

NCA CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To update the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) policies related to processing and clearing responses to congressional queries and other matters.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:

a. The directive is updated to reflect new NCA offices and titles of employees responsible for managing congressional relations activities.

b. The directive updates NCA policy regarding congressional relations activities to comply with Departmental guidance for VA congressional relations activities.

c. The directive addresses only NCA Congressional Relations Activities and does not address NCA policies and procedures affecting budget, appropriations, or legislative affairs (e.g., legislative proposal development, preparation of legislative views, or interpretation of statutory or regulatory authorities).

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: NCA Chief of Staff, Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service, 810 Vermont Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be referred to the Director, Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service (40A2), at ncacongressionalrelations@va.gov.

4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS: VA Directive 8100, Department of Veterans Affairs – Guidance Relating to Congressional Relations Activities (May 7, 2018).

5. RESCISSIONS: NCA Directive 8100 – Congressional Relations Activities (March 6, 2012).

6. RECERTIFICATION: This publication is scheduled for recertification in April 2026.

/s/

Ronald E. Walters

Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

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1. PURPOSE

a. This directive states National Cemetery Administration (NCA) policies that ensures timely and accurate action on all congressional relations activities to include preparation of witnesses and reports, development of briefing materials, trip packs, and responses to congressional queries and requests for information.

b. This directive aligns NCA congressional relations practices to be consistent with VA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA) policies addressing oversight hearings, Congressionally-mandated reports, and other congressional matters.

2. POLICY

a. It is NCA policy to comply with Departmental congressional response protocols and policy guidance.

b. District and Cemetery Directors and their staff will have regular contact with local congressional members and staff on constituent casework and may provide publicly available materials or data regarding VA programs and operations. Generally, cemetery-level issues may be cleared by District Directors who may delegate clearance to Cemetery Directors. Inquiries on national policies, programs, or issues, including multiple or repeat inquiries on the same topic(s) should be elevated through the chain of command in NCA central office.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA)** is responsible for:

(1) Clearing (i.e., reviewing and authorizing release) of NCA congressional submissions, such as testimony, questions for the record, Congressionally-mandated reports, and responses to congressional queries and other matters; or

(2) Delegating the authority to clear official NCA congressional responses to the Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, the Chief of Staff, or other NCA senior officials.

b. **Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (PDUSMA)** is responsible for:

(1) Acting for the USMA when authorized to clear NCA congressional submissions; and

(2) When authorized by the USMA, subsequently re delegating authority to clear official NCA congressional materials to senior NCA officials.

c. **Chief of Staff** is responsible for:

- (1) Overseeing the NCA Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service;
- (2) Maintaining updated policy guidance for NCA congressional activities;
- (3) Acting for the USMA or PDUSMA when authorized to clear NCA congressional submissions; and
- (4) When authorized by the USMA or PDUSMA, subsequently re delegating authority to clear official NCA congressional materials to senior NCA officials.

d. **Director, Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service** is responsible for:

- (1) Developing and managing procedures to ensure compliance with VA Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA) procedures on all NCA congressional activities;
- (2) Receiving, assigning, and transmitting official congressional requests to include, but not limited to, requests for NCA information, briefings, hearings, testimony, questions for the record, Congressionally-mandated reports and other matters. The Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service ensures that responses to Congress are accurate, cleared by an NCA senior executive, and are submitted within established timeframes.
- (3) Serving as the NCA liaison to OCLA related to congressional relations;
- (4) Developing NCA policies and procedures for NCA officials and program offices addressing NCA congressional relations;
- (5) Coordinating NCA preparation of reports, development of briefing materials, preparation of senior official trip packs, and requests for information;
- (6) Reviewing and ensuring all NCA reports to Congress, briefing materials, senior official trip packs, responses to congressional queries and requests for information are accurate, consistent, responsive and cleared by the assigned executive;
- (7) Providing guidance and advice to NCA program staff on congressional relations activities, such as responding to congressional inquiries received from OCLA, other offices, or communication channels;
- (8) Referring legislative and budget matters to the NCA Legislative and Regulatory Service and NCA Budget Service, respectively;
- (9) Coordinating with NCA Deputy Under Secretaries and Executive Directors on approving materials that accurately and completely respond to Congressional member's and Congressional Committees' requests for information for the Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service.

(10) Preparing NCA witnesses for congressional oversight hearings, assisting in testimony preparation, coordinating review of hearing transcripts, and attending hearings as required;

(11) Coordinating and assisting in the preparation of materials for congressional briefings, and attending briefings as required;

(12) Consulting as needed with NCA staff and Executive Correspondence Service on congressional constituent, non-routine or sensitive congressional correspondence;

(13) Tracking and monitoring submission of NCA congressional responses and non-budgetary Congressionally-mandated reports; and

(14) Maintaining an accessible and complete data base documenting NCA Congressional activities, NCA official submissions and transcripts.

e. NCA Deputy Under Secretaries and the Executive Directors for Cemetery Operations and Field Programs are responsible for:

(1) Approving materials that accurately and completely respond to Congressional members' and Congressional Committees' requests for information for the Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service;

(2) When authorized, clearing official NCA congressional materials for submission. This authority may not be further delegated;

(3) Providing notice and supporting documentation through the immediate chain of command, to include the Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service, of contacts with members of Congress, Congressional Committees or their staff on:

(A) Non-routine inquiries or controversial matters;

(B) Sensitive or national policy issues, and,

(C) Repeat or multiple routine queries on the same or similar issue or topic(s) for trend analysis purposes.

(4) Providing subject matter expertise and assistance in preparing materials for congressional hearings, briefings, and requests for information;

(5) Preparing Congressionally-mandated reports within established timeframes to include providing adequate review time for USMA concurrence to meet established deadlines; and

(6) Informing the Congressional Relations and Correspondence Service of any need to initiate contact with members of Congress or their staff.

(7) The NCA Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning retains responsibility for all aspects of budget and appropriations activities, as well as legislative actions related to proposed, current, and historical legislation, legislative hearing preparation, views on legislation, and interpretation of statutory or regulatory authorities.

f. **NCA District Directors** are responsible for:

(1) Advising their immediate chain of command through the SES-level of communications with Members of Congress or congressional staff on sensitive, controversial, complex, national policy matters received directly or through the cemeteries, or repeat or multiple routine queries on the same or similar topic(s);

(2) Promptly providing materials that accurately and completely respond to requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff for review and clearance by the appropriate-level of leadership in the immediate chain of command;

(3) Reviewing and clearing responses in inquiries of cemetery-level requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff or delegating that responsibility to cemetery directors on a case by case basis.

g. **NCA Program Office Staff** are responsible for:

(1) Advising their immediate chain of command through the SES-level of communications with Members of Congress or congressional staff on sensitive, controversial, complex, national policy matters, , or repeat or multiple routine queries on the same or similar topic(s); and

(2) Promptly providing materials that accurately and completely respond to requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff for review and clearance by the appropriate-level of leadership in the immediate chain of command.

h. **Director, Veteran Cemetery Grant Program (VCGP)** is responsible for:

(1) Advising the immediate chain of command through the SES level of communications with Members of Congress or congressional staff on sensitive, controversial, complex, national policy matters, or repeat or multiple routine queries on the same or similar topic(s);

(2) Serving as the clearance official for reviewing and responding to standard routine correspondence pertaining to the VCGP from Members of Congress or congressional staff.

(3) Providing materials that accurately and completely respond to requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff pertaining to the VCGP.

i. **Cemetery Directors** are responsible for:

(1) Advising their immediate chain of command through the SES-level of communications with Members of Congress or congressional staff on sensitive, controversial, complex, national policy matters, or repeat or multiple routine queries on the same or similar topic(s);

(2) Promptly providing materials that accurately and completely respond to requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff for review and clearance by the appropriate-level of leadership in the immediate chain of command;

(3) Reviewing and clearing responses in inquiries of cemetery-level requests and inquiries from Members of Congress or congressional staff when delegated by the respective district director.

4. REFERENCES: VA Directive 8100 – Guidance Relating to Congressional Relations Activities (May 7, 2018).