

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 18, 2021

The Honorable Matthew T. Quinn  
Under Secretary, Memorial Affairs  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 2040

Dear Under Secretary Quinn:

As sponsors of the Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act, we write to urge the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to implement reforms to the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program that ensure all members of Reserve Components and the National Guard are eligible to be buried in state veterans' cemeteries, so long as their service was terminated under honorable conditions. We also request that the Department cease its existing practice of punishing state veterans' cemeteries that bury the spouses, minor children or unmarried adult children of those service members by conditioning federal grants on a cemetery's compliance with existing burial eligibility criteria.

On July 30, 2021, the VA posted a Request for Information (RFI) on the Department's Eligibility Considerations for the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.<sup>1</sup> On August 30, 2021, the commenting period closed. Dozens of commentators, including leaders of state veterans' cemeteries from across the country, indicated they support efforts to expand eligibility for burial in a state veterans' cemetery to additional members of the National Guard and Reserve Components. Leadership of the National Guard and state veterans' cemeteries in our states have indicated that they strongly support this change in eligibility to ensure that those who served receive the proper burial that they deserve. We have also heard from constituents who served in the National Guard and Reserve Components and believe that existing restrictions on the Department's grant program fail to acknowledge their contributions in service of our nation.

National Guardsmen and Reservists swear to defend this country just as their Active Duty counterparts do, and we must make sure that they receive the respect and recognition that they deserve. As you are reviewing the information gathered throughout the RFI process, we ask that you consider reforms to expand the eligibility for the Department's Veterans Cemetery Grants Program.

Sincerely,



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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



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Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

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<sup>1</sup> Notice of Request for Information on the Department of Veterans Affairs' Eligibility Considerations for the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program, 86 Fed. Reg. 41162 (Jul. 30, 2021).



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John Hoeven  
United States Senator



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Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator



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Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress