U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

WHAT VETERAN FAMILIES CAN EXPECT AT A VA NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) honors our nation's Veterans and eligible family members with dignified burial services and final resting places that commemorate their service and sacrifice. There are no costs associated with the committal service, military funeral honors, burial site and interment, marking of the grave, or perpetual care—these benefits have been earned by the Veteran through their service to our nation.

The Committal Service

When you arrive, a cemetery employee will greet you and walk you through the necessary burial documents. The representative will lead you and other attendees to the committal shelter for the service.

The committal service typically takes place at an outdoor shelter, rather than graveside, and lasts for about 30 minutes. The family may select and arrange to have readings performed by a friend, relative, or a member of the clergy of their faith.

During the committal service for a Veteran, a Presidential Memorial Certificate will be presented to the family. The gold-embossed paper certificate bears the official signature of the President of the United States. It honors the memory of the Veteran and expresses the country's grateful recognition for their service in the Armed Forces.

Military Funeral Honors for Veterans

Families may request to have military funeral honors performed as part of the committal service for a Veteran. Honors are performed by either the military services or a Veterans Service Organization (VSO). The family or a funeral director must make these arrangements in advance, but VA national cemetery staff can provide information on who to contact.

Military funeral honors include:

- The playing of "Taps"
- Folding and presentation of the burial flag by uniformed service members or VSO members

"It is very important to us that we honor Veterans as they're laid to rest just as much as they were honored when they were living. Laying our brothers and sisters to rest is one of the most noble missions that we have."

— **Sonny Peppers, Veteran, Assistant Director at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery**

Sarasota National Cemetery

What to Know Before the Service

National cemeteries do not have facilities to conduct viewings or wakes. Families wishing to have these types of services must arrange to have them privately off-site.

National cemeteries can accommodate a family's religious and/or cultural requests. Please notify the cemetery director with sufficient notice before the scheduled service.

The burial will occur the same day as the committal service. The gravesite will be made presentable for visitors before close of business each day.

The family will be asked to review and approve the information for the headstone or grave marker. VA will order and install it within 60 days of the interment.

"Presenting the flag to families makes a big impact on their day. My grandson knows when I put on my uniform that I am going to do something important for Veterans and their families."

— **Allen Ferguson, Veteran, U.S. Marine Corps League Honor Guard, Indiantown Gap National Cemetery**

Scan the QR code for more information on burial in a VA national cemetery.
www.cem.va.gov/veterans-and-families

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