

**NAMES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NATIONAL CEMETERIES  
AND FOR ROADS AND FEATURES WITHIN THOSE CEMETERIES**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To update guidance for the naming of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries and activities and features within them.

**2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:** The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) made the following changes to the Directive:

a. Revised responsibilities for NCA's Cemetery Development and Improvement Service (CDIS) to include managing the process for naming a new VA national cemetery.

b. Updated responsibilities for NCA's Design and Construction Service to include managing the process for naming cemetery roads and features within existing or new national cemeteries.

c. Updated titles for responsible offices (e.g., "Office of Construction Management" to reflect current office title "Design and Construction Service").

d. Added an Appendix that provides step-by-step guidance for responsible NCA program offices to use when naming a new national cemetery. On 12/21/23, minor administrative edits were made to the sample letter in Appendix B.

**3. RELATED PUBLICATION:** None.

**4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** NCA Office of Cemetery Operations, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the material contained in this directive. Please refer questions about this directive to the Executive Director, Cemetery Operations.

**5. RESCISSIONS:** NCA Directive 3011 – Names for VA National Cemeteries and Features Within National Cemeteries, dated March 12, 2010.

**6. RECERTIFICATION:** This publication is scheduled for recertification the last business day of March 2026.

/s/  
Ronald E. Walters  
Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

**NAMES FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NATIONAL CEMETERIES  
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**1. PURPOSE/AUTHORITY:**

a. This directive establishes National Cemetery Administration (NCA) policy on the naming of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries, and cemetery features such as roads, walks, or special structures.

b. Relevant statutory authority is found in title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), section 531 which states, "Except as expressly provided by law, a facility, structure or real property of the Department, and a major portion (such as a wing or floor) of any such facility, structure, or real property, may be named only for the geographic area in which the facility, structure, or real property is located." Responsibility for naming cemetery features is delegated to the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs in 38 CFR 2.6(f).

**2. POLICY:** It is NCA policy that:

a. A proposed national cemetery name submitted to the Secretary of VA for approval will relate to the geographic area in which the facility is located.

b. When selecting a name for a national cemetery to recommend to the Secretary of VA, NCA will use the following evaluative criteria:

(1) How well does the name help identify the location of the cemetery site;

(2) How broad an appeal will the name have with the Veteran population; and

(3) How well does the name provide a positive impression through its relation to history, region, community, or other notable geographic features (e.g., a lake, river, mountain, etc.)?

c. NCA will submit proposed names for Cemetery Road Systems and Walkway names to the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs for approval. Name submissions will use a combination of a proper name (e.g., "Important City," or "Military Campaign") and an identifier ("Drive") that help visitors navigate through the public areas of the cemetery. The names may be based on the area's physical or historical characteristics, as well as a subject or setting that evokes a geographical region and features, military history, or regional history.

***NOTE:*** *The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 41-SOP-019: Naming Roads and Features in Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries, defines the types of roads and walkways, outlines appropriate use of proper names, and specifies the hierarchy of identifiers to be used.*

d. NCA will not name new or unconstructed road systems and walkways within

national cemeteries after individual persons. Any constructed roads and walkways that previously were named for an individual person or historical figure will retain their names. (**Note:** As first published in NCA Notice 2022-05, Sep 14, 2022).

e. Cemetery buildings, special structures, or features (other than roads), will not receive proper names. They may be identified by the building type or function or shelter designation (e.g., " Public Information Center (PIC)," "Rest Rooms," "Administration," "Committal Shelter A," "Committal Shelter 1," or "East Committal Shelter").

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA)** is responsible for naming features in VA national cemeteries. In addition, the USMA will endorse proposed proper names for cemeteries to be submitted to the Secretary for approval.

b. **Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs** is responsible for reviewing and concurring on the final recommendations for naming new cemeteries, roads, and features.

c. **Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations** is responsible for reviewing and concurring on the Executive Director's recommendations for naming new cemeteries, roads, and features.

d. **Executive Director, Cemetery Operations**, is responsible for reviewing and concurring on the NCA district office's recommendations for naming new cemeteries, roads, and features.

e. **Chief, NCA Cemetery Development and Improvement Service (CDIS)**, is responsible for:

(1) Overseeing successful execution of the process for naming a new VA national cemetery via the steps outlined in Appendix A;

(2) Evaluating naming suggestions developed by the District Office with Veteran stakeholder feedback; and

(3) Reviewing and concurring on naming package and sending it to the Executive Director of Cemetery Operations.

f. **Cemetery Operations Analysts** are responsible for:

(1) Developing the naming package and obtaining review and concurrence from CDIS and the Director, Design and Construction Service;

(2) Coordinating review and concurrence with NCA senior leadership and approval from the VA Secretary on the cemetery name recommendation package; and

(3) Reviewing the memorandum from the District Executive Director on

recommended road and feature names to verify compliance with the guidance in this Directive and the “Naming Roads and Features in VA National Cemeteries” SOP.

g. **Chief, NCA Public Affairs and Outreach**, is responsible for:

(1) Drafting a national press release for publication on the VA public-facing website that will inform the public of new cemetery names upon approval by the VA Secretary; and

(2) Coordinating review and concurrence of final draft press release for leadership approval.

h. **Program Analyst, NCA Congressional Relations**, is responsible for:

(1) Requesting OCLA to dispatch cleared notifications of cemetery naming solicitations with specific date, time, and distribution information to relevant members of Congress;

(2) Requesting OCLA to dispatch notification of the approved cemetery name to relevant members of Congress; and

(3) Providing the NCA Chief of Staff and Executive Director, Cemetery Operations, with confirmation that OCLA’s congressional notifications are complete.

i. **Director, Design and Construction Service (DCS)** is responsible for:

(1) Notifying the Chief, CDIS of the date when a new cemetery name is required to meet the schedule of a major or minor construction project;

(2) Notifying the Executive Director, Cemetery Operations, of the date when road and feature names are required to meet the schedule of a major or minor construction project;

(3) Notifying and coordinating with respective District Executive Director and Cemetery Director if applicable, to initiate the roads and features naming process;

(4) Providing review and concurrence of the roads and features recommendations; and

(5) Maintaining a master list of road names for every national cemetery.

j. **District Executive Directors** are responsible for:

(1) Soliciting the local Veteran stakeholder community to develop naming recommendations for new national cemeteries in accordance with procedures outlined in Appendix A; and

(2) Coordinating with the local Veteran stakeholder community to develop naming recommendations for roads and features in accordance with SOP-41-019, “Naming of

Roads and Features in Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries”.

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

(1) Providing support and coordination with the local Veteran stakeholder community at the direction of the Executive District Director in developing naming suggestions for a new national cemetery and names for roads and features in accordance with Appendix A of this directive and SOP-41-019, “Naming of Roads and Features in Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries”; and

(2) Notifying local stakeholders from the annotated Contacts Roster of new cemetery name after coordinating with their District Executive Director.

l. **Historians, NCA History Program** are responsible for retaining the paperwork used to develop the naming package and the final approvals and communication documents.

#### 4. DEFINITIONS AND RELATED TERMS

a. **National Cemetery.** As used in this directive, the term “national cemetery” refers to cemeteries administered by the National Cemetery Administration on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

b. **Cemetery Master Plan.** A set of design and planning documents that conceptualize how all areas of the entire national cemetery property will be developed over time, to include current and future section layouts, infrastructure, features and amenities.

c. **Road System.** The hierarchy of roads in the cemetery includes the entrance road, often a divided two-lane road, leading into a system of primary and secondary roads and service roads.

d. **Theme.** A subject or setting that evokes a geographic region and features, or military or regional history. Examples of themes used as the basis for selecting proper names for cemetery roads and features are:

(1) "Military history" where roads are named after significant and well-known military battles or campaigns;

(2) "Location of the cemetery" where roads are named after the State, county, city, town, mountain, State flower, State bird, etc.;

(3) "History of the site" where names come from original or later significant settlements, campaigns, etc., related to the history of the property; and

(4) For existing cemeteries where no theme is established, names for the road or walkway will be selected consistent with the criteria in this directive.

**APPENDIX A – PROCEDURES FOR NAMING A NEW CEMETERY**

- STEP 1 Upon notification from the Director, Design and Construction Service (DCS), the Chief, **Cemetery Development and Improvement Service (CDIS)**, contacts the District Executive Director that will have oversight of the new VA national cemetery to initiate the naming process as outlined below and using the associated templates (Contact Roster and Request Letter).
- STEP 2 **District Executive Director** conducts research to compile a Contacts Roster of local area Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), Veteran stakeholder groups, and other governmental organizations, who will be solicited for cemetery naming suggestions. District Executive Director completes development of Contacts Roster within 30 calendar days of receiving notification to initiate the process. The Contacts Roster must adhere to template requirements for data provision and formatting. See Appendix C.
- STEP 3 **District Executive Director** submits proposed Contacts Roster to CDIS for review.
- STEP 4 **CDIS** reviews Contacts Roster within 10 calendar days of receipt and returns it to the District Executive Director with any required edits/updates.
- STEP 5 **District Executive Director** makes any updates/changes to Contacts Roster as required by CDIS. **District Executive Director** reviews and finalizes Contacts Roster.
- STEP 6 **District Executive Director** modifies Template Request Letter (Appendix B) to reflect specific information about the new national cemetery site and provides information on how, when, and where to submit naming suggestions.
- STEP 7 **District Executive Director** notifies Program Analyst, NCA Congressional Affairs, at least two weeks prior to planned release date to initiate Congressional notification of the naming solicitation process to allow for coordination and dispatch of Congressional notifications and provides the following required information:
- Date **District Executive Director** will issue Request Letters for naming suggestion to VSOs and other organizations identified on the finalized Contacts Roster
  - Customized Request Letter included as email attachment.
- STEP 8 Analyst, **NCA Congressional Affairs**, drafts notification message to Congress to include date solicitation will be released and a copy of the

Request Letter. Obtains review and concurrence from:

- Executive Director, Cemetery Operations
- NCA Chief of Staff

- STEP 9 Analyst, **NCA Congressional Affairs**, coordinates with VA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA) to make notification to applicable members of Congress that solicitation to VSOs and other stakeholder organizations for cemetery name is forthcoming.
- STEP 10 Analyst, **NCA Congressional Affairs**, contacts District Executive Director to confirm congressional notifications have been made.
- STEP 11 **District Executive Director** sends Request Letters to VSO and other organization POCs identified on finalized Contacts Roster.
- STEP 12 **District Executive Director** tracks responses to solicitation and records suggested cemetery names on Contacts Roster. Per Request Letter, only those responses received within 45 calendar days will be accepted.
- STEP 13 **District Executive Director** submits annotated Contacts Roster to CDIS.
- STEP 14 **CDIS** reviews and evaluates suggested cemetery names on annotated Contacts Roster and builds recommendation package for NCA senior leadership's approval.
- STEP 15 **CDIS** submits cemetery name recommendation package to **Executive Director, Cemetery Operations**, for coordination of review and concurrence with NCA senior leadership and approval from the Secretary.
- STEP 16 Upon approval of new cemetery name by the VA Secretary, **CDIS** will notify the Program Analyst, NCA Congressional Affairs, and Chief, NCA Public Affairs, to execute the following notifications in the order specified below:
- STEP 16a. Chief, **Public Affairs**, develops national press release announcing new cemetery name, clears it through the VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and sends it to Analyst, NCA Congressional Affairs, with a requested release date and time.
- STEP 16b. **Analyst, NCA Congressional Affairs**, drafts a notification message to Congress for review and concurrence by:
- Executive Director, Cemetery Operations

- NCA Chief of Staff

STEP 16c. **Analyst, NCA Congressional Affairs**, coordinates with OCLA to make notification to applicable members of Congress that the Secretary has named the cemetery. Notification to congressional members will include a copy of planned national press release.

STEP 16d. **Chief, NCA Public Affairs**, following congressional notification, will coordinate with VA's OPIA to disseminate national press release to appropriate media markets, to include those in the new national cemetery's surrounding area, and will copy both the District Office and the cemetery director (when applicable) to confirm release.

STEP 17 District Executive Director will coordinate with the cemetery director to notify local stakeholders from the annotated Contacts Roster of new cemetery name. The NCA History Program will retain the paperwork used to develop the naming package and the final approvals and communication documents.



**APPENDIX B-SAMPLE TEMPLATE REQUEST LETTER**

**NOTE:** Modifications to this template letter may be necessary to address circumstances unique to each naming package.

[DATE]

**[NATIONAL CEMETERY LETTERHEAD ]**



Subject: Naming of New VA National Cemetery in [City, State]

To Whom it May Concern:

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has acquired land in [City, State] for a new Veterans' [SPECIFY TYPE OF CEMETERY] and the cemetery planning and design process is currently underway. The #-acre cemetery will be located on the XXX subdivision, on the [X] side of XXX Road and [X] side of XXX Road, City, State.

You are receiving this letter because NCA is actively collecting cemetery name suggestions from the local and regional Veteran and military community. Provided below is NCA's guidance regarding name suggestions for national cemeteries that are being newly established.

Unless Congress passes a law with a name, in accordance with Section 531 of title 38, United States Code, VA may name national cemeteries only for the geographic area in which the facility is located.

a. National cemeteries may be named only for the geographic area in which the facility is located. Names for new national cemeteries will be based on three criteria:

(1) The name helps identify the location of the cemetery site;

(2) The name has broad appeal to the Veteran population; and

- (3) The name provides a positive impression through its relation to history, region, community, or other notable geographic features (lake, river, mountain, etc.).

b. Responsibility for naming a new national cemetery rests with the VA Secretary. NCA is required to do the following in support of naming process:

- (1) Collect and coordinate name suggestions from various sources;
- (2) Evaluate proposed names against the criteria; and
- (3) Prepare a decision document with recommendations and background for review by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and submission to the VA Secretary.

NCA offers the name "XXX National Cemetery" as an example that best meets all the criteria. Does your group agree with the name "XXX National Cemetery" or have any other cemetery name suggestion you wish to submit for NCA consideration? If so, please submit your response within the next 45 days (NLT Add Date) to the following point of contact:

XXX  
[SPECIFY NCA District Office]  
Street Address or PO BOX  
City, State, Zip code  
Email: XXX@va.gov

Sincerely,

XXX, District Executive Director

**APPENDIX C-SAMPLE ROSTER CONTACTS LIST**

<b>Contact Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
<b>State of XXXX</b>			
State Veterans Cemetery Honors			
Military Funeral Honors			
Department of Labor - VET			
Veterans Memorial Museum			
STATE National Guard Museum			
<b>Regional VSO groups and/or Tribal Veteran groups</b>			
Air Force Association			
Air Force Sergeants Association			
AMVETS			
Association of the US Army			
Disabled American Veterans			
Korean War Veterans Association			
Legion of Valor			
Marine Corps League			
Military Order of the Purple Heart			