgins' conclusion, that "we must bury these veterans with the honor they deserve, close enough to their homes and their families so that they will not be forgotten."

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I also cosponsored H.R. 1476, the "National Cemeteries Act of 1999", that would require VA to establish three new national cemeteries. Each to be built in areas of the country most in need of veterans cemetery space.

I am confident that Florida's veterans would get a new cemetery under this bill. I am just disappointed that Congress has to propose such legislation. An initiative like this should be coming from VA in light of the staggering projected needs for veterans burial space over the next twenty years.

Further, Mr. Chairman, I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999", introduced last week by Chairman Stump.

That bill would require an independent study to assess, among other things, the number of additional national cemeteries needed for veterans who die after 2010. Such a study would better identify the critical needs of not only the whole State of Florida, but the entire Nation. Throughout America, Mr. Chairman, 90 percent of eligible veterans are not buried in a state or national veterans cemetery. That bears repeating. Only 90 percent of eligible veterans are not buried in a state or national veterans cemetery.

Another important matter required to be studied by H.R. 2040 would be improvements to VA burial benefits to better serve veterans and their families. The legislation specifically mandates consideration of a proposal to increase the amount of the plot allowance benefit.

The plot allowance, when paid to a state veterans cemetery, helps defray the state's operating costs of those burial grounds. At our recent Subcommittee hearing on veterans cemeteries, veterans organizations and State Directors of Veterans Affairs testified it is their concern for high operating cost obligations that keeps many states from seeking a VA grant to build and equip a state veterans cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, I must tell you that I am appalled that the fiscal year 2000 performance plan program objective of the National Cemetery Administration is to try to provide only 80 percent of America's veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence.

A goal, which does not provide 20 percent of America's veterans with a burial option within a reasonable distance of their residence, is not acceptable to me nor should it be to this Congress.

Yesterday I introduced a House Resolution that would reaffirm the Nation's commitment to provide reasonable access to burial in a veterans cemetery to the men and women who have honorably served this country in the Armed Forces.

My Resolution would call on the Department of Veterans Affairs, vested with the responsibility of providing a final resting place for America's heroes, to commence without delay the planning for the construction of new national

cemeteries and other activities to provide America's veterans reasonable access to burial in a veterans cemetery.

I ask that this Subcommittee consider, as an amendment to H.R. 2040, language that would embody the intent of my Resolution.

Standing on the threshold of a new century as we are, it is our obligation as Members of the 106th Congress to again affirm America's solemn commitment to her veterans -- past, present, and future -- that they and their families will be provided an appropriate resting place of honor, and that the Department of Veterans Affairs will fully carry out its responsibilities to that end.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MIKE DOYLE (PA-18)**Subcommittee on Benefits of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Hearing on Various National Cemetery Legislative Initiatives**

June 16, 1999

Thank you Chairman Quinn and Ranking Member Filner for extending the opportunity to members of the House to testify before the Subcommittee today in regards to legislation that has been introduced that directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in various regions of the country.

Considering the Subcommittee's ambitious schedule this morning, I am particularly appreciative to be able to add my voice to this important and comprehensive discussion on matters concerning the Department of Veterans' Affairs National Cemetery Administration. As many members of the Subcommittee are already aware, I am supportive of the numerous initiatives that are before you today. I am a cosponsor of Chairman Stump's measure H.R. 2040, the Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act, and Ranking Member Evans' bill H.R. 1476, the National Cemetery Act, as well as Representative Calvert's bill H.R. 1663 which deals with the Riverside California National Cemetery. It is heartening to see an increased amount of attention paid to these issues and again I want to reiterate my thanks for accommodating those of us who care very strongly about these matters.

Recently, I introduced H.R. 1973 which directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to build a national cemetery in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. I am pleased to report that my bill has already garnered the support of the entire Pennsylvania delegation and that of Ranking Member Evans. Before I begin the body of my remarks on this bill I ask unanimous consent to have numerous letters of support from prominent western Pennsylvania affiliated veterans service organizations be included along with my statement as part of the record. To date, I have received letters of support for H.R. 1973 from The American Legion-Department of Pennsylvania, AMVETS-Pennsylvania State Headquarters, Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars-Department of Pennsylvania, The Disabled American Veterans-Regional Office, and The Vietnam Veterans of America-Pennsylvania State Council.

Just as with all VA services and benefits, the demands placed on the National Cemetery Administration are overwhelming. Clearly, adequate funding levels and improved strategic planning would greatly improve the integrity of many VA programs, including the National Cemetery Administration. Given the budgetary constraints imposed by years of flat-funded appropriations, I recognize the efforts that are being made in relation to the new cemeteries that are slated to be opened later this year in Chicago, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Saratoga, and Cleveland. The overwhelming need for a national cemetery in western Pennsylvania however, continues to go unmet. This fact is quite frustrating considering the demographics of this area and the long-standing documented recommendations for construction by the National Cemetery Administration.

The western Pennsylvania region is the second oldest population in the nation which includes a disproportionately large number of veterans. VISN 4, which includes the entire Commonwealth, is the fourth largest in the country and comprises 1.6 million veterans. It has been projected that by 2005, the overall number of veterans age 75 and older will increase by 37% (nearly 90,000) from 244,000 to 334,000. I have serious concerns about many VA health care related issues that will be impacted by this demographic imperative, but I also have ever increasing concern about the growing need for a national cemetery in this area. Given these factors, I am sure members of the Subcommittee can understand my frustration with the rate at which national cemeteries are being constructed.

Western Pennsylvania has been recognized as meriting a national cemetery since 1987 and recent reports from the Department of Veterans' Affairs indicate that the Pittsburgh metropolitan area continues to be one of the top seven locales that have been identified as being in the greatest need of a national cemetery. I do want to mention that Pennsylvania is fortunate to have national cemeteries located in Annville and Philadelphia, but both face serious challenges. The 168 acres that are currently developed at the Annville cemetery are 75% filled and the Philadelphia cemetery, which is only 13 acres in size, has no space for full casket burials and can only accept cremated remains.

Just as we should do all we can to improve the quality of life for our nation's veterans, we should also afford their loved ones the ability to lay them to rest in an appropriate and respectable manner. In order for the families of the three rivers region of Pennsylvania to be afforded this most basic of courtesies, the Department's efforts must be accelerated.

It is my hope that today's Subcommittee hearing, in concert with the previous efforts by the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, will facilitate more timely completion and expanded construction of veterans' national cemeteries.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.



Gary L. Reph
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AMVETS

American Veterans
STATE HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Building 3-97
Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003-5002



TELEPHONE: (717) 865-9982
TOLL FREE: 1-800-AMVET06
FAX: (717) 865-9440

June 11, 1999

Congressman Mike Doyle
133 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20516

Dear Representative Doyle;

The AMVETS of Pennsylvania along with other veteran organizations commend you on your sponsorship of H.R. 1973. This legislation is very much need. And as we move into the Millenium we will see more and more veterans dying and in need of a final resting place. The Western part of Pennsylvania has been in need for many years and we within the AMVETS feel its time something was done. We support you and your fellow Legislator is passing such a bill. If we in AMVETS can be of any further assistance in the future, do not hesitate to give me a call.

Sincerely Yours,

Gary L. Reph
Executive Director



*Vietnam Veterans of America,
Pennsylvania State Council, Inc.*



June 11, 1999

The Honorable Mike Doyle
U.S. House of Representatives
133 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

As the Legislative Coordinator of the Vietnam Veterans of America Inc., Pennsylvania State Council, I am writing in support of H.R. 1973 establishing a National Cemetery in the Pittsburgh area of Pennsylvania.

In association with other veterans' organizations, we are concerned with the lack of a long range plan to meet the burial needs of a veterans population whose members are "dying at the rate of 1,000 per day."

How can this country turn its back on our veterans when it comes time to render their final honor? Are we to tell them they are not going to have the same honor of burial in national cemeteries as previous generations of veterans because there are too many of them, or because this country, at the height of its prosperity, cannot afford it?

If the VA and the administration are not going to act, then we are depending on our Congress to consider what we should do.

Once again thank you for introducing H.R. 1973 and rest assured that you have our support.

Sincerely,

Harry R. Kutchner
Legislative Coordinator
Vietnam Veterans of America Inc.
Pennsylvania State Council



**Disabled American Veterans
National Service Office**

DVA Regional Office • 1000 Liberty Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 305-6787



June 11, 1999

The Honorable Mike Doyle
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Congressman Doyle:

On behalf of over 50,000 members of the Disabled American Veterans, we would like to commend on your efforts to establish a National Cemetery in the PITTSBURGH area. We totally support your efforts and echo the need for a National Cemetery due to the vast number of veterans located in western Pennsylvania. Furthermore, Allegheny County is listed as the second largest county of our veteran population in the United States.

Anything that our Organization can do to help you secure a National Cemetery, we're only a phone call away.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Barry".

DANIEL D. BARRY
National Service Officer
Supervisor

DDB/plh

THE AMERICAN LEGION



P. O. BOX 2324
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17105

DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Office of the STATE ADJUTANT:
STANLEY W. REINHARD, JR.

(717) 730-9100
FAX (717) 975-2838

June 11, 1999

Hon. Mike Doyle
United States Congressman
13 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
via fax: 202-225-3084

Dear Congressman Doyle:

The American Legion, Department of Pennsylvania extends to you their sincere and deepest thanks upon your efforts to establish a National Cemetery in the Pittsburgh area.

I am enclosing a resolution that has been written by me that will be presented at the 81st State Convention of The American Legion on July 9, 1999 at the Adams Mark Hotel, Philadelphia, PA.

The Pennsylvania American Legion is most interested in a cemetery in the Pittsburgh area so that those veterans who pass on from that area may be laid to rest in a National Cemetery closest to their home. It also gives the families of the deceased piece of mind in knowing that their loved ones are interred in a place that will always be neatly groomed and its serenity protected by the federal government.

Again, thank you for appearing on the House Veterans Affairs Committee on our behalf and on behalf of the more than 1.3 million veterans in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stanley W. Reinhard, Jr.".

Stanley W. Reinhard, Jr.
Department Adjutant

SWR:jac



DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Veterans of Foreign Wars
OF THE UNITED STATES



June 11, 1999

**The Honorable Mike Doyle
House of Representatives
133 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515**

Dear Representative Doyle:

The Department of Pennsylvania Commander Albert S. Thomas, Jr. has requested me to inform you that we fully support legislation that would enable the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a National cemetery in southwestern Pennsylvania.

This has been a Department of Pennsylvania legislative goal for the past several years. We would appreciate your initiative to make this a success.

Rest assured, you have the support of 154,000 members of the Department of Pennsylvania, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Thank you for your support of this important veterans issue.

Sincerely,


**John W. Neeves
State Adjutant**

JWN:can



Phone (412)784-9320
1-800-775-9323

KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA • 203 Butler Street • Pittsburgh, PA 15223-2006

June 14, 1999

Congressman Mike Doyle
133 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

The Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America (KPVA) supports your efforts to establish a national veteran cemetery in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. H.R. 1973 provides veterans and their eligible dependents the dignity and respect that comes with burial in a national cemetery.

The Keystone Paralyzed Veterans of America commends you for introducing H.R. 1973 and acknowledges the 21 cosponsors of your resolution. Please let me know how our organization can further assist you in establishing a national cemetery in our region.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Matthews, Jr.
President, KPVA

TJM/ejb

Cc

**STATEMENT BY
CONGRESSMAN BOB BARR (R-GA)
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
ON
JUNE 16, 1999**

I would like to commend Chairman Jack Quinn, Chairman of the Benefits Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, for holding a hearing today on the need to establish additional national cemeteries for veterans.

I would like to call your attention to H.R.1249, a bill I introduced on March 24, 1999, and which has the full support of the entire Georgia delegation, including Senators Cleland and Coverdell. H.R. 1249 authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery for veterans in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area. This legislation is vital to all veterans in the state of Georgia.

Our nation has a sacred obligation to fulfill the promises we made to our veterans when they agreed to risk and, in many cases, give their lives to protect the freedoms we all enjoy. One of those promises was a military burial in a national cemetery.

The metropolitan Atlanta area has been at the top of the list for a new national cemetery for 21 years. During this time, the population of the Atlanta metropolitan area has undergone dramatic change. According to the 1980 census, Georgia had a population of 5,463,105; 2,029,710 of which resided within the metropolitan Atlanta area. By 1996, the population of Georgia had risen to 7,353,225 and that of metropolitan Atlanta had exploded to 3,541,230. Included in this population, are 450,000 veterans in the metropolitan area and 700,000 state-wide. Clearly, the need for an easily accessible national cemetery has increased significantly in the past several years.

Studies in 1987 and 1994, both titled *Report on National Cemetery System in Regard to Public Law 99-576 sec.(4.2)*, again reiterated the need for a new national cemetery in the metro-Atlanta area. Presently, the National Cemetery System ranks Atlanta as the number one city in regard to the necessity of a national cemetery. There are several reasons why this need has been recognized for the past 21 years. Data regarding veterans as well as the rapidly changing demographics of Atlanta and north Georgia create a compelling case for a new facility to be

created immediately. Since a consensus among Veterans' Administration officials, veterans' groups and politicians has been reached, the next step is to choose the most logical and cost-effective site for the project.

There are no open national cemeteries in the state of Georgia. Veterans residing in metropolitan Atlanta, who desire to be interred in a national cemetery, must either go 298 miles to Beaufort, South Carolina, 128 miles to Chattanooga, Tennessee, or 100 miles to Fort Mitchell, Alabama. Studies have shown that veterans and their families rarely choose to be buried in national cemeteries over 75 miles from their residence. It has also been shown that surviving spouses visit the gravesites of the deceased located farther than 75 miles from their home, much less frequently than gravesites located closer. In this context, the three aforementioned cemeteries (South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama) do not adequately serve the veteran population of metropolitan Atlanta.

Currently, there are national cemeteries scheduled to open in the near future in Saratoga, New York; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; and Cleveland, Ohio. Two years ago, a new cemetery opened in Tacoma, Washington near Seattle. Obviously, none of these cemeteries are expected to alleviate the demand for new burial space in the southeastern United States.

The growth in the number of veterans in Georgia, has led to several trends that point to an increased demand in burial space in national cemeteries for the coming years. Currently, the median age of World War II veterans is above 70 years. These vets are dying at the rate of more than 1,000 per day (and 377,000 per year). This number will continue to increase, and when including all vets, should peak at 620,000 per year by the year 2008. These same studies have shown that the years 2005 to 2015 will continue to exhibit especially high mortality rates among veterans. When factoring in peacetime veterans of the post-Vietnam era as well as Gulf War veterans, mortality rates will continue to remain high until the year 2040. On average, ten percent of the veteran population opts to be interred in a national cemetery. Past experience has shown that it takes approximately five to seven years to construct one of these sites. Therefore, when taking the previous statistics regarding veterans into account, it is imperative to immediately begin the process of establishing a national cemetery in metropolitan Atlanta in order to meet the current and certainly the unavoidable demands in the next decade.

When choosing a location for a new national cemetery, two factors must be addressed. First it should be situated in an area that will serve the greatest number of vets. Second, it must be cost-effective to taxpayers. As noted previously, veterans tend to choose to be interred within 75 miles of their residence. Atlanta's veteran population of 450,000 is the largest in the nation not served directly by a national cemetery, and establishing a national cemetery in or near a population center with a large amount of veterans is the best way to ensure that the facility will be utilized by veterans. (Instances where this was not done, indicate clearly that veterans and families will not patronize a national cemetery located far from a metropolitan area.)

When developing new cemeteries, the National Cemetery System is also aware of *economics of scale*. There are many factors, such as land prices and availability that must be considered, and those who administer the Cemetery System certainly try to buy larger plots of land, which will

serve for years to come. The cemeteries currently under development are evidence of this, with Saratoga having 273 acres, Chicago 980 acres, Dallas 673 acres, Cleveland 250 acres and Tacoma 158 acres. These sized lots are able to accommodate the net burial acreage plus the amount of additional land required for roads, easements, and drainage. The net burial acreage is arrived at by analyzing the demographic factors of the local veterans population as well as recognizing the standard of 800 burials per acre. In general, the net acreage is then doubled to determine the optimum size of the facility. These larger cemeteries not only meet the demand exerted by the local veterans populations, they also prove to be more cost-effective than smaller facilities.

Consideration of the factors presented here are paramount in the successful choice of a new location for a national cemetery.

The first step in rectifying this current and anticipated critical shortfall is to authorize funding for a new national cemetery in metropolitan Atlanta. We then need to appropriate the funds, and begin construction; which will likely take up to five years. Time is of the essence. This commitment we ask today will fulfill the promise to the veterans who have for 29 years been without reasonable access to a national cemetery. Even though land in the immediately vicinity of Atlanta has become heavily developed, there are numerous potential locations suitable for a new national cemetery.

Establishing a national cemetery in Georgia would provide veterans and their families accessibility and the recognition they deserve. This has been a long awaited process for Georgia veterans. These men and women deserve a proper resting place.

**The Honorable Ken Calvert
of California**

Testimony before the House Veteran's Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits

June 16, 1999

Medal of Honor Memorial Act

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today about H.R. 1663, The Medal of Honor Memorial Act. I believe this bill is a fitting tribute to the 3,413 men and women who have placed their lives on the line for their country, have taken risks above and beyond the call of duty and, because of their extraordinary bravery and actions during crisis, have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

This legislation designates the memorial currently being constructed at the Riverside National Cemetery as a National memorial. Since this will be the only memorial honoring all 3,413 recipients of the Medal of Honor located in a National Cemetery, I believe it is only fitting to identify it as a National memorial. This designation will in no way diminish other memorials throughout the country honoring recipients of the Medal of Honor, but will instead bring national recognition and appreciation from the American people to those who have received our military's highest award.

I believe Riverside National Cemetery in California is the ideal location for this memorial. There are two Medal of Honor recipients buried there and 102 recipients of the Medal of Honor are originally from the State of California. At its capacity, the Riverside National Cemetery will inter approximately 1.4 million persons, making it the largest National Cemetery in the national system.

This bill has received strong bipartisan support from members representing nearly every state in the nation. Currently, 75 of my colleagues have cosponsored the National Medal of Honor Memorial Act, including all 52 members of the California delegation, the Chairman and Ranking Member of this Subcommittee and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, as well as over half of the Veterans' Committee members.

This memorial will be dedicated on November 5, 1999, during the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's 1999 National Convention, which is being held in Riverside, California. At this time, I would like to personally extend an invitation to all of the members of this subcommittee to join me in November to further honor our most distinguished soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen by attending the dedication of the Medal of Honor Memorial.

I encourage my colleagues and all Americans to pay a special homage to these men and women who have shown extraordinary bravery in battle and support The Medal of Honor Memorial Act.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee for allowing me take part in this hearing. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Statement of
Roger R. Rapp
Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
Before the
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits
June 16, 1999

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here this morning to provide the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on several bills that affect important programs for veterans and their dependents or survivors. Today's agenda includes the following bills: H.R. 1247 (World War II memorial); H.R. 1476 (establishment of additional national cemeteries); H.R. 1663 (designation of National Medal of Honor Memorial); H.R. 2040 (assessment of national cemeteries); H.R. 1484 (authorization of appropriations for homeless veterans projects); and H.R. 1603 (housing loan entitlement for reservists). Accompanying me this morning is Ms. Judith Caden, Deputy Director, Loan Guaranty Service, Veterans Benefits Administration.

H.R. 1247 – WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1247 would authorize the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) to use "special borrowing authority" for the World War II memorial authorized by Public Law No. 103-32 and to use, register, license, and defend trademarks, copyrights, etc., in connection with fund raising for that purpose.

The Administration strongly supports extension of the authority to establish the memorial. The Fiscal Year 2000 Budget, however, proposed continued reliance on private contributions as the best approach to completing the World War II memorial. The Administration opposes "special borrowing authority" as transition funding because it would undercut solicitation of private

contributions, thereby hindering, rather than expediting, the completion of the memorial.

Specifically, the Administration is concerned that this "special borrowing authority" would undermine the private contribution effort to raise around \$150 million, and thus this "borrowing" would never be repaid. The Administration questions whether potential contributors would continue to contribute after they find out that their contributions would go to paying off Federal Government loans. Thus, relying on future voluntary contributions from the public for the repayment of debt owed to the Treasury would not provide sufficient assurance of repayment. Through the Commemorative Works Act, Congress and successive Administrations have sized the scale of proposed monuments by their abilities to raise private contributions. The "special borrowing authority" in H.R. 1247 would undercut this linkage and set a new precedent that would be difficult, if not impossible, to contain in the future.

H.R. 1247 would increase direct spending; therefore, it is subject to the pay-as-you-go requirement of the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1990. This bill does not contain provisions to offset the increased direct spending of \$65 million. Therefore, if the bill were enacted, its net budget costs could contribute to a sequester of mandatory programs.

H.R. 1476 – ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERIES

H.R. 1476 would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in each of the three areas in the United States that the Secretary determines to be most in need of such a cemetery in order to serve the burial needs of veterans and their families. No later than 120 days after enactment, VA would furnish a report to Congress which identifies locations, projects, and construction timeframes, and estimated costs associated with each project.

The findings in two reports to Congress, one completed in 1987 and a follow-up completed in 1994, have been, and will continue to be, the basis for planning new national cemeteries. Each report identified the ten

geographic areas in the United States in which the need for burial space for veterans is greatest based on concentrations of the veteran population. The listings, however, do not commit VA to build national cemeteries in each location, nor do they establish an order in which cemeteries may be built.

By the turn of the century, six new national cemeteries cited in the 1987 and 1994 reports to Congress will be operational. San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in California opened in 1992 and Tahoma National Cemetery, near Seattle, opened in 1997. The construction of four additional national cemeteries to serve veterans is currently underway. These new cemeteries are Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery near Chicago, Illinois; Saratoga National Cemetery near Albany, New York; Dallas/Fort Worth National Cemetery in Texas; and the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery near Cleveland, Ohio. The establishment of these new cemeteries will allow us to offer a burial option to veterans and other eligible people in these areas until at least 2030.

VA will continue to evaluate the potential establishment of additional new national cemeteries in the remaining geographic areas identified in the two reports. The seven remaining areas identified in the 1987 and 1994 reports as being in greatest need are, in alphabetical order: Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; Miami, Florida; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Sacramento, California; and St. Louis, Missouri. If VA were required to choose three sites for new national cemeteries, the sites would be chosen from this list.

I am pleased to report that we have also made progress in the St. Louis metropolitan area, which is currently served by Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. When the 1994 report to Congress was issued, Jefferson Barracks was projected to exhaust its inventory of gravesites in 2002. Subsequent to the 1994 report, additional land has been acquired to extend the service period of the cemetery to 2010, and \$7.5 million was included in the Fiscal Year 1999 appropriations bill to develop this additional land.

In addition, we are following the intent of Congress by working to award a contract to develop a master plan and design documents for a potential cemetery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. We expect the contract award to

take place later this summer.

Based on VA's most recent experience with the four new cemeteries under construction, we estimate an average cost of \$18 million with a 5-7 year timeframe to establish a full-service cemetery. These averages are derived from the costs and timelines associated with establishment of the Saratoga, Dallas/Fort Worth, Abraham Lincoln, and Ohio Western Reserve national cemeteries.

We do not believe development of the report which would be required by this legislation is necessary, nor would it be cost-effective, because, as I have explained, we already have valid data regarding locations and costs and timeframes for construction of new national cemeteries.

VA is continuing to meet the burial needs of our nation's veterans by providing service to more veterans each year. We therefore consider H.R. 1476 unnecessary and do not support its enactment.

H.R. 1663 – DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL

H.R. 1663 would designate a memorial honoring Medal of Honor recipients which is presently under construction at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California, as the "National Medal of Honor Memorial."

We are aware of the recent dedication by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society (CMOHS) of a significant and costly memorial to Medal of Honor recipients at Indianapolis, Indiana. We are also aware of the Congressional Medal of Honor Museum in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. The memorial at the Riverside National Cemetery is presently under construction and planned for dedication later this year. Each of these sites has been developed, funded, and dedicated through the efforts of the CMOHS or its affiliated organizations and chapters. However, in VA's negotiations and discussions with the local donating group, we were not made aware of, nor asked to support, a proposal for designation of the memorial as the "National Medal of Honor Memorial." The memorial was viewed as being a memorial at Riverside National Cemetery devoted to MOH recipients. In this regard, it is possible that designation of any

one memorial as "the" national memorial could be seen as diminishing the status and importance of the other memorials and museums devoted to Medal of Honor issues or recipients.

Enactment of this bill would not affect VA operations, and for that reason we take no position on its merits. However, we recommend that the Committee solicit the views of the CMOHS.

H.R. 2040 – ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL CEMETERIES

H.R. 2040 would require the Secretary to contract with one or more qualified organizations for the conduct of a study that would include an assessment of several matters relating to the national cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). Not later than one year after an organization enters into a contract with VA, the organization would be required to submit a report detailing the results of the study to the Secretary. The Secretary then would be required to transmit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate, within 120 days, a copy of the report, together with any comments on the report that the Secretary determines appropriate.

VA does not support enactment of this bill in its present form; however, we do not object to some of the concepts embodied in the bill. We believe that some of the provisions may be duplicative of what the NCA is already accomplishing, and we have some other concerns. A step-by-step comment on the matters that a contracting organization would be required to assess under the bill follows.

(1) The one-time repairs required at each national cemetery to ensure a dignified and respectful setting appropriate to a national cemetery

While we believe a one-time snapshot of repairs needed at each national cemetery would be beneficial and would assist us in our planning, NCA already has in place a comprehensive "bottom-up" five-year construction planning process. Needs at all national cemeteries for maintenance, repair, construction,

renovation, and expansion are identified annually, prioritized by urgency, and used to develop and justify requests for appropriations necessary to fund requirements in the annual budget and for projections for a five-year cycle. Regrettably, funding for all of the projects on our list is not always available. Because projects must compete for funding, NCA is faced annually with prioritizing projects. We determine if project funds should come from the Administration's operating budget for maintenance and repair, from the minor construction account for projects estimated to cost less than \$4 million, or from the major construction accounts for projects estimated to cost over \$4 million. Ultimately, the issue has never been one of identifying suitable projects, but rather, the difficulty lies in funding them.

(2) The feasibility of making standards of appearance of national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world

NCA already uses customer-satisfaction measures as a means for obtaining feedback with respect to the appearance of our cemeteries. In fiscal year 1998, of those customers who responded to survey cards, 96.5 percent rated our national cemeteries from good to excellent in appearance, with 77 percent providing an excellent rating. Our goal is to reach a 100 percent "excellent" survey response by fiscal year 2003. We believe these survey results reflect the quality of our work.

We have a statutory commitment to maintain our cemeteries as national shrines, while at the same time fulfilling our burial mission. These national shrines must provide each veteran with a final resting place that reflects the dignity, honor, and respect he or she has earned. Regular, ongoing maintenance is required in burial sections, as well as in the infrastructure of all 115 national cemeteries. In 1998, these cemeteries consisted of 2.3 million gravesites, over 6,000 developed acres, more than 400 buildings, and other infrastructure such as

roads, walks, fences, boundary walls, irrigation, electrical systems, and monuments.

Our continuous attention is required to maintain these grounds as national shrines. The reality, however, is that it is often difficult to achieve the same level of reflective, serene settings in cemeteries where burials still occur as may be found in other cemeteries, such as those under the jurisdiction of the ABMC, in which active burials generally have not occurred since the 1950's. We do, however, achieve tranquility befitting a national shrine in those areas that no longer have burials, or where second interments are rare.

(3) The number of additional cemeteries that will be required for the interment and memorialization of veterans or other qualified persons who die after 2010

In assessing the number of national cemeteries that will be required in the future, the report contemplated by H.R. 2040 would identify, by 5-year periods beginning in 2010 and ending in 2030, the number of additional national cemeteries required during each 5-year period. The report would also identify, with respect to each 5-year period, the areas of the United States with the greatest concentrations of veterans whose needs are not served by national or state veterans' cemeteries. Our concern is that planning too far ahead can result in development of information that may not be useful. For example, the need for national cemeteries is based on veteran demographics. It would be extremely difficult to predict veteran migration patterns 20 or 30 years in advance. Furthermore, the need for, and location of, new national cemeteries may be affected by future wars or conflicts that cannot be predicted.

As I noted earlier, the 1987 and 1994 reports to Congress currently serve as the basis for NCA's decisions regarding the planning and establishment of new national cemeteries. We are in the process of constructing four new national cemeteries and have dedicated two others (San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery and Tahoma National Cemetery) in areas identified in the reports. In

addition to completing the construction of these four new cemeteries, more than 20 expansion projects will be completed and additional land will be acquired at 12 existing national cemeteries over the next two years.

These developments will allow us to ensure that 80 percent of veterans will have a burial option within 75 miles of their homes by 2004.

We believe that projecting possible national cemetery growth beyond 5 to 10 years would not provide valid information, as too many unknowns could come into play. We also believe that we already have valid data indicating where the next new national cemeteries should be constructed, if more are to be established.

(4) Improvements to burial benefits provided under current law, including a proposal to increase the plot allowance under 38 U.S.C. 2303(b)

We are concerned that this provision fails to provide an adequate indication of congressional intent to guide the contractor in framing recommendations. For example, it is unclear whether such recommendations would be based on a concept of full coverage of the cost of funerals, plots, markers, and burials, of partial coverage of these costs, or on other factors.

Mr. Chairman, as the Committee considers the action it may take with respect to this bill, we urge that the potential for unnecessary duplication of effort and the other concerns we have noted be recognized. In view of the concerns we have noted, we cannot support the enactment of H.R. 2040 in its present form.

H.R. 1484 – AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS PROJECTS

Mr. Chairman, you have also asked us to comment on H.R. 1484, which would authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The Department of

Labor's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP), a program that effectively maneuvers veterans out of homelessness, has been very effective, and the Department of Labor has worked very closely with our Department and programs administered by grantees under our Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program. HVRP provides nationally competitive direct grants to non-profit groups in both urban and rural settings. Grantees make referrals to other service providers to address needs of the veterans (including referrals to VA for medical care and benefits assistance) as well as providing (paying for) clothing, shelter and transportation.

While the Department of Labor's program is limited, serving approximately 2,200 veterans with approximately \$3 million in funding, the results have been extremely beneficial. HVRP has been very helpful in limited settings in assisting more than 1,800 veterans in obtaining employment at an average cost of \$1,700 per placement.

VA works closely with HVRP, and we are pleased to support the continuation of this program at the level of the Administration's Budget request for Fiscal Year 2000.

H.R. 1603 – HOUSING LOAN ENTITLEMENT FOR RESERVISTS

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1603 would make permanent the entitlement for VA housing loan benefits currently given to persons whose only military service was in the Reserves (including the National Guard).

Prior to October 28, 1992, in order to qualify for VA housing loan benefits a veteran was required to have served on active duty, other than active duty for training, in the Armed Forces. Generally, a person must have served at least 90 days on active duty during a period of war, or 181 consecutive days during a non-war period, in order to qualify for this benefit. (Veterans who first entered service after September 7, 1980, must also satisfy the minimum service requirements contained in section 5303A of title 38, United States Code.) Persons whose only service was in the reserve components and who never

served on extended active duty did not qualify. Public Law 102-547 granted VA housing loan entitlement to persons not otherwise eligible who served for 6 years in the Selected Reserve, including the National Guard. In most cases, persons whose entitlement is derived from service in the Reserves are required to pay a higher VA funding fee. For example, for a no-downpayment loan to a veteran who has not previously used his or her VA loan benefits, the fee paid would be 2 percent of the loan amount. The fee paid by a reservist for the same loan would be 2.75 percent of the loan amount.

Loan entitlement based on Reserve service will not expire until September 30, 2003. VA supports this benefit, but we are in the process of evaluating all our programs and will be better prepared to comment on this benefit and its interactions with other VA benefits after our evaluation of the loan program is complete.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

**STATEMENT OF
ESPIRIDION "AL" BORREGO
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR THE
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
OF THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 16, 1999**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today regarding H.R. 1484, a bill to authorize appropriations for the homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. This bill would extend the authority of the Veterans' Employment and Training Service's (VETS) Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) through 2004 and proposes to increase the current authorized funding level to \$50 million per year.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to begin by thanking you and this Subcommittee for your past support of the HVRP. We at the Department have worked hard and are very proud of the help provided to veterans under the HVRP through the many local groups participating in this program. HVRP is intended to augment our general veteran employment program by expediting the reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force so that they may achieve financial independence. Once these homeless veterans are job ready, our veterans' employment representatives step in to assist with job placement.

This has been a very successful program that has been broadly supported by local community groups and Veterans Service Organizations. From its inception, this program was meant to be a partnership with local agencies and other State and Federal programs. These linkages are a fundamental requirement of providers, and applicants for these grants are required to describe linkages with the workforce development system (including the Job Training Partnership Act) and State Employment Security Agencies, as well as the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans' Affairs (VA).

While I believe most everyone in this hearing room has visited one of the homeless veterans programs and met veterans benefitting from HVRP, I would like to take the opportunity to tell you about two special veterans.

Both stories are from a rural HVRP program run by the Volunteers of America in Eastern Kentucky. The first is a Vietnam veteran who had been living in a dilapidated building. He had some family support from his sister. The sister read about the HVRP program in the local newspaper and encouraged him to call the provider. He would not, so the sister called and asked if they would reach out to him. The homeless veteran would not speak to or trust the outreach worker until the outreach worker showed him that he himself was a disabled veteran, which gained the outreach worker access to the shack. The homeless veteran showed symptoms of social anxiety phobia. Eventually the veteran was able to be trained to be a truck driver and is living in permanent housing. The Volunteers of America case manager is working with him so he will accept the mental health services that still seem to be necessary. This is the kind of ongoing case that is most often seen in our program.

The other veteran had been homeless for ten years, sleeping anywhere he could, doing odd jobs to pay for food or just going hungry. Another local service provider referred him to our HVRP program. The local HVRP grantee learned that the veteran had experience as a carpenter and roofer, skills he had learned while he was homeless. While living in the shelter, the grantee searched for people who needed carpentry work done and transported the veteran to jobs and even purchased carpentry tools for him to do this work. He has been doing this work for more than 90 days and has moved into permanent housing and is acquiring furniture as he completes

more jobs. He even has met a woman he plans to marry.

I mention these stories simply to illustrate how important, and successful, the HVRP program can be in improving the lives of veterans and their families.

The program originated in 1989 and from Fiscal Years 1989 through 1994, cumulatively, 19,516 homeless veterans were served and 9,808 were placed in jobs. The total funding during that period was \$19 million. The program was not funded for Fiscal Years 1995, 1996 and 1997.

Fiscal Year 1998 funding was \$3 million and grants were awarded April 1, 1998. Though preliminary, results thus far are 3,485 homeless veterans served, of which 1,751 have been placed in jobs.

The Fiscal Year 1999 funding is \$3 million. VETS' Fiscal Year 1999 Solicitation for Grant Application (SGA) to operate the HVRP program in this fiscal year drew 53 applications for funding. VETS was able to fund 18 urban and 4 rural areas.

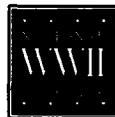
The Administration has requested \$5 million for HVRP funding for Fiscal Year 2000. This is an increase of \$2 million over Fiscal Year 1999 funding, and will enable VETS to compete funds with fewer limitations and increase the efficiency of the program. At this funding level, VETS latest estimates are that 5,100 veterans who are homeless would be enrolled in programs and more than 3,500 would be placed in jobs. In addition, the Administration supports a 5-year reauthorization of HVRP for such sums as necessary for years beyond Fiscal Year 2000. This would provide stability and continuity for the program.

Moreover, we appreciate the efforts to increase funding for HVRP, such as would be provided by H.R. 1484. There are, however, many critical needs of veterans and of the Nation generally. Within the confines of the Balanced Budget Act and Budget Enforcement Act, difficult choices need to be made regarding the spending of limited resources. The President's Fiscal Year 2000 budget recognizes the need for more funding for the HVRP, and attempts to reconcile this with the competing needs of the country. Therefore, funding levels should be sustained at the Administration's request of \$5 million.

We recognize that the job of addressing the plight of homeless veterans is not finished. In spite of the many Federal, State, and local efforts to reduce homelessness among our Nation's veterans, some estimate that as many as one-third of the homeless males are veterans -- another study found that 275,000 veterans are homeless at any one time. We, therefore, ask the Congress to support reauthorization of homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee and look forward to working closely with you and the veterans' community in resolving homelessness among our Nation's veterans.

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION



**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STATEMENT OF
MAJOR GENERAL JOHN P. HERRLING
SECRETARY, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION**

**ON
EXPANDING FUND-RAISING AUTHORITIES TO EXPEDITE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL**

JUNE 16, 1999

MR. CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your subcommittee on behalf of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). I want to note that the views I express today, particularly those related to the "Special Borrowing Authority" in H.R. 1247, are those of the American Battle Monuments Commission. The Administration's position on H.R. 1247 was conveyed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which also testified on the bill at today's hearing.

It is a privilege to appear before you today to support legislation that will expedite efforts to honor in our nation's capital the incredible sacrifices and achievement of America's World War II generation. With me today is Mr. James Aylward, the Executive Director of the National World War II Memorial Project.

In 1993, Congress enacted Public Law 103-32 that authorized creation of the National World War II Memorial and directed the ABMC to raise the funds from private sources for its construction. Our efforts over the ensuing six years are effectively coming together. We have an outstanding design team. The design concept for the memorial was approved last summer, and the preliminary design was approved this month. We hope to receive final design approval later this year.

Since 1997, we have created an aggressive fund-raising program that is accelerating and delivering excellent results. Exclusive of government support of \$9.8 million, the private sector has contributed \$57 million. The pace of fund raising has picked up since approval of the design concept last summer; we've raised \$28.5 million since the beginning of this fiscal year. However, many of our contributors have pledged large gifts over a four-to-five year period. These pledges cannot be applied to the requirement of the Commemorative Works Act to have available sufficient funds to complete construction of the memorial. Due to these limitations, even at our accelerated fund-raising pace we may not be able to break ground until 2003; and the memorial would not be dedicated until 2005.

The issue is not *if* the World War II Memorial will be built, but *when*. The goal of breaking ground in the year 2000 was initially driven by the seven-year legislative deadline; this goal has become public expectation. The urgency is amplified by public awareness that we lose 1,000 World War II veterans each day; of 16 million who served in uniform during World War II, only 6.3 million are alive today. Our projections indicate that we will lose 1.2 million or more during the three-year delay in dedication that would be caused by having to wait until all funds are collected. We are committed to keeping our fund-raising efforts growing to make the memorial a reality before the World War II generation we honor passes into history. H.R. 1247 will ensure that we achieve this goal.

H.R. 1247

Nearly all of the provisions of H.R. 1247 were substantively proposed by the Administration at the time our proposed Budget was submitted. In particular, the Administration sought enactment of legislation that would:

- **preserve any funds remaining after completion of the National World War II Memorial in a fund in the United States Treasury dedicated to future expenses associated with the memorial** (Planned giving presents significant opportunities for contributions to the memorial. Individuals considering testamentary gifts want to be assured that their gift will only be used for the intended purposes, and they want to know the entity that will make those expenditures. Provisions are similar to those Congress authorized for the benefit of overseas memorials through Sec. 602 of Veterans Benefits Improvements Act of 1996, PL 104-275, 110 Stat. 3322.);
- **accord the ABMC full authority to use and protect intellectual property interests to further efforts to generate funds for the construction of the National World War II Memorial** (This will enhance the Commission's ability to obtain corporate contributions through national trademark-based licensing programs.);
- **enhance the ABMC authority to accept voluntary services in furtherance of the National World War II Memorial** (Makes explicit ABMC's implied authority to accept volunteer services in support of the memorial project, and permits compensation for injuries a volunteer might sustain in the course of supporting authorized programs.); and
- **extend the period of time for the issuance of a construction permit for the National World War II Memorial until December 31, 2005** (The current legislative deadline is May 25, 2000. The design approval process has taken longer than expected. Thus, fund raising could not begin until early 1997 and did not achieve significant momentum until the summer of 1998. The combination of these factors makes it likely that additional time will be needed to obtain a construction permit.).

H.R. 1247 achieves these results. H.R. 1247 also includes a unique provision that would allow the ABMC borrowing authority to meet the requirement of the Commemorative Works Act of having the full cost of construction plus 10% for maintenance of the memorial available prior to groundbreaking.

The Commemorative Works Act does not require the ABMC to actually have 110 percent of the estimated cost of construction on hand in order to obtain a construction permit, but rather to have access to such funds available at the time of the permit request. While the private sector often issues bonds or borrows funds against pledges receivable, these options are not available to agencies of the federal government.

Beginning construction before receipt of all necessary funds is not an uncommon endeavor and is often done in the private sector. The Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island project, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the New York Hospital building, and the American Society of Civil Engineers headquarters in Reston, Virginia, are but a few examples where construction was begun before the campaign goal was achieved. The solicitation of private contributions was not hampered by initiation of construction. Borrowing authority would act in the same fashion.

Accordingly, the drafters of H.R. 1247 seek to grant the ABMC a similar authority by authorizing us to borrow from the Treasury – in effect, granting us a line of credit. If such authority existed, the required funds would be available, even if never used, and construction of the memorial could begin next year.

NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Under Public law 103-32, signed by President Clinton on May 25, 1993, the ABMC has been charged with the duty of establishing a National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., or its environs. Moreover, the legislation directs that the ABMC obtain funds to construct the memorial from private donations.

The National World War II Memorial will be the first national memorial dedicated to all those who served during that war, and will recognize the commitment and achievement of the entire country. It will serve as a permanent tribute not only to those who fought to protect our nation, but also to those who served on the home front, both individually and in the work place. The site has been chosen and the design concept approved. Since 1997, more than \$57 million has been raised from corporations, foundations, veterans groups, civic associations, states and individual Americans.

I. Background: Site and Design

The first step in building the memorial was the selection of an appropriate site using an open, cooperative process that followed all of the provisions of law and all of the procedural steps regarding the placement of memorials in the nation's capital. Following nearly a year of careful consideration, and after the merits of nine prominent locations were evaluated by the federal agencies responsible for memorial oversight, the Rainbow Pool site, a 7.4-acre rectangular area at the east end of the Reflecting Pool between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, was approved. On Veterans Day 1995, President Clinton dedicated the site in a formal ceremony that concluded the commemorations of the 50th Anniversary of World War II.

In the summer of 1998, the memorial design passed an important milestone when the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission approved the design concept. This summer, both commissions approved the preliminary design, the second of three design approval phases. The design team will continue to define the details of the memorial in anticipation of final design approval hearings later this year.

II. Funding and Fund-Raising

As noted, the World War II Memorial is to be funded primarily through private contributions. To solicit contributions, the ABMC created a capital campaign staff of professional fund-raisers. To lead their efforts, former Senator Bob Dole agreed to be the National Chairman of the World War II Memorial Campaign in March 1997, and he was joined in August 1997 by Frederick W. Smith, founder of Federal Express and Chairman, President and CEO of FDX Corporation, as National Co-Chairman. They are assisted by a national campaign committee of prominent American business executives, and new members are continually recruited to ensure campaign vitality.

The public fund-raising campaign effectively began in mid-1997 when Senator Dole became the National Campaign Chairman. As of May 1997, the private sector had contributed \$5.5 million; as of May 1998, \$21 million; and as of mid-June 1999, \$57 million. This support has come from corporations, foundations, veterans organizations, and more than 325,000 individual Americans. As national awareness of the effort grows, we expect the response from the public to be even more positive.

A. Public Awareness Program

In 1999, the memorial campaign initiated a national public service advertising campaign under the auspices of The Advertising Council. The introduction of new films such as *Saving Private Ryan* substantially raised awareness of the sacrifices of the World War II generation and the planned recognition of their sacrifice and achievement through the National World War II Memorial. Academy Award winning actor Tom Hanks, the star of *Saving Private Ryan*, volunteered his support to the memorial, and is featured in television, radio, and print ads that went into distribution in late-March 1999. The PSA campaign is scheduled to run through the year 2000.

The Ad Council advised us that the media response to this campaign has exceeded anything they have experienced in recent years. More than 300 newspapers ran full-page ads on Memorial Day; *Parade* magazine featured the ad and an article on May 30 and another article on June 13; major newspapers such as *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* have featured the ads several times. The PSAs have had a noticeable impact on our campaign. Prior to Hanks' participation, our toll free number had received just over 5,400 calls. Since he became our national spokesman, we have received more than 100,000 calls and the momentum continues to build.

B. Corporations and Foundations

ABMC has established prudent estimates of the various giving constituents. To date, the campaign has been led by philanthropic corporate and foundation giving, and we project continued positive response. Many of these corporations played an integral role in the World War II effort. More than \$37 million is targeted from corporations and another \$12 million is expected from foundations.

Nearly 1,800 companies and more than 500 private foundations have been identified for support. With design concept approval in July 1998 and growing campaign credibility, we now have more than 100 major corporate donors, including 10 that have given \$1 million or more and another 13 that have given \$500,000 or more. Corporate giving recently passed the \$27 million mark. Decisions from another 85 major corporate solicitations are pending, and more than 200 donor prospects will be contacted within the next three months. Many corporate CEOs and senior executives were surprised to learn that there is not a National World War II Memorial and have expressed their desire that groundbreaking take place by Veterans Day 2000.

To date, 27 private foundations have contributed \$3.9 million and 52 requests are under consideration by foundations throughout the country. In the foundation arena, the memorial site, design, and initial cost estimates are required before submission of a proposal. Some foundations will not provide support until actual construction has begun and there is a high degree of assurance that financing, similar to borrowing authority, is available for completion of the project.

There is clear and substantial evidence that borrowing authority will enhance solicitation within the corporate and foundation community and, therefore, expedite the completion of the World War II Memorial Campaign.

C. Cause Related Marketing

The National World War II Memorial Campaign is developing and selling cause-related marketing promotional concepts to corporate America. Cause-related marketing is not philanthropic giving, but rather a marketing function that allows corporations to use the assets of the campaign to meet business objectives and marketing goals. Proceeds from cause-related marketing programs go to the memorial campaign.

The key to success in this cause marketing campaign is timing – taking advantage of a window of opportunity that has opened with the approaching end of the 20th century. This has led to renewed interest in World War II and America's "greatest generation." We are aggressively attempting to take advantage of the opportunity.

The campaign began focusing on cause-related marketing in February 1999. Most recently, Blockbuster Entertainment agreed to a cause-related media and promotional campaign that includes a \$250,000 corporate donation, media events honoring veterans in 24 markets, in-store and direct mail advertising, and a hot link to our Web site. The overall value of this program, including media, publicity, advertising and donations is more than \$2 million.

There are several additional programs currently under review by a professional sports league, a motel chain, banks, grocery chains, department store chains, and restaurants. We are confident donations to the campaign via cause-related marketing will reach \$6 million in 1999 and an additional \$8 million in 2000. Corporate partner and consumer support of cause marketing promotions creates an expectation of prompt project completion.

D. Veterans, States, Professional-Fraternal-Civic Groups, Grassroots

Veterans Campaigns

Millions of interested and committed individuals are becoming involved in the respective campaigns of veterans groups led by a \$7.5 million commitment of the VFW, a \$3 million goal of the American Legion, and a \$500,000 goal of the Non Commissioned Officers Association. A \$500,000 gift has already been received from the Disabled American Veterans, and \$100,000 or more has been donated or pledged by the AMVETS, the Association of the U.S. Army, the Military Order of the

World Wars, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. We expect to raise \$13.5 million from this giving constituency.

Membership campaigns are the norm with veterans organizations. They often include "matching" gifts from the national headquarters or foundations. With large commitments, the membership campaigns are programmed over three to four years. This is true with the two largest veterans groups: the VFW (four years, 1998-2002, \$7.5 million) and the American Legion (four years, 1997-2001, \$3-5 million). These campaigns will continue for a number of years and will gain impetus from a groundbreaking event.

State Campaigns

We have requested that each state, commonwealth and territory of the United States contribute \$1 for each of its citizens who entered the armed forces during World War II. If every state supported this request, the total value of the program would be more than \$16 million. The program began in December 1997 and is beginning to show results. Once state legislation is passed and signed by the governor of the state, the dollar amount is considered "pledged" to the campaign.

Currently, 15 states have passed legislation for a total of \$4.2 million. Twenty additional states and the territory of Puerto Rico have introduced legislation in 1999 to contribute to the memorial project. These could total another \$6.6 million in potential contributions before the end of 1999.

The remaining 15 states have not made a commitment to introduce legislation supporting the memorial campaign. These uncommitted states represent another \$5.1 million in potential contributions. The remaining territories may support the campaign but their potential is not readily quantifiable. Congressional approval of borrowing authority would guarantee groundbreaking and demonstrate a national commitment that could bring the remaining states on board.

Other Organizational Campaigns

Many organizational campaigns have only recently begun to develop. The National Executive Council of the AFL-CIO has publicly endorsed the memorial, and we are working with them and their member unions to define specific levels of support. The BPO Elks and the Knights of Columbus have committed to membership campaigns that will extend beyond November 2000. In addition, AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are helping to generate awareness of the memorial among their memberships.

There are hundreds of organizations in this category that have not been approached as yet, representing millions of dollars in potential contributions. Initiation of construction would give evidence of a credible project and would encourage these groups to more readily support the campaign.

Grassroots Campaigns

Grassroots programs for the World War II Memorial Campaign center around two categories: 1) individual volunteers who seek contributions from friends and acquaintances, and solicit contributions at local malls and community events, and 2) Community Action Councils formed to solicit donations from local businesses and organize formal community fund-raising activities or events. To date, there are more than 200 individual volunteers and four Community Action Councils working in support of the campaign. Growth in these programs is wholly dependent on national exposure and public confidence in the project.

The positive exposure created by a groundbreaking ceremony on the National Mall will provide the impetus for volunteer campaigns in communities across the country. The millions of annual visitors to the National Mall would take the word of the ongoing construction of the memorial back to their towns and cities, creating broad-based confidence and credibility for the successful completion of the project.

E. Individual Donors and Direct Mail

Individuals are being cultivated for major gifts and should accelerate the total level of support during calendar year 1999. We are focusing on major metropolitan areas such as New York, Atlanta,

Houston, Los Angeles, Dallas, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Chicago and Phoenix to hold major fund-raising activities for individuals, and we anticipate a positive response. In addition, we are establishing a planned giving program to allow our donors to make gifts in the future.

In 1997, the ABMC initiated a direct mail program to realize a broad base of support across America. Our direct mail agency tested hundreds of lists and multiple packages designed to appeal to various segments of society to build a ground swell of support. Reaching six million homes that first year, the direct mail program successfully communicated the goal of the project.

Direct mail has helped us educate the giving public and continues to provide a profitable return for each dollar invested. Americans responded in record numbers – more than 325,000 donors to date, generating a net profit of \$6.3 million. We now process more than 20,000 donations a month. We've established a solid foundation of donors that feeds other fund-raising programs – major gifts, grassroots, veterans group campaigns, and planned giving.

Increased visibility of our efforts is the key to our success. As a continuing sign of support, an extraordinarily high percentage of donors continue to give multiple gifts. The overwhelming response confirms donor involvement and support. As each milestone, such as design approval, is passed, individual fund raising receives greater levels of support. As awareness increases, prospect and donor mailings reach peak efficiency, and response rates and average gift amounts increase. Prior to 1997, only a handful of Americans were aware of this effort. The growth of our individual donor base attests to the momentum the campaign has begun to generate: in 1997, the donor file was 65,000; in 1998, 215,000; to date, more than 325,000. We believe that once we break ground, Americans will respond in greater numbers to ensure this memorial is completed.

F. Stewardship

Congressional oversight of the ABMC is provided by several committees and subcommittees. The ABMC's World War II Memorial Trust Fund is audited annually by the General Accounting Office and a private accounting firm. In addition, the ABMC provides information to various charitable "watch dog" organizations, most notably the National Charities Information Bureau (NCIB) and the Council of Better Business Bureaus. The memorial campaign is working diligently to ensure that it complies with all applicable NCIB standards.

CONCLUSION

We are committed to building the National World War II Memorial as quickly as possible. As stated at the beginning of this testimony, the issue is not *if* the memorial will be built, but *when*. The immediacy of the need to recognize this extraordinary generation, and the general nationwide interest in honoring the individuals who paved the way for present day America and the values which they so quietly exemplified, make our fund-raising goals both reasonable and attainable. The provisions of H.R. 1247 will allow us to keep faith with the World War II generation by breaking ground for their memorial in the year 2000, while keeping faith with Congressional direction that this memorial tribute be privately funded.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. Mr. Aylward and I will be pleased to respond to questions from the Subcommittee.



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PRIDE

Statement of

Peter Gaytan
AMVETS Legislative Director

for the
House Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits

Wednesday, June 16, 1999
334 Cannon



A M V E T S

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony this morning on behalf of the members of AMVETS. The bills before us today will help ensure that America's veterans receive the entitlements earned through service to their country.

Neither AMVETS nor myself has been the recipient of any federal grants or contracts during FY-99 or the previous two years.

H.R.1476 National Cemetery Act of 1999

In accordance with Chapter 24 of Title 38, United States Code, this bill introduced by Ranking Minority Member Lane Evans requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish national cemeteries in each of the three areas in the United States that the secretary determines to be most in need. The demand for space is expected to reach 620,000 by the year 2008. It is projected that from the years 1995 to 2010, the burial rate will have increased by 42%. The need for additional cemeteries to serve veterans and their families is evident, and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) must have a clear, strategic plan through 2010 to address the problem. AMVETS supports H.R. 1476, and we commend Congressman Evans for this foresight in proposing this bill.

H.R. 1247 World War II Memorial Completion Act

This bill, introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Stump and Ranking Minority Member Lane Evans, seeks to expand the fund-raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia and to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial, and for other purposes. AMVETS is proud to be a major contributor to the World War II Memorial fund-raising campaign. The World War II Memorial is a long overdue tribute to the servicemen and women who served during the second World War. AMVETS supports H.R. 1247.

H.R. 1603 Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999

Introduced by Congressman Lane Evans and Chairman Bob Stump, this bill amends Title 38, United States Code, and provides for permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans housing loans. As fewer young people are choosing a career in the military, service recruiters are experiencing increasing difficulties in reaching their goals. We must develop benefits and incentives that can compete with the civilian job market. Since 1987, the military has seen a decrease of 800,000 servicemen and women. Although the number of personnel in the military continues to drop, the number of deployments has risen. From 1998 to today, our military has supported thirty-two separate deployments. The unprecedented rate of downsizing and cutbacks experienced in the military in recent years has expanded the role of reservists. Because the active duty is forced to "do more with less," they are relying to a greater extent on the reserve forces for support. AMVETS recognizes the efforts of reservists and supports the provisions of H.R. 1603.

H.R. 1484

This bill, introduced by Congressman Filner, would authorize appropriations for homeless veterans' reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. AMVETS has long supported homeless veterans' programs. At AMVETS' national convention last year, members adopted a resolution seeking new funding for homeless veterans' programs. Research shows that as many as half of the homeless males of most cities and towns in this country are veterans, many of whom are disabled and/or chronically ill and therefore unable to obtain employment. A Department of Veterans' Affairs study indicates that up to 20% of these disabled veterans have serious psychiatric illnesses associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, a major obstacle to becoming employable. We must continue to provide reintegration programs for our veterans. By approving the resolution, members of AMVETS agreed to urge Congress to provide adequate funding for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program under the McKinney Act. AMVETS, therefore, supports H.R. 1484.

H.R. 1663 National Medal of Honor Memorial Act

This bill seeks to designate as a national memorial the monument being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor. It is important for America to remember the sacrifices of our combat veterans and their role in securing the freedom that we now take for granted. AMVETS supports H.R. 1663.

H.R. 2040 National Cemeteries Act of 1999

This bill, introduced by Chairman Bob Stump, seeks a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries. Every year hundreds of thousands of people nationwide gather at our national cemeteries during Memorial Day and Veterans Day to recognize the sacrifices made by our nations' veterans. It is our responsibility to ensure that these cemeteries maintain a dignified and respectful setting. AMVETS supports H.R. 2040.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. On behalf of the members of AMVETS, I commend this committee on its continuing efforts to secure the entitlements of our nation's veterans, and we look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF
MICHAEL P. CLINE
MASTER SERGEANT (RET)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**BEFORE THE
BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

June 16, 1999

DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) does not currently receive, nor has the Association ever received, any federal money for grants or contracts. All of the Association's activities and services are accomplished completely free of any federal funding.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Benefits Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee:

I am honored to have this opportunity to present the views of the Enlisted men and women of the National Guard of the United States. Our members are very appreciative of the support extended to them in the past, and are very confident that you will, through your diligent and conscientious efforts, give serious consideration to important issues facing the National Guard today.

The citizen soldiers of today are truly the finest ever. Today, the Guard is being called upon more and more to provide peacetime and combat-ready support for contingencies around the world. The Army and Air National Guard represent a stable force that acts as a storehouse for skilled professional personnel and an effective structure to retain skilled personnel departing the active services. The Army and Air National Guard need to assure its members that it can recognize them for the contributions that they make to national defense. To maintain the personnel necessary to get the job done, EANGUS is pursuing a number of quality of life issues on behalf of Enlisted National Guard members.

Greater reliance is being placed on Guard and Reserve members. The reserve components are asked to perform a number of duties that were previously conducted only by active duty personnel. However, there are very few incentives to get individuals to join and serve our country. The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States believes that the provision under Title 38, Section 3702, United States Code, to provide VA Home Loans to National Guard and Reserve members who have completed six years of service, should be made permanent.

When the law was originally passed, there was bipartisan support in both the House and Senate for this legislation. Since the beginning of the Home Loan program for Guard and Reserve members in October of 1992, the VA has guaranteed more than 55,000 loans, totaling more than \$5.2 billion.

Prior to 1992, only those who had served on active duty, other than active duty for training, qualified for VA housing loan benefits. Selected Reserve members with six years of honorable service became eligible for the loan entitlement in October 1992. Reservists pay a loan fee that is generally .75% higher than other veterans. For example, on a no-downpayment loan that is the veteran's first use of VA

housing loan entitlement, most veterans would pay a fee equal to 2% of the loan amount. Reservists pay a fee of 2.75% of the loan amount for the same loan.

VA has noticed that loans made to Reservists have a lower default rate than loans made to veterans using the active duty benefit. Guard and Reserve members tend to be a little older and more settled in their community than the average active-duty veteran. First time homebuyers make up 67.2% of Reservists who obtained VA guaranteed loans. According to the VA, only 93 of 33,224 loans made to Reservists as of 1996 have been foreclosed upon; a rate of 0.37 percent. Foreclosure rates for loans made to other veterans are two and a half times higher at 0.97 percent.

The main purpose of the VA home loan program is to help veterans finance the purchase of homes with favorable loan terms. These loans are often made without any downpayment at all, and frequently offer lower interest rates than ordinarily available with other kinds of loans. Currently, for VA housing loan purposes, the term "veteran" includes certain members of the Selected Reserve, active duty service personnel and certain categories of spouses.

Included in the HVA report (105-627) on the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1998, the Congressional Budget office estimated that extending home loan benefits for Reservists would increase VA loan guarantees by roughly 7,000 each year. Because origination fees would more than offset the subsidy cost of additional loan guarantees, CBO estimates that it would lower net spending by about \$3 million annually through 2002. Starting in 2003, however, this provision would cost \$3 million a year because certain fees will expire under current law. However, we feel Congress will extend the funding provision to keep both the active and Guard and Reserve VA Home Loan program viable.

Members of the Selected Reserve are eligible for the VA Home Loan and if they have completed at least 6 years in the Reserves or National Guard, or been discharged because of a service-connected disability, and (1) have been discharged under honorable conditions, or (2) have been placed on the retired list, or (3) have been transferred to an element of the Ready Reserve other than the Selected Reserve, or (4) continue to serve in the Selected Reserve are eligible for a VA Home Loan.

In the original law, eligibility for members of the Selected Reserve was to expire October 28, 1999. Last year, authority for VA Home Loans for Guard and Reserve members was extended to 2003 by P.L. 105-368. Unfortunately, this cannot be used as a recruiting incentive since recruits are not eligible for benefits until they

have served for six years. A new recruit today will not be eligible before the current authority for the loans expires.

CLOSING

Mr. Chairman, it is our Association's belief that the National Guard, in conjunction with the active component, represents the most cost-effective weapon at our disposal to defend our nation. The National Guard's potential has barely been tapped. Yet, it stands ready, willing and accessible to meet our defensive needs. It is imperative to ensure that the Guard has the necessary quality of life benefits to ensure quality recruits for our future.

The Veterans Administration, the Transition Commission, and the Military Coalition, which represents 30 military and veterans organizations with 5.5 million members, all support making the VA Home Loan for Guard and Reserve members permanent.

Mr. Chairman, the National Guard is your next door neighbor, he or she may be a truck driver, your lawyer, your son or daughter or your grandchildren's teacher. When the National Guard is called, America goes to war. The National Guard is family, Americans at their best. The National Guard - protectors of freedom. and defenders of peace!

I would like to thank the Chairman and Members of this committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on the VA Home Loan for Guard and Reserve.

STATEMENT

of

Linda Boone
Executive Director

of the

NATIONAL COALITION *FOR* HOMELESS VETERANS

before the

Subcommittee on Benefits

of the

Committee on Veterans Affairs
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Jack Quinn
Chairman

June 16, 1999
Washington, DC

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the **National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV)**, I thank you for the opportunity to present our views here today. On any given night there are the equivalent of 17 infantry divisions on the streets of this great nation with no place to call home. That is approximately 275,000 men and women who have worn this country's uniforms, been trained at great expense in many of the most advanced technical skills, stood guard over all that we hold sacred and dear, and in some cases, incurred physical and psychological injuries.

We have all heard the stories of their descent into homelessness. In many cases, the reasons could befall any of us, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, prolonged medical disability and a variety of other triggering events. Some have problems associated with their military experience, the lack of transferable skills to the civilian labor market, PTSD, the difficulty of transitioning from military to civilian life.

No matter what caused their homelessness, these veterans are usually highly skilled, intelligent, motivated men and women who could be an asset to any business organization. Without a home, even a mailing address, a telephone, a place to dress and shower how can they hope to find and keep a good job?

Fortunately there are organizations dedicated to helping veterans break the cycle of homelessness and hopelessness. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) is a coalition of community based service providers in 43 states and the District of Columbia dedicated to ending homelessness among veterans.

Work is the key to helping homeless veterans rejoin American society. As important as quality clinical care, other supportive services, and transitional housing may be, the fact remains that helping veterans get and keep a job is the most essential element in their recovery and reintegration.

The Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) under reauthorization consideration in HR1484, is a job placement program begun in 1989 to provide grants to community-based organizations that employ flexible and innovative approaches to assist homeless, unemployed veterans reenter the workforce. Local programs offer employment and job-readiness services to place these veterans directly into paying jobs. HVRP provides the key element often missing from most homeless programming, job placement.

Through HVRP funds veterans gain access to civilian assistance, ex-military benefits and entitlements, education and training opportunities, legal assistance, whatever is needed to begin the rebuilding process towards employment.

HVRP programs work with veterans who have special needs and are shunned by other programs and services, veterans who have hit the very bottom, including those with long histories of substance abuse, severe PTSD, serious social problems, those who have legal issues, and those who are HIV positive. These veterans require more time consuming, specialized, intensive assessment, referrals, and counseling than is possible in other programs that work with other veterans seeking employment.

How did these veterans get to be unemployed and homeless? Each veteran has their own story, but we know that when they are not working they lose their self-respect, which can lead to substance abuse, legal problems, relationship issues. The decline continues until the formerly proud veteran has nothing and is on the street with so many barriers to employment that there is no clear beginning point for the road back.

When homeless veterans connect to an HVRP grant organization their common background serves as a unifying factor as they begin to reconstruct their lives. Recognition of this unity is a key to their individual success. Just as 10 weeks of Boot Camp brings together recruits from all races, cultures, and backgrounds and melds them into a cohesive group who talk the talk and walk the walk, and work as a team with a unified sense of purpose, homeless veteran providers reach out to end the isolation of homeless veterans, bringing them together again into a diverse group working toward a common task...finding a job, securing the job, and keeping the job.

HVRP success stories are many and varied and here are just a few we would like to share:

- ◆ US Army Airborne trooper spent 25 years on the street with alcohol addiction was able to spend 10 weeks in a program that led to full-time employment.
- ◆ Marine female minority veteran who left an abusive marriage, reunited with her children, obtained housing and a full time job to support her family.
- ◆ A veteran and his wife living in their car had legal problems preventing him from taking home a paycheck was able to receive legal assistance and a job that paid \$12.55 hour plus benefits and permanent housing.
- ◆ Formerly incarcerated veteran with addiction issues was placed in supportive transitional housing, provided with job search assistance including clothing, interviewing skills, and resume writing. He obtained an \$11.15 per hour job but also needed the tools and transportation to the job site. The HVRP funds provided this help. This veteran has now graduated from the HVRP program and is making \$18.75 per hour.
- ◆ Female Vietnam veteran was living in her car with a teenage daughter. The veteran had good job skills and work history but had only held low paying jobs. She lost her job and was unable to maintain a household as a single parent and became dependent on AFDC. With assistance she obtained a \$20,000 a year position and was referred to a credit service to help with past debt and a current budget.
- ◆ Vietnam combat veteran with severe PTSD that had caused him to be long term unemployed. With proper counseling and assistance with employment he has obtained full time employment and feels a renewed pride in himself.
- ◆ Female veteran was living in her car after being kicked out by her family. Through an HVRP provider she was able to find housing, counseling and assistance in relating her military experience into the civilian world. She now has a job as a procurement supervisor making over \$31,000.
- ◆ A veteran, his wife and four small children had been living in the woods in a tent after eviction. He was able to find a job and housing working through an HVRP grantee.

The *Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)* is virtually the only program that focuses on employment of veterans who are homeless. Since other sources of funding that should be available to our member organizations to fund activities that result in gainful employment are not generally available, *HVRP* takes on an importance far beyond the very small dollar amounts involved.

The keys to veterans' success are: finding stable housing or shelter; having a place to go where they feel comfortable and can enhance their self-esteem; and, being allowed the opportunity to pursue and be supported in their efforts for seeking employment. Service providers are committed to helping veterans overcome past failed attempts in employment. When veterans recognize the benefits and are motivated, they can be successful in obtaining employment and become a productive member of the community.

Mr. Chairman, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) urges you and your colleagues to authorize an amount of \$50 Million for the *Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)* for the years 2000-2004.

The problem is that the state and local agencies that distribute Federal resources for employment, training, and other vital services feel that "veterans are a Federal problem." Unless veterans are specifically and explicitly "written in" to laws, regulations, and appropriations by the Congress, then veterans will be explicitly "read out" of any program at the state and local level. As just one example, in program year 1995, only 2,052 homeless veterans received services from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Title II-A and Title III, out of the many tens of millions of dollars provided. This makes it all the more important for this small program to be authorized and funded at the modest \$50 million.

***HVRP* is an extraordinarily cost efficient program, with a cost per placement of about \$1,250 per veteran entering employment for the years 1989-1995. This is less**

than 25% of the cost of JTPA programs, which do not meet the special needs of homeless veterans, even in the rare instances where homeless veterans can secure such services. In at least some measure this is because *HVRP* is primarily a placement program and not a lengthy training program. *HVRP* is a very inexpensive and extraordinarily cost effective program in comparison to all of the JTPA programs.

Due to the very small appropriations for this program, \$3 million for the past two years, only twenty-two programs in eleven states have received grants. For FY2000 the President's budget is only asking for \$5 million to be appropriated. The Department of Labor estimates being able to place approximately 3,500 veterans in unsubsidized jobs with this \$5 million for about \$1430 per placement cost, still significantly lower than most job placement programs.

This program has suffered since its inception because it is small and an easy target for elimination or reduced appropriations. Our coalition has spent the majority of its advocacy efforts in the past five years in keeping this program alive because it has been so vital in ending homelessness among veterans.

While we believe that the Congress never intended to "write veterans out" of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) general titles, the fact remains that until recently there have been virtually no veteran specific or homeless veterans' specific projects funded by JTPA entities at the state or local level. Recently, two discretionary grants were given from JTPA for homeless veterans in Buffalo, NY and Springfield, Massachusetts for a total of about \$200,000.

Mr. Chairman, the National Coalition *for* Homeless Veterans (NCHV) urges this committee to continue to exercise its leadership as veteran advocates, by ensuring that as many veterans as possible receive the help needed to return to productive roles in American society, and get back on the tax rolls as full participating members of our society. NCHV **urges authorization of \$50 Million for the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) for each year 2000-2004 an investment program for veterans.**

The alternatives to getting these homeless veterans back to work are to have them continue to rotate through programs that don't provide an employment component, long term hospitalizations due to declining health caused by homelessness, to be a burden to states welfare programs, and finally to death on our streets.

\$50 million is only \$100 for each of the 500,000 veterans that the VA estimates are homeless at some point during the year.

NCHV thanks you for your consideration of the vital employment and training needs of our Nation's veterans who are homeless.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Linda Boone, Executive Director, National Coalition *for* Homeless Veterans took over the management of this national organization in April 1996. Although she is a native of Oregon, she came to DC after two years in Little Rock, Arkansas as executive director of a statewide association of nonprofits.

Linda's efforts for veterans' issues started in 1969 as a volunteer in her local community. In 1990 she became aware of the growing crisis of homeless veterans and began her advocacy for these veterans. In September 1993 Linda completed a year as National President of the one million member American Legion Auxiliary.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans was founded in 1990 by a group of veteran service providers when they became frustrated with the growing numbers of homeless veterans that were coming into their facilities and the lack of resources to adequately provide services.

The organization opened a Washington, DC office in 1993 to raise the homeless veteran issue at a national level to obtain resources to resolve issue. It is a nonprofit 501c3, membership organization. Funding is from donations, grants and membership fees.

The current mission of NCHV is to champion the quality of life for homeless veterans by shaping public policy, educating the public, and building the capacity of service providers to meet the needs of homeless veterans.

FEDERAL GRANT OR CONTRACT DISCLOSURE

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans received \$36, 016 Federal funding in FY99 (Oct. 1, 1998- Sept. 30, 1999) to provide targeted marketing for the Work Opportunity Tax Credits.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans received \$60,000 Federal funding in FY98 (Oct. 1, 1997- Sept. 30, 1998) to provide targeted marketing for the Work Opportunity Tax Credits.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN R. VITKACS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
VARIOUS VETERANS' LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS
(HR 1247, HR 1476, HR 1484, HR 1603, HR1663 and HR 2040)**

JUNE 16, 1999

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The American Legion appreciates the opportunity to address several bills dealing with the expansion of national cemeteries, a National Medal of Honor Memorial, the World War II Memorial, and issues related to homeless veterans.

**HR 1476
NATIONAL CEMETERY ACT OF 1999**

HR 1476 directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish new national cemeteries in each of three areas in the United States most in need of such a cemetery to serve the needs of veterans and their families. The measure requires that not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary submit to Congress a report setting forth the three areas identified for such establishment, a schedule for such establishment, and an estimate of the costs associated with such establishment.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion supports the construction of new national cemeteries in the areas of greatest need. Demographic projections of the veteran population have identified a number of areas of the country where there is a need for national cemeteries. Notwithstanding the construction and expansion of six new national cemeteries over the past decade, the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot expect to meet the burial needs of veterans and their eligible dependents in the 21st Century without further expansion of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Ironically, some open national cemeteries will accommodate veterans' burials for the next 50 to 100 years. The problem that needs to be resolved is that unless a veteran and their family lives near certain open national and state veterans' cemeteries, there is no easy solution to accommodate a request to be buried in a veterans' cemetery. A partial answer to a lack of sufficient open national cemeteries is the State Cemetery Grants Program. This program is an excellent complement to NCA. However, The American Legion does not believe the states should be considered as a substitute to the National Cemetery Administration.

Also, prior to 1981, all honorably discharged veterans' families were entitled to a headstone and burial plot allowance for the interment of a veteran in a private cemetery. Those small benefits were helpful to many families. Many private cemeteries have specific veterans' sections that, in the absence of reasonable access to an open national or state veterans' cemetery, is preferable to many veterans. The American Legion supports the restoration of the headstone and burial plot allowance for all eligible veterans. The elimination of this benefit was shortsighted and in no small part, may have contributed to a growing need for more national and state veterans' cemeteries. The headstone and burial plot allowance could help reduce the need for additional national and state veterans' cemeteries as veterans would be more content to be buried near their hometown community.

Mr. Chairman, NCA recorded approximately 77,000 burials during Fiscal Year 1998. The number of World War II veterans' deaths is expected to peak at 620,000 in 2008 and slowly return to the 1995 level in 2020. The unfortunate reality is that even if given the go-ahead tomorrow to build several new national cemeteries, it would require NCA almost seven years to

activate any new cemeteries. The American Legion strongly supports the development of a NCA strategic plan to provide a roadmap for future national cemetery expansion.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion is not blaming NCA for the current predicament. NCA officials have performed admirably over the past decade in designing, planning and supervising the construction of six new national cemeteries. Additionally, NCA has endeavored to expand existing open national cemeteries and achieved significant improvements in the State Cemetery Grants Program. What is needed today is earnest preparation to meet the unprecedented increase in veterans' deaths over the next two decades.

The American Legion supports the objectives of H.R. 1476. However, the measure should not limit the expansion of new national cemeteries. There are currently at least seven geographic areas in need of new national cemeteries and the selection process must be devoid of political considerations. Appropriate selection criteria must take precedence in the selection process. For example, veterans living in western Pennsylvania or Atlanta, Georgia should know why another area is selected before their area and vice versa.

Mr. Chairman, the enactment of Public Law 105-368 in November 1998 did not provide the states with all of the necessary incentives to develop new veterans' cemeteries. In the short-term, to accelerate realistic burial options for veterans and their families, VA must increase the burial plot allowance of \$150 currently paid to state veterans' cemeteries and make the allowance applicable to all veterans. Although Public Law 105-368 significantly improved the State Cemetery Grants Program, many states are still reluctant to commit to the long-term costs associated with maintaining veterans' cemeteries. An immediate increase in the burial plot allowance and an expansion of the benefit could help meet the need for new veterans' cemeteries and strengthen the efforts of the Federal government. Additionally, the State Cemetery Grants Program must be adequately funded to match the approved state grant applications.

H.R. 2040
NATIONAL CEMETERIES ASSESSMENT ACT OF 1999

H.R. 2040 would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a comprehensive study of national cemeteries, for the interment of deceased veterans, under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration. The study conducted shall include an assessment of:

- (A) The one-time repairs required at each national cemetery to ensure a dignified and respectful setting, appropriate to such cemetery, taking into account the diversity of age, climate, and burial options at individual national settings.
- (B) The feasibility of making standards of appearance of national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world.
- (C) The number of additional national cemeteries that will be required for the interment and memorialization in such cemeteries of individuals qualified under chapter 24 of such title who die after 2010.
- (D) Improvements to burial benefits under chapter 23 of title 38, United States Code, including a proposal to increase the amount of the benefit for plot allowances under section 2303(b) of such title.

The study shall identify by five-year period, beginning with 2010 and ending with 2030, the following:

- (A) The number of additional national cemeteries required during each five-year period.
- (B) With respect to each five-year period, the areas in the United States with the greatest concentration of veterans whose needs are not served by national cemeteries or State veterans' cemeteries.

The organization selected to conduct the study shall submit a report to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs not later than one year after a contract is established.

Mr. Chairman, the proposal to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the National Cemetery Administration's interment capacity and field operations is useful and necessary. Similar studies were previously conducted in 1987 and 1994. These studies were extremely beneficial in that the 1987 study directly contributed to identifying the geographic areas most in

need of new national cemetery development. Consequently, six new national cemeteries were designed, funded and constructed. The last four of these cemeteries will open in late 1999 and early 2000.

The 1994 study rearranged the geographic priorities for the next sequence of national cemeteries to be constructed. The study also recommended that the service period of open national cemeteries be extended as long as possible and that the State Cemetery Grants Program become more attractive to active participation by the states. These objectives have subsequently been met or are in process. The 1994 study reprioritized the development and establishment of new national cemeteries for veterans. To date, of the seven locations identified in the study, limited progress has been made on only one site - Oklahoma City, OK.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion supports the measure to conduct an independent study on improvements to existing national cemeteries and to assess the need for additional national cemetery expansion. The American Legion hopes the proposed study does not unnecessarily delay the needed expansion in areas already identified in the 1994 contractor study. It is commonly acknowledged that in addition to Oklahoma City, OK, the other high priority areas for national cemetery expansion are Atlanta, GA; south Florida (Miami); northern California (Sacramento); Pittsburgh, PA; Detroit, MI; and the expansion of the existing national cemetery at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, MO.

The American Legion, in particular, supports the proposal to identify by five-year periods, beginning with 2010 and ending with 2030, the number and location of additional national cemeteries to meet growing interment requirements. The adage "If you build them, they will come" is appropriate in this situation. It would also be of tremendous help to the NCA and to the states, if the proposed study would focus on areas of greatest need for the development and expansion of state veterans' cemeteries. The added focus on the states would help to identify and encourage veterans' organizations in those areas to seek support from their respective state legislatures for the State Cemetery Grants Program.

The necessary one-time repairs and the measure to make the appearance of national cemeteries commensurate with standards of appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world will require appropriate funding to meet the intent of the proposal. The American Legion strongly supports the proposal and trusts that the Congress will provide the funds necessary to comply with the measure. The American Legion has testified on numerous occasions in support of increasing the burial plot allowance. This is especially important in that the average cost of funerals has markedly increased since the last revision. The American Legion believes the burial plot allowance paid to the states should be increased and applicable to all veterans. As stated in our remarks under H.R. 1476, the burial plot allowance and the headstone allowance should also be reinstated for all honorably discharged veterans.

H.R. 1663

NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL

H.R. 1663 would designate as a national memorial the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California to honor recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Mr. Chairman, it is fitting that Medal of Honor memorials keep alive the memories of the gallant men and women who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. While The American Legion has no official position on the proposal, to proclaim this particular memorial to be the "National Medal of Honor Memorial" could cause offense to other cities and towns across the United States that have also chosen to erect such a monument.

This past Memorial Day, a \$15 million privately funded Medal of Honor Memorial, honoring all 3,410 recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor was dedicated in Indianapolis, Indiana. The memorial is called the "Medal of Honor Memorial." The memorial was erected in Indianapolis, Indiana due to the city and state's significant involvement in the American Civil War and its link to several Medal of Honor recipients of that conflict. Private citizens secured corporate funding to erect and maintain the memorial. It is the only Medal of Honor memorial in the United States that honors and recognizes all recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

H.R. 1247
WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL COMPLETION ACT

H.R. 1247 would expand the fund raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II memorial in the District of Columbia and to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial, and for other purposes.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion fully endorses the requested extension to December 31, 2005, for the completion of the National World War II Memorial. The American Legion's fund-raising efforts on behalf of this worthwhile and long overdue tribute to the men, women and children of that generation continue to expand. The American Legion has never set a goal for how much money it can raise through its efforts, but we are very confident that the amount will far exceed the combined total for what Legionnaires and their respective communities did for the Vietnam and Korean War Memorials.

H. R. 1484
AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR
HOMELESS VETERANS REINTEGRATION PROJECTS

Mr. Chairman, most individuals who work with homeless veterans, and who advocate for them, agree that the key to breaking the cycle of homelessness lies in assisting the veteran to become job ready and then assisting that veteran in finding suitable employment. Unfortunately, however, very few homeless veterans' programs offer an employment component. As a result, veterans all too often remain homeless when a small investment in their futures would provide the "hand-up" necessary for them to once again become productive members of society.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project (HVRP) is the only federally funded program that is focused strictly on preparing homeless veterans for employment and on successfully placing them in jobs. Through this program, grants are awarded to community-based organizations and private sector contractors that assist homeless, unemployed veterans in finding and sustaining employment. According to Department of Labor statistics, the average cost per placement is between \$900.00 and \$1500.00.

In order to find suitable employment, homeless veterans must overcome significant and real barriers. These barriers can be anything from not having the proper training to compete for certain jobs; to not having appropriate clothing for a job interview; to not having the tools to ply one's trade. HVRP addresses these types of issues and helps homeless, unemployed veterans get off the welfare dole and onto the tax rolls.

In other words, HVRP is not a "handout", but rather, it is an investment in the veteran and an investment in this country's economy. Considering the average cost per placement, the Federal government usually recoups its investment with a year.

H. R. 1484, *Authorization of Appropriations for Homeless Veterans Reintegration Projects*, seeks to extend the HVRP program from Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 through FY 2004. It will also raise HVRP's funding level from \$10 to \$50 million per fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, in view of HVRP's track record and its potential for reducing homelessness among veterans, The American Legion fully supports this legislation.

H. R. 1603
SELECTED RESERVE HOUSING LOAN FAIRNESS ACT OF 1999

This legislation will amend section 3702 (a)(2)(E) of title 38, United States Code, by making eligibility for housing loans permanent for former members of the Selected Reserves who meet the criteria outlined in sections 3701 and 3702 of that title.

Mr. Chairman, in recent years this country drastically reduced the size of its active duty and Reserve Components. That reduction necessitated the complete integration of National Guard and Reserve units into America's Total Force. Today, with the Active Forces' reduction in manpower and numerous military deployments, our national security is increasingly dependent on the Reserve Components.

In view of the very important role that members of the Reserve Components play both at home and abroad, The American Legion believes that their efforts should be recognized by a grateful nation. Therefore, we fully endorse enactment of **H. R. 1603**.

Mr. Chairman, that completes this statement.

**STATEMENT OF
JOY ILEM
ASSOCIATE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 16, 1999**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the more than one million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and its Women's Auxiliary, I thank you for this opportunity to express the views of the DAV regarding several bills on which the Subcommittee invited testimony.

Clearly, actions taken by the Subcommittee will materially affect the lives our Nation's service-connected disabled veterans and their families. Our membership sincerely appreciates that our views are being given consideration by the Subcommittee prior to further congressional action.

Our discussion will encompass the provisions of the following legislation: H.R. 1476, to establish additional national cemeteries for veterans; H.R. 1247, to expand the fund raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) to expedite the establishment of the World War II Memorial and to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial; H.R. 1603, to provide for permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans housing loans; H.R. 1484, to authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects; H.R. 1663, to designate as a national memorial the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor; and H.R. 2040, to provide for a comprehensive assessment of national cemeteries.

H.R. 1476

This bill, introduced by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Minority Member Lane Evans for himself and several cosponsors, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a national cemetery in each of the three areas in the United States determined to be in most need of such a cemetery to serve the needs of veterans and their families.

The DAV has no mandate from our membership on this measure. However, its purpose is a beneficial one, and we do not object to its favorable consideration.

In recognition of the need for development of additional national cemeteries, we appreciate the introduction of H.R. 1476, the National Cemetery Act of 1999, by Congressman Evans. As you are aware, there is a need to address in a comprehensive manner the need for additional national cemeteries across the Nation, and we believe this is a step in the right direction to meet the increasing burial needs of the rapidly aging veteran population.

H.R. 1247

Representative Bob Stump, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs introduced this bill for himself, with several cosponsors, to expand the fund-raising authorities of the ABMC, to expedite the establishment of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia and to ensure adequate funds for repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial.

The DAV does not have a mandate to support this legislation. However, its purpose is a beneficial one, and the DAV therefore does not have any opposition to it. This bill, cited as the "World War II Memorial Completion Act" would expedite completion of the memorial to honor

members of the Armed Forces who served in World War II and commemorate the participation of the United States in that war.

Provisions of H.R. 1247 include sections on fund raising, special Treasury borrowing authority to assure timely completion of the monument, and protection of ABMC intellectual property through registration and licensing of trademarks in connection with fund raising.

We appreciate Congressman Stump's and the other cosponsors' efforts to address all aspects of this important issue. With an increasing mortality of World War II veterans, we see the need to aggressively act on this important legislation. Expedient completion of the monument is necessary so that World War II era veterans and their family members can witness the culmination of this Nation's gratitude.

H.R. 1603

This bill, introduced by Representative Lane Evans for himself and Representative Bob Stump, would provide permanent eligibility for veterans' housing loans to former members of the Selected Reserve.

The current law provides eligibility to former members of the Selected Reserve for veterans' housing loans with delimiting dates for the period beginning on October 28, 1992, and ending on September 30, 2003. As a matter of fairness to all qualifying former members of the Selected Reserve, the amendment to delete the delimiting dates appears appropriate.

While DAV has no resolution relative to this bill, we do not object to its favorable consideration.

H.R. 1484

The DAV, in National Convention, assembled in Las Vegas, Nevada, August 23-27, 1998, voted to support DAV Resolution No. 248, to increase federal funding for homeless veterans initiatives.

Accordingly, the DAV fully supports the provisions of this legislation that would authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act and specifies a funding level of \$50 million for fiscal years 2000 through 2004.

The homeless veterans reintegration project is a worthy program and we support its continuation and adequate funding. Conservative estimates put homelessness among veterans as high as 280,000 or about 35% of the total homeless population in America. Therefore, DAV believes there exists a critical need for homeless initiatives such as the reintegration project, to create opportunities for homeless veterans and their families to achieve a fair and reasonable chance to break the vicious cycle of homelessness and despair among this population.

Mr. Chairman, we commend Representative Bob Filner for his efforts to adequately fund the homeless reintegration program, and we appreciate the Subcommittee's serious consideration of this bill.

H.R. 1663

This bill, introduced by Representative Ken Calvert, with 69 cosponsors, would designate as a national memorial. The memorial is being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California, to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor.

DAV has no National Convention mandate relative to this issue; however, we do not oppose this measure.

Our Nation holds in the highest regard Medal of Honor recipients who demonstrated extraordinary valorous actions in keeping with the most cherished traditions of military service. Therefore, it is fitting that a national memorial is designated to recognize and honor the memory of those military heroes memorialized there. As a country, we acknowledge our everlasting gratitude and respect for these extraordinary individuals, by providing this national memorial in recognition of their selfless actions and honorable service to this county.

H.R. 2040

This bill, introduced by Representative Stump and six cosponsors, would provide for a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries. Provisions of the bill would require an independent study to be conducted to determine the need to increase burial benefits and the number of additional cemeteries that will be required between the years 2010 and 2030. It would also require an assessment and report of one-time repairs needed at each national cemetery and the feasibility of improving the appearance at national cemeteries commensurate with standards of the finest cemeteries in the world.

Last year, the DAV, in National Convention, adopted DAV Resolution No. 23 to support legislation to increase both VA burial and plot allowances to a level reflecting the inflationary impact of the intervening years. Accordingly, DAV fully supports the section of H.R. 2040 which would increase the amount of the benefit for plot allowances.

The amount payable by the VA as a burial allowance (\$300) and the amount payable as a plot allowance (\$150) have remained constant for many years in spite of inflationary spiral. Therefore, we maintain that an increase in the amount of the benefit for plot allowances under chapter 23 of title 38, United States Code, section 2303(b) is appropriate and will better serve veterans and their families. We also request that the Subcommittee consider an increase in the amount of the benefit for burial allowance.

The DAV has no official mandate from our membership on the remaining provisions in this bill. However, we do not object to their favorable consideration.

In previous testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, DAV discussed the difficulty that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) had in maintaining the appearance of its 115 national cemeteries. Budgetary shortfalls and reduction in personnel have forced the system to often defer important preventative maintenance and infrastructure repairs. In the past, some national cemeteries were not being properly maintained, with reported long-standing deficiencies including poorly tended lawns, deteriorating structures, unsafe walkways, and sunken gravesites.

We commend the Subcommittee for its insight and consideration of this very important issue. Part of NCA's mission is to provide veterans with an honorable final resting place and to maintain its national cemeteries as national shrines. As a Nation, we consider our national cemeteries to be sacred memorials dedicated to the honor and memory of those interred or memorialized there. The appearance of these final resting places should be maintained in a manner befitting their status as national shrines. We agree that veterans should be provided a final resting place that reflects the dignity and respect they deserve and with appearance equivalent to the finest cemeteries in the world.

Eligible veterans and their dependents should be assured that their final resting place will always be properly maintained and that its appearance will remain impeccable without regard to budgetary constraints. We agree an independent study is appropriate to assess one-time repairs needed and the feasibility of improving appearance of national cemeteries. However, we are concerned that recommendations from the mandated study may not result in NCA taking action to make the recommended repairs or improvements due to budgetary constraints. The highest standard of care and maintenance at our national cemeteries should always be a priority. Neglect of national cemeteries can only be described as shameful. There is no excuse for such neglect.

Of equal concern is adequate long-range planning to meet the burial needs of the veteran population well into the future. In previous testimony, we expressed our sincere concern that NCA lacked a comprehensive long-term planning strategy, which is essential to providing adequate burial space for eligible veterans and their family members during the peak years. We agree that studies beyond 2010 are essential to meeting the future needs of veterans. However, we are not satisfied that NCA is properly prepared to meet its responsibilities given the significantly increasing interment rate expected to peak in the next ten years. The Subcommittee may consider an amendment to H.R. 2040 which would require the independent study and assessment of the number of additional cemeteries that will be required to include the years 2005 through 2030.

CONCLUSION

We hope that our statement is helpful to you. We appreciate the opportunity to present our views, and we thank the Subcommittee for its continuing support for this Nation's veterans.



DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) does not currently receive any money from any federal grant or contract.

During fiscal year (FY) 1995, DAV received \$55,252.56 from Court of Veterans Appeals appropriated funds provided to the Legal Service Corporation for services provided by DAV to the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program. In FY 1996, DAV received \$8,448.12 for services provided to the Consortium. Since June 1996, DAV has provided its services to the Consortium at no cost to the Consortium.



Vietnam Veterans of America

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

STATEMENT

of

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

by

**Richard F. Weidman
Director of Government Relations**

Before the

**House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits**

**Regarding Pending Legislative Proposals
H.R. 1476, H.R. 1247, H.R. 1484,
H.R. 1603, H.R. 1663, and H.R. 2040**

June 16, 1999

Vietnam Veterans of America

House Committee on Veterans Affairs
 Subcommittee on Benefits
 Regarding Pending Legislative Proposals
 H.R. 1476, H.R. 1247, H.R. 1484,
 H.R. 1603, H.R. 1663, and H.R. 2040
 June 16, 1999

Mr. Chairman, my name is Rick Weidman, and I serve as Director of Government Relations for Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). On behalf of the officers and members of VVA, I thank you for the opportunity to appear here today to present our views on these legislative proposals. Let me note that VVA is grateful for your continued leadership on these and other issues of vital interest to America's veterans.

In regard to H.R. 1476, the "National Cemetery Act of 1999," Vietnam Veterans of America favors this bill, which would authorize moving ahead with three areas most in need of additional cemeteries.

In regard to H.R. 1247, the "World War II Memorial Completion Act," Vietnam Veterans of America favors speedy approval and enactment of this proposal. It is difficult to accomplish the many things necessary to build memorials to any war, as those of us who served in the Vietnam War are keenly aware. VVA believes that those seeking to build the World War II Memorial should have the time needed to successfully complete their mission, which to all reports is again on track toward a fine memorial to the men and women who served in World War II.

In regard to H.R. 1603, the "Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999," VVA favors passage of this proposal. Given the low-cost nature of this program, and the fact that the actuality of the "total force concept" becomes more of a reality each year, affording this benefit to men and women who serve in the reserve, and may be called up to active duty at a moment's notice, makes a great deal of sense.

In regard to H.R. 1663, the "National Medal of Honor Memorial Act," Vietnam Veterans of America would favor the creation of such a memorial and would support the creation of same at the Riverside, California, site as long as the Medal of Honor Society does not object to this location.

Vietnam Veterans of America strongly favors passage of H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999." As we testified last month, VVA believes that a good need assessment and a workable plan for the burial need is essential. VVA believes that the "Independent Study" is necessary and urges the earliest possible enactment of this legislation, so that we can get this much-needed planning process underway as soon as possible.

In regard to H.R. 1484, "To authorize appropriations for homeless veterans reintegration projects under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act," Vietnam Veterans of America believes that this legislation is vitally needed and urges passage and enactment as soon as possible.

Vietnam Veterans of America

House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Subcommittee on Benefits
Regarding Pending Legislative Proposals
H.R. 1476, H.R. 1247, H.R. 1484,
H.R. 1603, H.R. 1663, and H.R. 2040
June 16, 1999

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) provides resources for job placement that simply are not otherwise available from any other source. HVRP is the most cost-effective and cost-efficient program operated by the U.S. Department of Labor. The low cost of about \$1,000 per placement is returned to the Treasury in the first year. One can reasonably argue that this is really a high-yield short-term investment program that provides quick returns to the American people in fiscal terms, without even discussing the extraordinary human returns that it yields. The problem is that it has been just too small an authorization, and it is shameful that even that small amount has not been fully funded. VVA argues that even a \$50 million authorization is not adequate to fully meet the need, but it more nearly approaches what needs to be done than the current situation.

HVRP provides resources so that community-based organizations and others who have helped veterans in the process of recovery, rehabilitation, and restoration can now help those veterans take the crucial final step of getting and keeping a job. It is fair to say that without the resources to help veterans actually get and keep a job we would jeopardize the effectiveness of the hundreds of millions of dollars spent to help veterans reach the point where they are "job ready". If these veterans can obtain employment, and with support, maintain that employment until they can get a better job and start to build a career and successful work history, then they have a chance to truly be all they can be.

Mr. Chairman, work is the key to ensuring that the rest of the process works to assist homeless veterans regain a place in American society by helping them get and keep remunerative work while continuing in treatment. Let us not leave so many that need this assistance, who want to work, adrift without the services needed to help them become productive citizens again. These men and women have earned the right to get assistance so that they can earn their own way in the society they defended, risking life and limb.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions. Again, Vietnam Veterans of America appreciates the opportunity to appear here today and thanks you for your leadership on these important issues.



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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Funding Statement
June 16, 1999**

The national organization Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is a non-profit veterans membership organization registered as a 501(c)(19) with the Internal Revenue Service. VVA is also appropriately registered with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives in compliance with the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995.

VVA is not currently in receipt of any federal grant or contract, other than the routine allocation of office space and associated resources in VA Regional Offices for outreach and direct services through its Veterans Benefits Program (Service Representatives). This is also true of the previous two fiscal years.

For Further Information, Contact:
Director of Government Relations
Vietnam Veterans of America
(202) 628-2700, extension 127

SIDNEY DANIELS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

H.R. 1247, H.R. 1476, H.R. 1484, H.R. 1603, AND H.R. 1663

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 16, 1999

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

I appreciate the opportunity to present the views of the Veterans of Foreign Wars with respect to bills being considered by the Subcommittee this morning.

First, I would like to offer comments on H.R. 1476, the *National Cemetery Act of 1999*. If enacted, this measure will allow for establishment of a national cemetery in three areas of the country that the Secretary determines to be most in need of a cemetery to serve veterans and their families. We strongly support this legislation and believe it represents a measured response to the increased burial demand that will be placed on veterans' cemeteries over the next several years.

As the veteran population ages, the VFW believes that expansion of the VA Cemetery System is crucial to meeting the inevitable increased burial demands. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration (NCA) interments will peak at approximately 107,000 in the year 2008.

The increased demand for burial space comes at a time when space is at a premium. Of the 115 national cemeteries managed and operated by NCA, 57 are open to all interments, 33 are open to cremated remains and the remaining 25 are closed to new interments. Although four new national cemeteries scheduled to open in 1999 -- Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas; Saratogo, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; and Chicago, Illinois -- will provide some relief, the VFW continues to be concerned that there are no plans to address the burial needs of veterans in other areas where the demand is as great as in these cities. We believe that H.R. 1476 is a giant step in the right direction and we urge that the measure be favorably reported out of this subcommittee.

[H.R. 1247.] The VFW firmly supports enactment of H.R. 1247, the *World War II Memorial Completion Act*, which, if enacted, would primarily expand the fund raising authority of the American Battle Monuments Commission. We are familiar with and have the highest regard for the services provided to the nation by the Commission. Since its inception in 1917, the Commission has been primarily responsible for commemorating the services of the American Armed Forces through the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of memorial shrines. In addition to its domestic responsibilities, the Commission also exercises control over the design and construction of U.S. military monuments and markers erected in foreign countries by U.S. citizens and organizations.

The World War II Memorial, which would immediately benefit from passage of H.R. 1247, is dedicated to all those who served during this era. The memorial honors all military veterans of the war, the citizens on the home front, the nation at large, and the high moral

purpose and idealism that motivated the nation's call to arms on battle grounds in foreign countries.

The VFW is aware that there is concern among some that the special borrowing authority contained in H.R. 1247 could have an adverse effect on overall fund raising efforts. We have considered this premise and rejected it. We are satisfied that the borrowing authority expressed in H.R. 1247 is consistent with sound business principles, and urge passage of the measure in its entirety. It goes without saying that the VFW is committed to the World War II Memorial project and will continue to publicize and provide financial support.

[H.R. 1484.] We strongly support H.R. 1484, which would authorize appropriations for homeless veterans' reintegration projects (HVRP) under the Steward B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. This measure calls for a \$50 million appropriation for each of the next five fiscal years.

Mr. Chairman, although the HVRP was most recently authorized at \$10 million per fiscal year, the program has never received an appropriation of more than \$5 million. For the current fiscal year, the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), which administers the HVRP program received an appropriation of approximately \$3 million. Considering that HVRP is essentially the only federal program that directs its total resources to finding jobs and providing counseling and support services aimed at reintegrating homeless veterans into society, the amount of funding available for this mission is woefully inadequate.

During the current fiscal year, VETS has been able to award grants to approximately 19 urban areas and 5 rural communities to assist homeless veterans. The average size of these grants comes to approximately \$125,000. As a result of the inadequate funds made available to VETS, over 100 projects from communities around the nation applied for but did not receive any funding.

The VFW believes that if this Congress is committed to eradicating homelessness in America then it should demonstrate its seriousness by providing a respectable level of resources to combat the problem. We firmly believe that an annual appropriation of \$50 million over the next five fiscal years is a step toward that end.

[H.R. 1603.] Through the years, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has been a strong supporter and advocate of the VA home loan program. This program has proven to be highly successful and is an essential readjustment benefit allowing veterans who have sacrificed years as well as educational and professional opportunities in order to serve their nation, catch up with their non-veteran peers. It is even more important to those members of the Selected Reserve to be able to participate in this program because so many of them have left their jobs, businesses, and their families to answer the call to duty in such places as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and now Kosovo. The Veterans of Foreign Wars supports H.R. 1603.

[H.R. 1663.] The President, in the name of Congress, has awarded more than 3,400 Medals of Honor to our nation's bravest servicemembers since the award was created in 1861. The history of this medal is indeed vast because it brings to the forefront the deeds of unrelenting heroism of those brave Americans who have been recognized by their peers for their selfless devotion to duty. It is only fitting that the memorial being built at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California, be dedicated in their honor. The Veterans of Foreign Wars supports H.R. 1663.

This concludes my testimony and I will be happy to answer any questions you or members of the subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF
HARLEY THOMAS, ASSOCIATE LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
OF THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
CONCERNING
"WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL COMPLETION ACT",
"NATIONAL CEMETERY ACT OF 1999",
"VETERANS' CEMETERIES ASSESSMENT ACT OF 1999",
"STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT",
"SELECTED RESERVE HOUSING LOAN FAIRNESS ACT OF 1999",
"NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL ACT"
JUNE 16, 1999**

Chairman Quinn, Ranking Democratic Member Filner, Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), I appreciate this opportunity to testify regarding the pending legislation before this subcommittee today.

H.R. 1247 - WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL COMPLETION ACT

On behalf of the more than 12,245,000 men and women that served during World War II, including more than 400,000 that gave the ultimate sacrifice, PVA believes the completion of the WWII memorial authorized by Congress under Public Law 103-32 is long over due. PVA fully supports the provisions in H.R. 1247 which would allow for

special borrowing authority to assure that groundbreaking, construction, and dedication of the WWII memorial are completed on a timely basis. Additionally, PVA fully supports the provisions to allow for the commission to solicit and receive contributions to the memorial fund.

NATIONAL CEMETERY ACT OF 1999 - H.R. 1476

PVA fully supports the enactment of H.R. 1476. However, we feel the legislation falls far short of that which will be needed to meet the burial demands that will be placed on the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), over the next 10 years. Conservative estimates indicate that burial demands will peak at approximately 107,000 in 2008, however, the NCA has no strategic plan in place beyond FY 2000.

The demand for burial space comes at a time when that space is at a premium. There are 115 national cemeteries that fall under the jurisdiction of the NCA. Twenty-two are closed to new burials and 36 are only open to cremated remains. Although the three new cemeteries that will be created under this legislation will help, there are no plans for new cemeteries in high population areas such as Atlanta, Miami, and Sacramento. Since the congressionally mandated study initiated in 1987, only six of the ten areas identified have initiated construction of new cemeteries. PVA believes this chronic resource shortfall must be addressed and positive action taken with utmost urgency.

VETERANS CEMETERIES ASSESSMENT ACT OF 1999 - H.R. 2040

The passage of this legislation may provide the urgent relief necessary for the NCA to provide adequate resources to our Nations' Veterans. PVA supports the language in H.R. 2040.

STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT - H.R. 1484

PVA is in full support of amending 42 U.S.C. § 11448(e)(1) adding \$50,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2000 through 2004. The *Independent Budget* made this recommendation and we would like to thank Mr. Filner for his amendment.

SELECTED RESERVE HOUSING LOAN FAIRNESS ACT OF 1999 - H.R. 1603

PVA has no opposition to the amendment affecting the permanent eligibility for housing loans for former members of the selected reserve.

NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MEMORIAL ACT - H.R. 1663

PVA supports the designation of a national medal of honor memorial to be set aside at the Riverside, California National Cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.



Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States of America

225 N. Washington Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314 • Telephone (703) 549-0311

STATEMENT OF

**LARRY D. RHEA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS**

TO THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ON

H.R. 1247, H.R. 1476, H.R. 1484, H.R. 1603, H.R. 1663

And

**Draft Legislation Cited As The
Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999**

JUNE 16, 1999

DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) does not currently receive, nor has the Association ever received, any federal money for grants or contracts.

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, the Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) is pleased to have the opportunity to testify on the legislative initiatives under consideration today. The Association is grateful for the attention that this Subcommittee has given to important issues affecting veterans programs and benefits. The noncommissioned and petty officers of NCOA trust that our testimony will be helpful to the important issues you have before you this morning.

H.R. 1247 World War II Memorial Completion Act

NCOA enthusiastically supports the World War II Memorial Completion Act, H.R. 1247, and the Association salutes the Distinguished Chairman, Mr. Stump, and the Distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Evans, for introducing the bill. The legislation would expand the fund raising authorities of the American Battle Monuments Commission to expedite the establishment of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia, as well as provide a mechanism to ensure adequate funds for the repair and long-term maintenance of the memorial. NCOA urges the Subcommittee to favorably report the Act to the full Committee, where the Association anticipates it will receive unanimous endorsement for consideration by the House of Representatives.

NCOA wants to take the opportunity afforded by this hearing to inform the Subcommittee of a major effort launched by the Association to raise funds for the National World War II Memorial. Recently, NCOA announced the "Honor Walk," a landmark effort to help raise funds to build the Memorial. The "Honor Walk," beginning in Mobile, Alabama, on September 2, 1999 (V-J Day), and finishing in Washington, DC, on November 11, 1999 (Veterans Day), will pass through six states, five state capitals, 15 military installations, and hundreds of smaller cities and towns. In honor of World War II veterans, including his father, NCOA member and Army Command Sergeant Major Ron Bedford of Ozark, Alabama will walk 1500 miles in 71 days.

Along the 1500-mile route, Command Sergeant Major Bedford will be joined by thousands of veterans and their families, local and regional dignitaries, mayors, governors and Members of Congress. The kick-off will be a noon concert on September 2, at the USS Battleship Alabama Park in Mobile. Similar large-scale events will be held in Atlanta, Norfolk and Washington, DC. Events will also be staged along the route in cities and towns, at major military installations, and in State capitals including Montgomery, Columbia, Raleigh, and Richmond. The World War II Memorial Campaign has sanctioned the "Honor Walk".

NCOA, whose members include active duty, reserve, national guard, retired military personnel and veterans who have served honorably, has been a strong supporter of the World War II Memorial since the project's inception. The Association is pleased to lend its strong support to H.R. 1247 and honored to be spear heading an effort to raise funds for the Memorial.

H.R. 1476 National Cemetery Act of 1999

NCOA supports H.R. 1476, the National Cemetery Act of 1999, that would require the Secretary of Veterans to establish a national veterans cemetery in each of three geographical areas determined by the Secretary to have the greatest need. While the Association supports this measure and believes it is a positive step forward, it nonetheless falls short of the long-range strategic plan for the National Cemetery Administration that NCOA believes is desperately needed. The Association

sincerely hopes that H.R. 1476, in conjunction with the draft legislation entitled the Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999 (discussed below), will provide the starting point to develop such a plan.

H.R. 1484

Regarding Appropriations For Homeless Veterans Reintegration Projects

For Fiscal Years 2000 through 2004, H.R. 1484 would authorize appropriations for homeless veterans' reintegration projects, under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, in the amount of \$50 million for each of those years. NCOA supports H.R. 1484 with the following additional comments.

As the Distinguished Members of this Subcommittee know, at any given time since 1990, the best estimates available indicate that homeless veterans comprise approximately 30-35% of the homeless population. While the Association is deeply grateful for H.R. 1484, NCOA believes that legislation is needed to target a percentage of the funds, for each of the several programs under the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, to the benefit of homeless veterans. Ideally in our view, a target for the funds to be dedicated to homeless veterans would closely approximate the veteran percentage of the overall homeless population.

H.R. 1603

Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999

Currently, the Selected Reserve Home Loan Program is set to expire on September 30, 2003. For many years, NCOA has been advocating that this highly successful program should be made permanent and the Association is pleased that Mr. Evans and Mr. Stump have introduced H.R. 1603 to provide for permanent eligibility of former members of the Selected Reserve. NCOA strongly supports the Selected Reserve Housing Loan Fairness Act of 1999 and urges the Subcommittee to report the bill favorably to the full Committee.

H.R. 1663

National Medal of Honor Memorial Act

The National Medal of Honor Memorial Act, H.R. 1663, would designate the memorial being constructed at the Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California, as the National Medal of Honor Memorial to honor recipients of the Medal of Honor. NCOA strongly supports this measure and urges its swift consideration and passage.

Draft Legislation

The Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999

The proposed Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999 would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into a contract with a qualified organization, other than an entity of Federal, State, or local government, to conduct a comprehensive study of national cemeteries. The proposed study would include an assessment of:

- One-time repairs required at each national cemetery to ensure a dignified and respectful appearance

- **The feasibility of making the appearance of national cemeteries commensurate with the appearance of the finest cemeteries in the world**
- **The number of additional national cemeteries required for the interment and memorialization of eligible veterans**
- **Improvements needed in burial benefits (i.e., plot allowances).**

NCOA applauds the well-intentioned motives of the draft legislation but in complete candor the proposed legislation is a vote of "no confidence" in the National Cemetery Administration. NCOA must ask the following questions in regard to the proposed assessment of veterans' cemeteries: Is this not one of the very reasons why we have an Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs? Who, if not the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, is in a better position to assess the needs and requirements of the National Cemetery Administration and recommend improvements in burial benefits? Granted the Office of the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs has substantial and important administrative functions, however, is not long-range strategic planning and budgeting at the very core of their responsibilities also?

Public Law 99-576 required the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide Congress two reports on the National Cemetery System. The first of those reports was delivered to Congress in 1987 and proposed a five-point plan for the National Cemetery System. The second report, delivered to Congress in February 1994, reaffirmed the earlier five-point plan of action. While these two reports had at their core the regional cemetery concept, that concept later yielded to the demographics of the veteran population as the principal criteria for locating new national cemeteries where the need is greatest. Further, each year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs receives, comments on and forwards to Congress, as required by 38 USC 2401, the Annual Report of the Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials. That Advisory Committee annually provides the Secretary with its best advice on the administration of national cemeteries, selection of new national cemetery construction sites, and the adequacy of funding for operation of the National Cemetery Administration.

NCOA respectfully submits to the Subcommittee that if another study is undertaken today, many of the findings of such a study would mirror what we have known since 1987, if not before. Each year the Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials reviews current demographics of the veteran population and the impact of those trends on the ability of the National Cemetery Administration to meet the burial needs of veterans and their families. The dilemma, as NCOA sees it, is not so much identifying the need for new cemeteries, specifying where those cemeteries should be located, or assessing the maintenance and equipment requirements, as it is the funding to meet all of those needs and requirements. The real problem confronting the National Cemetery Administration today, and for the last two decades, is that the need has not been the driver - we have let inadequate budgets and poor long-range planning dictate what we do. Until that is reversed, another study will be just that - another study.

If the Subcommittee elects to advance the Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999, NCOA recommends that the following areas be included in Section 2(b)(1), Matters Studied:

- **An assessment of equipment in need of replacement, the costs associated with such replacement, and recommendations, based upon equipment life-expectancy, for a long-term equipment replacement strategy**
- **An assessment of full-time employees required at each national cemetery to ensure the conduct of appropriate and dignified burial operations and to ensure appropriate maintenance of cemetery grounds and burial sites**
- **An assessment of the State Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, including recommendations for improvement.**

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, NCOA again thanks the Subcommittee for the opportunity to comment on these legislative initiatives pertaining to veterans programs and benefits. The Association requests that you consider our comments relating to each bill and NCOA stands ready to work with the Subcommittee and full Committee, and committee staff, on each of the bills being deliberated.

Thank you.

WRITTEN COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND THEIR RESPONSES

Post-Hearing Questions
Concerning the June 16, 1999, Hearing

for
Mr. Roger Rapp
Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs

from
The Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

1. Nearly half of the states do not participate in the State Cemetery Grants Program. A report to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs by its Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations regarding a Subcommittee hearing on May 20, 1999, noted that three directors of State Veterans Affairs Departments had expressed the need for financial assistance from the National Cemetery Administration for recurring maintenance costs and requested an increase of the \$150 plot allowance.

- a. Please describe the relationship between the plot allowance benefit and the State cost of maintaining a veterans cemetery.**

The plot allowance is funded from the Compensation and Pension appropriation, and the program is administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration. The plot allowance assists the states in partially offsetting the costs associated with the burial and interment of eligible, wartime veterans. The impact of the plot allowance on defraying the costs of operating a state veterans cemetery will vary from state to state due to differences in local factors.

Currently 21 states operate 38 cemeteries, which received Federal assistance through the State Cemetery Grants Program. Several states are in the process of designing and constructing additional cemeteries. When all these projects are completed, 28 states will be operating 51 cemeteries. Additional states have passed legislation in their most recently completed sessions to establish state veterans cemeteries and a number of other states are considering cemeteries.

- b. In your experience, what, if any, effect would an increase in the plot allowance have on the effectiveness of the State Cemetery Grants Program?**

An increase in the amount of the burial plot allowance may have a positive effect on states considering whether or not to apply for a grant. Many states rely on the burial plot allowance as income to assist in offsetting costs associated with operating a cemetery. There are also those states that operate state veterans cemeteries and do

not have plans to build future cemeteries, for example, Maryland, which currently operates five state veterans cemeteries. These states are not able to take advantage of the recent legislation that has increased the grant amounts available through the States Cemetery Grants Program, but they would benefit from an increase to the burial plot allowance.

- c. If an increase in the plot allowance would increase program effectiveness, to what appropriate level should the benefit be raised? Please explain your reasoning.**

As stated above, NCA believes that an increase in the burial plot allowance may have a positive effect on states considering whether or not to apply for a Federal grant to assist in the construction costs associated with building a state veterans cemetery. However, NCA is currently unable to make a determination as to what would be the appropriate level of the burial plot allowance since the Department does not have the data on state cemetery operating costs. The cost range between the states is likely to vary quite a bit. The costs of interments in a VA national cemetery generally range from \$350 to \$600, depending on the type of burial (casket or cremain) and local climatic and soil conditions.

- d. What would be the estimated cost of such an increase in the amount of the plot allowance benefit?**

Once an increase in benefits is defined, a cost estimate could be calculated. In FY 2000, it is projected that there will be 9,400 veterans interred at state veterans cemeteries who are currently eligible to receive a burial plot allowance based on their wartime service. The states would be the recipients of these payments.

- e. What would be the estimated benefit to America's veterans of such an increase?**

To the extent that an increase in the burial plot allowance paid to states encourages more states to establish veterans cemeteries, more veterans would be provided with reasonable access to the benefit of burial in a veterans cemetery.

- f. What, if any, negative aspects would there be to such an increase?**

While costs for both the State Cemetery Grants Program and burial plot allowance payments are likely to increase, no adverse impact on these programs are anticipated.

2. State veterans cemeteries are eligible to receive payment of the plot allowance benefit only in the case of veterans who have wartime service. Directors of State Departments of Veterans Affairs noted at the recent Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing that about 20 percent of the burials in state veterans' cemeteries are of veterans who are not eligible for a plot allowance. Those directors recommended that eligibility for the plot allowance benefit be expanded to include all veterans who would be eligible for burial in a national cemetery.

a. In your experience, what, if any, effect would such an expansion of plot allowance eligibility have on the effectiveness of the State Cemetery Grants Program?

An extension of the burial plot allowance to all veterans buried in a state cemetery may have a positive effect on states considering whether or not to apply for a grant. Many states rely on the burial plot allowance as income to assist in offsetting costs associated with operating a cemetery. There are also those states that operate state veterans cemeteries and do not have plans to build future cemeteries, for example, Maryland, which currently operates five state veterans cemeteries. These states are not able to take advantage of the recent legislation that has increased the grant amounts available through the States Cemetery Grants Program, but they would benefit from an increase to the burial plot allowance.

b. What would be the estimated cost of such an increase in plot allowance eligibility?

The estimated cost of legislation to expand the eligibility to receive a plot allowance to all veterans eligible for burial in a national cemetery at the current rate of \$150 would be \$180,000 for FY 2000. This figure is based on the projected number of veterans who will be interred at a state veterans cemetery in FY 2000 that are not currently eligible for the plot allowance.

c. What would be the projected benefit to America's veterans of such an expansion?

To the extent that an expansion in burial plot allowance eligibility encourages more states to establish veterans cemeteries, more veterans would be provided with reasonable access to the benefit of burial in a veterans cemetery. In addition, the burial plot allowance payments to the states would be provided for all honorably discharged veterans, which is consistent with the eligibility requirements for burial in a national cemetery.

d. What, if any, negative aspects would there be to such an expansion of eligibility?

While costs for both the State Cemetery Grants Program and burial plot allowance payments are likely to increase, no adverse impact on these programs are anticipated.

Congressman Filner to U.S. Department of Labor

Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service Responses to
Follow-up Questions from the Subcommittee on Benefits
Legislative Hearing held June 16, 1999 on
Miscellaneous Legislation

Question 1 – The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) is a cost-effective program, with a cost per placement of approximately \$1,250 per veteran. A witness pointed out that this is less than 25% of the cost of JTPA Programs.

What is it about the structure and design of HVRP that accounts for the cost efficient success?

Answer – The HVRP cost effectiveness is based on a focused outcome -- employment and ultimately self-sufficiency. That is the entire focus of the program. HVRP's focus is in turn supported by the work of other organizations. VETS and the HVRP grant recipient work with organizations like the Departments of Veterans' Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, as well as state and local government and community-based organizations to make sure that the veterans have support services for medical problems, interim housing, and have links to the VETS' funded DVOPs and LVERs, so that the homeless veteran get good job placement assistance. Additionally, if training is needed, programs are made available. In terms of dollars, the small amount of money HVRP is able to provide is the tip of the iceberg of support services that are brought together for the homeless veteran. Clearly, the ability to work with other government agencies and with other providers in the community to make sure that there is a support network, makes it possible for HVRP to be that one piece that brings it all together and takes the homeless veteran to self-sufficiency.

The success is due in no small way to good planning and administration. The HVRP model used by VETS owes much of its success to the requirements outlined in the Solicitation for Grant Application (SGA). Specifically, potential grantee proposals are measured on their linkages with veteran service providers such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, as well as state and local governments. Additionally, potential grantees are measured on their ability to identify the need for the project and the overall strategy to increase employment and retention.

There are several other factors that have contributed to the success of the HVRP grants. These include;

1. All grantees are requested to attend a Post-Award Conference that outlines reporting procedures and expectations;
2. Second year funding is available based on accomplishments;

3. VETS staff monitors performance on a quarterly basis, including site visits;
4. Most of the current grantees have experience in working with veterans so barriers to employment are often addressed prior to referral to existing job vacancies; and
5. Many of the current grantees have ties to employers within their community.

These methods allow for close oversight of the program grants and the maximization of best practices while still allowing a great deal of local flexibility based on the skills and abilities of the provider.

Question 2 – There are those who ask why homeless veterans need programs designed specifically for them, such as the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP). How do you answer those who say that homeless veterans do not need veteran-specific programs – that they benefit as much from main-stream programs?

Answer – Very often homeless veterans are considered and grouped with the general homeless population. However, the typical homeless providers are not able to identify veteran specific problems which do not fit into the general homeless population. For example, many veterans suffer from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that is often overlooked by the general homeless service provider. Additionally, many veterans have military experience that can translate to a comparable civilian occupation but because most service providers do not have knowledge of the Military Occupational Specialities they fail to take full advantage of the homeless veterans abilities.

Further, the veteran service provider is able to seek assistance from Veteran Service Organizations as well as Community Based Organizations, thus increasing the opportunity for homeless veterans to receive treatment for barriers to their employment. Doing so, maximizes the veteran bond that exists among those who have served our country. This bond remains a very effective medium to 'reach' the veteran, especially in dealing with homelessness.

The key factor in the success of the HVRP is the outreach, by former homeless veterans, of current homeless veterans. The value of the HVRP is that it allows previously homeless veterans to reach out and convince homeless veterans to seek services and seek economic stability. The veteran doing the work is living proof that the homeless veterans' problems can be overcome. Once a homeless veteran agrees to be helped, the HVRP will do the referrals necessary to get the veteran ready for employment.

Moreover, veterans have needs that are not addressed by other programs. Their special characteristics, especially for those veterans that have been in conflict or combat situations, tend to require specialized attention from service providers that understand the nature of their problems. Mainstream programs are not set up to adequately address these needs.

Most homeless veterans have multiple problems contributing to their unemployment, such as

alcohol and/or drug abuse, physical and/or mental trauma stemming from wartime which may have led to instability and/or family breakup, as well as the general contributory factors of unemployment such as a lack of skills or education and a poor employment history. There are services, benefits and entitlements available through other agencies such as the VA and HUD to deal with these matters and HVRP providers use those resources extensively. Local homeless veteran providers may be seen as the “hub of the wheel” of services provided to homeless veterans within their communities.

The key to HVRP success is to get the homeless veteran to accept the help. We have found that homeless veterans are more receptive to services from dedicated staff who, most often, have experienced homelessness themselves and can identify and be responsive to real client needs.

Congressman Evans to Peter S. Gaytan, AMVETS Legislative Director

Follow-up questions from the Subcommittee on Benefits
Legislative Hearing held June 16, 1999 on
Miscellaneous Legislation

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) opposes H.R. 1476, the "National Cemetery Act of 1999", which would require the DVA to establish new national cemeteries. The Department also opposes H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999", which would require the DVA to contract for a study of veterans' cemeteries.

How would you respond to the DVA's assertion that these bills are unnecessary and duplicative?

I would respond to the DVA's assertion that these bills are unnecessary and duplicative by first illustrating the overwhelming need to create new national cemeteries nationwide to serve the aging veteran population.

Since 1973, annual interments in the National Cemetery System have increased from 36,400 to 70,522. This increase is expected to continue until the year 2008 as the veteran population ages. Many VA national cemeteries have reached capacity for casket burials. It is projected that from the years 1995 to 2010, the burial rate will have increased by 42%.

The need for additional national cemeteries is obvious, and the National Cemetery Administration must have a clear, strategic plan through 2010 to address this problem. We owe it to those who have honorably served this country to ensure that burial in a national cemetery remains a singularly special honor.

The DVA argument that these two bills are duplicative is simply not true. H.R. 1476 requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish national cemeteries in each of the three areas of the United States that the secretary determines to be most in need. This bill addresses the lack of available cemetery space.

H.R. 2040 seeks a comprehensive assessment of veterans' cemeteries. As a member of the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard while stationed at Dover Air Force Base, I performed military honors for over 200 funerals. During my three years serving on the Honor Guard, I performed as body bearer, firing party NCOIC, color guard NCOIC and flag presenter at national cemeteries all along the east coast. Many of these cemeteries were less than impressive. I can attest from personal experience that an assessment of veterans' cemeteries is very much needed.

As I present the folded flag that was draped over the coffin of a veteran to their next of kin, I begin the presentation by saying: "It is with deepest regrets that I present to you this flag, on behalf of a grateful nation....."

It is our responsibility as a grateful nation to ensure that these cemeteries maintain a dignified and respectful setting.



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For God and Country

July 6, 1999

Honorable Lane Evans
 Ranking Minority Member
 Committee on Veterans Affairs
 U.S. House of Representatives
 CHOB, Rm. 334
 Washington, DC 20515-6335

Dear Representative Evans:

The American Legion appreciates the opportunity to respond to follow-up questions to the hearing held on June 16, 1999.

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) opposes H.R. 1476, the "National Cemetery Act of 1999," which would require DVA to establish new national cemeteries. The Department also opposes H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999," which would require DVA to contract for a study of veterans' cemeteries.

How would you respond to DVA's assertion that these bills are unnecessary and duplicative?

Answer

First of all, H.R. 1476 is necessary. Without the measure, Congress and the veterans' community would be dependent upon the Administration to include recommendations in its annual budget submission to construct new national cemeteries. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is extremely unlikely to support the necessary level of effort to ensure that new national cemeteries in critical locations are constructed over a critically short interval. It is especially unlikely that OMB supports building many new national cemeteries since VA constructed six new cemeteries over the past 12 years.

With the enactment of Public Law 105-368, States now have a greater incentive to cost share with the federal government in developing veterans' cemeteries. However, the provisions related to the development of new state veterans' cemeteries do not mean that the states will choose to participate in the State Grants Cemetery Program. Thus, the State Grants Cemetery Program must be viewed as a complimentary program and not as a substitute program for new national cemeteries. Therefore, the Federal government's

efforts over the next 10 years must match the level of effort in developing six new national cemeteries between the period 1988-2000.

An additional argument in favor of H.R. 1476 is the time factor necessary to meet the anticipated death rates of World War II veterans. Without aggressive action in developing new national cemeteries and state veterans' cemeteries, many veterans will simply not have a realistic option of burial in a dedicated veterans' cemetery.

Secondly, H.R. 1476 and H.R. 2040 are not duplicative. H.R. 1476 addresses the rapid construction of new national cemeteries in areas previously identified. H.R. 2040, on the other hand, would require a study to determine if and where additional national cemeteries are needed beyond the current priority list. H.R. 2040 presumes that the four to seven sites for the construction and opening of new national cemeteries would already have been approved and funded.

The American Legion favors having H.R. 2040 include a provision to examine the areas in greatest need of new state veteran cemeteries in addition to national cemeteries. The identification of these potential sites would greatly benefit the veterans' organizations in those states as they petition their state legislatures for the donation of land and to commit to the perpetual maintenance of those sites.

The end result is that a combination of new national cemeteries and state veterans' cemeteries are required over the next decade and beyond to provide realistic burial options to veterans and to their eligible dependents.

The Nation should do no less than to provide all available means to rightfully honor the sacrifices and service of its veterans of the Armed Forces.

Sincerely,



John Vitikacs
National Veterans Affairs and
Rehabilitation Commission

Congressman Evans to Joy J. Ilem, Associate National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans

Question: The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) opposes H.R. 1476, the "National Cemetery Act of 1999," which would require the DVA to establish new national cemeteries. The Department also opposes H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999," which would require the DVA to contract for a study of veterans' cemeteries. How would you respond to the DVA assertion that these bills are unnecessary and duplicative?

Answer: The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) reported that it has already identified locations where burial space for veterans is greatest, provided estimated costs for cemetery construction and a time frame to establish a full service cemetery. Therefore, NCA claims that legislation which would require submission of a report to Congress with that vital information is unnecessary and duplicative.

The provisions of H.R. 1476 are twofold. Part one requires an initial report be submitted to Congress which formally identifies proposed cemetery locations, schedule for establishment and estimated costs for the projects followed by annual reports until development of the additional national cemeteries identified in the report are complete.

The information NCA has provided is non-specific. Therefore, specific information required by this legislation is not duplicative or unnecessary. This bill's specific intent is to get NCA to make known when and where additional national cemeteries will be established to ensure there is adequate burial space for veterans who are eligible and desire burial in a national cemetery.

NCA has not formally announced when the additional national cemeteries will be developed or which specific locations from its targeted list will be chosen. NCA has only provided that it will continue to evaluate the potential establishment of additional national cemeteries in the geographic areas in which need for burial space for veterans is greatest, "within the framework of the Department's strategic planning and budget process."

There should be no cost to NCA to provide the requested information and make a firm commitment on its plans to meet the burial needs of veterans in the near future. Additionally, this would provide Congress with a timeline and projection of the funding needed for NCA to establish these additional national cemeteries.

NCA indicated that it currently conducts an annual assessment at all national cemeteries to address maintenance, repair, construction, renovation, and expansion needs and that these needs are prioritized by urgency and carried out based on funding availability. Therefore, NCA reported that the issue was not the lack of identification of suitable projects, but rather, inadequate funding availability to carry out the necessary projects.

Congress should review NCA's annual assessment reports for this year to determine if the list of identified one-time repairs or maintenance needed at national cemeteries across the country has been satisfactorily addressed. The Subcommittee should evaluate and determine the validity of those reports before moving forward to avoid a duplicative, costly or unnecessary study regarding one-time maintenance concerns.

Finally, NCA voiced concern that trying to predict cemetery growth patterns beyond 5 to 10 years may result in obsolete or invalid data due to unknown factors such as possible future conflicts and unpredictable veteran migration patterns.

Contracting to formulate a long-range planning strategy is neither duplicative or unnecessary. Findings from such a study are essential for NCA to meet the burial needs of veterans in the future. Although veterans' burial needs may significantly change over time based on future uncertainties, NCA is responsible for adequate planning to ensure it is prepared to meet these needs. Therefore, it is appropriate that an assessment is conducted.

Congressman Evans to Sidney Daniels, Deputy Director of National
Legislative Service, Veterans of Foreign Wars

HEARING QUESTIONS

Posed by
The Honorable Lane Evans
Ranking Democratic Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States House of Representatives

With respect to
June 16, 1999 Hearing
before the
Subcommittee on Benefits

QUESTION: The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) opposes H.R. 1476, the "National Cemetery Act of 1999," which would require the DVA to establish new national cemeteries. The Department also opposes H.R. 2040, the "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999," which would require the DVA to contract for study of veterans' cemeteries.

How would you respond to the DVA assertion that these bills are unnecessary and duplicative?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION: The following is our response as to why we (VFW) believe the bills cited above are necessary and would not require duplicative effort on the part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

H.R. 1476, The "National Cemetery Act of 1999" – The VFW does not agree that development of the report required by H.R. 1476 is unnecessary. Our position is that expansion of the National Cemetery Administration is crucial to meeting the inevitable increased burial demands that will be placed on the system as the veteran population ages.

Even recognizing VA's 1989 and 1994 reports to Congress, which are currently being used by VA as their basis for planning new cemeteries, we remain concerned that there is no plan to specifically identify or address the needs of veterans in cities where the demand may be greater than those outlined in Mr. Rapp's testimony before the subcommittee.

H.R. 2040, The "Veterans' Cemeteries Assessment Act of 1999" – We do not agree that the proposed legislation would be an unnecessary duplication of effort on the part of the VA. On the contrary, this bill, if enacted, would place the VA in a situation where they could explore other avenues for the care and upkeep of existing cemeteries and develop a future plan to build new cemeteries. However, with the cost of an average funeral today exceeding \$5,000, the current plot allowance of \$150 is very minimal of what is now required to purchase a plot in a private cemetery. Therefore, a study of national cemeteries would help the VA develop a more comprehensive plan to better address the future needs of both the cemeteries and the veterans they serve, such as the current plot allowance inequity and the future lack of burial space.

