



COMMITTEE *on* VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Veterans Cemetery Benefit Correction Act

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide outer burial receptacles for remains buried in National Parks, and for other purposes.

- Title 38, United States Code, 2306(e) requires that when a veteran is buried in a national cemetery under the control of the National Cemetery Administration, VA provide an outer burial receptacle or provide a reimbursement if the family purchases one.
- However, National Park Service national cemeteries are not covered by this statute, so neither VA nor the National Park Service can provide an outer burial receptacle for burials in those cemeteries.
- Currently, the National Park Service controls 14 national cemeteries. 11 of these cemeteries were transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior by Executive Order No. 6166 in 1933. The remaining three national cemeteries were transferred after 1933.
- Of the 14 national cemeteries controlled by the National Park Service, two are still active: Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia and Andrew Johnson National Cemetery in Tennessee.
- Veterans in Georgia and Tennessee who wish to be buried in national cemeteries run by the National Park Service must pay the cost of their own outer burial receptacle.
- Veterans buried in national cemeteries run by the VA have the outer burial receptacle provided at no cost by the VA.
- This inequity is due to a lack of authority by VA to extend this burial benefit to cemeteries maintained by the National Park Service.
- This gap in benefits creates an undue burden of expense on the veteran and their family and forces them to choose between incurring the additional expense or selecting another veteran cemetery that may be located across state lines or over 150 miles away from their loved ones.
- VA's 2017 cost for each outer burial receptacle is \$315.
- In 2017, Andersonville interred 200 veterans, which is above their normal average of 180 interments per year.
- If CBO assumes a cost of \$315 per outer burial receptacle and 200 interments per year, the bill would cost about \$630,000 over the 10-year budget window.