



Veterans Burial Benefits

SURVEY 2012

Purpose of Survey The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is conducting this survey to improve the quality of our current burial benefits program and guide its direction in the future. The information we collect will be used to help serve you better, and you will learn about your burial benefits as you complete the survey.

You may also [take this survey online](#) by entering the following URL in your web browser: [www.????@?????.com](#).

Enter the following access code when prompted on the introduction screen: ??????.

Along with taking our survey, you can also help us by participating in a focus group or personal interview. If you would like to participate in such an activity in your area, please provide us with your phone number and/or email address at the end of the survey so that we can set up a time that is convenient for you.

Your Burial Benefits

As a Veteran, you may be eligible to be buried in a national or state Veterans' cemetery. Burial benefits include a gravesite in one of the 131 national Veteran's cemeteries or one of the 81 state Veterans' cemeteries, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual maintenance of the gravesite, a government-provided headstone or marker, a U.S. flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. These benefits are available at no cost to the family and apply to both casketed and cremated remains.

Your spouse and/or dependents may also be eligible to be interred with you in a shared gravesite at a national/state Veterans' cemetery. This benefit includes burial with the Veteran, perpetual maintenance of the gravesite, and their names and dates of birth and death inscribed on the Veteran's headstone, at no cost to the family.

Some Veterans may also be eligible for a Burial Allowance, a partial reimbursement of an eligible Veteran's burial and funeral costs. When the cause of death is not service-related, the reimbursement generally consists of two parts: (1) a burial and funeral expense allowance, and (2) a plot or interment allowance. There are no benefits available to spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery. For more information on your benefits, please visit the NCA website: [www.cem.va.gov](#).

Use of Survey Results

The Department of Veterans Affairs will be using the information collected from you to improve services and plan for the future needs of Veterans and their families. Your responses will not impact your benefits in any way.

Confidentiality of Data

All survey responses are kept strictly confidential and will only be used to report group-level findings. Completion of this survey is voluntary; if you complete the survey, you may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Risk to Participants

There is no measurable risk to participants associated with completing the survey. Participation will in no way impact your Veterans' benefits.

OMB Statement

OMB Control Number: To be determined

Public Reporting Burden Statement

VA may not conduct, sponsor, or require the respondent to respond to this collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. All responses to this collection are voluntary. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including the time necessary for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Failure to furnish the requested information will have no adverse effect on any VA benefits to which you may be entitled.

Respondents are assured that answers given will be kept confidential under the Privacy Act and will be used for research purposes only. The information that respondents supply is protected by law (the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 522a and section 5701 of the Title 38 of the United States Code). Disclosure of information involves releases of statistical data

and other non-identifying data for the improvement of services and associated administrative purposes. If you have comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspects of this collection of information, please call 1-866-216-0695 for mailing information on where to send your comments.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and for helping improve the VA's Burial Benefits Program. *Continue>*

SECTION 1

Please remember this survey is voluntary and confidential. Your responses will be combined with others and will not affect your benefits in any way. Thank you for your participation.

1) Have you given much thought to planning your burial?

- ① Thought about it a lot
- ② Thought about it some
- ③ Thought about it hardly at all
- ④ Never thought about it

2) Before receiving this survey, how aware were you of your burial benefits offered by the VA?

- ① Very aware
- ② Somewhat aware
- ③ Unaware

3) Have you done any of the following?

Please mark all that apply.

- ① Visited a national cemetery
- ② Attended a funeral ceremony at a national cemetery
- ③ Planned or helped to plan a funeral ceremony for a Veteran

4) Have you discussed your burial preferences with your spouse or other family members?

- ① Yes
- ② No

5) When thinking about the arrangements for your funeral, what are your three most important concerns?

- ① My religious beliefs
- ② My family's or loved ones' religious beliefs
- ③ My culture/heritage
- ④ My family's or loved ones' culture/heritage
- ⑤ Cost
- ⑥ That the ceremony be dignified
- ⑦ That the burial is familiar and/or traditional
- ⑧ Environmental impact

6) When choosing the location of your burial, what are your two most important concerns?

- ① It is near my residence
- ② My remains will be near other deceased family members or loved ones
- ③ It is located near other fallen service men and women
- ④ Family and friends are able to visit
- ⑤ Cost
- ⑥ Other: _____

7) How likely are you to choose burial in a national Veterans' cemetery?

- ① Very likely
- ② Somewhat likely
- ③ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ④ Very unlikely
- ⑤ Definitely would not

8) Have you ever considered any types of burial options other than a casketed burial or cremation?

- ① Yes
- ② No

9) The following burial options are currently offered by the VA. If you had to choose one of these options today, which option do you think you would choose?

- ① In-ground casket burial
- ② Cremation, in-ground burial
- ③ Cremation, columbarium (a vault for cremation remains)
- ④ Don't know

SECTION 2

The next section asks you about burial methods that are not currently offered by the VA. We are interested in your opinions of these methods for yourself and for other Veterans. For each of the following statements, please indicate your agreement or disagreement.

10) Some people choose to have their remains placed in mausoleums, which are small buildings with walls, a roof and sometimes a door. Mausoleums are used for storing the remains of one or more people, either wholly above ground or within a burial vault below the structure.

	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this method for myself.	①	②	③	④	⑤
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	①	②	③	④	⑤
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	①	②	③	④	⑤

11) Some people choose to be buried at sea, in which their cremated or casketed remains are committed to the ocean.

STRONGLY AGREE					
SOMEWHAT AGREE					
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE					
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE					
STRONGLY DISAGREE					
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5

12) Some people choose to have their cremated remains scattered in the air from a balloon or other types of aircraft.

STRONGLY AGREE					
SOMEWHAT AGREE					
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE					
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE					
STRONGLY DISAGREE					
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3

Some people choose methods of treating remains that are intended to lower the impact on the environment. The following questions refer to these types of practices.

13) Some people choose embalming methods that utilize only biodegradable materials, or they choose to have their remains buried without embalming. If not embalmed, remains are held in cooled facilities and/or interred in a timely fashion.

STRONGLY AGREE					
SOMEWHAT AGREE					
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE					
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE					
STRONGLY DISAGREE					
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5
D. This method would uphold the dignity and sanctity of the national cemeteries.	1	2	3	4	5

14) Some people choose to use a biodegradable casket or a simple cloth shroud to wrap the body for burial rather than a traditional casket to reduce the impact on the environment.

STRONGLY AGREE					
SOMEWHAT AGREE					
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE					
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE					
STRONGLY DISAGREE					
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5
D. This is method would uphold the dignity and sanctity of the national cemeteries.	1	2	3	4	5

15) Some cemeteries create dedicated sections that are intended to lower the impact on the environment by using only biodegradable caskets, as well as biodegradable pesticides, natural fertilizers, and organic gardening techniques. These sections may also have some limitations on the use of concrete grave vaults, site decoration, and memorial markers.

STRONGLY AGREE					
SOMEWHAT AGREE					
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE					
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE					
STRONGLY DISAGREE					
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5
D. This method would uphold the dignity and sanctity of the national cemeteries.	1	2	3	4	5

16) Some cemeteries are designed and maintained to have a natural appearance. These cemeteries might contain only plants and materials native to the region. Memorial markers might be restricted to trees or naturally occurring rocks to maintain the natural appearance. Some areas of these cemeteries may also restrict visitor access, similar to natural conservation areas, while other areas may actively encourage visitors, similar to parks.

	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this kind of cemetery for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This kind of cemetery would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this kind of cemetery to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5
D. This kind of cemetery would uphold the dignity and sanctity of the national cemeteries.	1	2	3	4	5

17) Some people choose coral reef burials, in which their cremated remains are used to create a new coral reef habitat. In this process, cremated remains are incorporated with cement to create a structure that is placed on the sea floor in a designated reef reclamation area. The structure may include a memorial plaque, and mourners may visit the site by boat or by snorkeling or scuba diving.

	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this method for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
B. This method would be a respectful and dignified way to treat Veterans' remains.	1	2	3	4	5
C. The VA/NCA should offer this method to Veterans.	1	2	3	4	5

18) Are you aware of any other burial methods you and your loved ones might consider that are not mentioned above?
Please write your answer.

SECTION 4

Next, we'd like you to think about ceremonies that people perform at burials, including traditional rituals related to their religion or cultural or ethnic background.

19) Are there any ceremonies, perhaps related to your cultural heritage or religious or ethnic background, that you would like to have at your burial?

Please write your answer.

20) Would the ceremony you wrote above include any of the following at the gravesite?

Please mark all that apply.

- 1 Food
- 2 Flowers
- 3 Music
- 4 Leaving gifts or mementos

21) Would you still choose to be buried at a national Veterans' cemetery if the kind of ceremony you wanted was not allowed?

Please mark all that apply.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Not applicable, I do not want a ceremony.
- 4 Not applicable, I believe they allow the ceremony I want.

22) Why or why not?

Please write your answer.

SECTION 5

In addition to headstones, markers, and the Presidential Certificate that NCA currently provides Veterans, there may be additional methods to memorialize a Veteran's life and service to the country. Through recent advances in technology, the following information could be provided on a website and/or through handheld devices so that loved ones, and other people they choose, have access to it.

23) Specific information about your burial location, such as directions to the gravesite and a picture of the headstone.

	STRONGLY AGREE
	SOMEWHAT AGREE
	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this kind of memorialization for myself.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
B. I believe other Veterans should have this available to them at the VA's national cemeteries.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

24) Information about your military service, such as where you enlisted, the rank you achieved, the places you were stationed, and your military specialty and decorations.

	STRONGLY AGREE
	SOMEWHAT AGREE
	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this kind of memorialization for myself.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
B. I believe other Veterans should have this available to them at the VA's national cemeteries.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

25) Information about your life after the military and your family.

	STRONGLY AGREE
	SOMEWHAT AGREE
	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE
	STRONGLY DISAGREE
A. I would choose this kind of memorialization for myself.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
B. I believe other Veterans should have this available to them at the VA's national cemeteries.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

26) Are you aware of any memorialization methods you and your loved ones might consider that are not mentioned above?

Please write your answer.

SECTION 6

Next, we would like to understand your background. This information will not be used to identify you, but will only be used to analyze survey responses.

27) In which branch of Service did you serve?

Please mark all that apply.

- ① Air Force
- ② Air Force Reserve
- ③ Air National Guard
- ④ Army
- ⑤ Army National Guard
- ⑥ Army Reserve
- ⑦ Coast Guard
- ⑧ Coast Guard Reserve
- ⑨ Marine Corps
- ⑩ Marine Corps Reserve
- ⑪ Navy
- ⑫ Navy Reserve

28) When did you begin your first term of service?

- ① September 2001 or later
- ② August 1990 to August 2001 (includes Persian Gulf War)
- ③ May 1975 to July 1990
- ④ Vietnam Era (1964-1975)
- ⑤ February 1955 to July 1964
- ⑥ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1953)
- ⑦ January 1947 to June 1950
- ⑧ World War II (December 1941 to December 1945)
- ⑨ November 1941 or earlier

29) What was your pay grade at the time of your last separation/retirement?

- ① E1-E4
- ② E5-E6
- ③ E7-E9
- ④ WO1-CW5
- ⑤ O1-O3
- ⑥ O4-O6
- ⑦ O7-O10

30) What is your sex?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

31) In what year were you born?

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32) Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

33) Which of the following best describes your race?

Please mark all that apply.

- 1 American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 2 Asian
- 3 Black or African American
- 4 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- 5 White

34) What is the highest education or degree you have received?

- 1 High school diploma/GED or other high school equivalency
- 2 Some college credit, but no degree
- 3 Associate's degree (e.g., A.A., A.S.)
- 4 Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.S.)
- 5 Graduate or professional degree (e.g., M.A., Ph.D., M.D., J.D.)

35) What was your total family income for 2011 before taxes and deductions (gross income)?

- 1 Less than \$10,000
- 2 \$10,001 - \$20,000
- 3 \$20,001 - \$30,000
- 4 \$30,001 - \$40,000
- 5 \$40,001 - \$50,000
- 6 \$50,001 - \$75,000
- 7 \$75,001 - \$100,000
- 8 More than \$100,000

36) What is your current marital status?

- 1 Married, living with spouse
- 2 Married, not living with spouse
- 3 Widowed
- 4 Divorced
- 5 Legally separated
- 6 Never married

37) What is your religious affiliation?

Please mark only one.

- 1 Protestant
- 2 Catholic
- 3 Jewish
- 4 Muslim
- 5 Other religion (Please be specific) _____
- 6 No religion

38) Are you currently receiving any of the following benefits from the VA?

Please mark all that apply.

- 1 Eligibility for VA health care
- 2 VA health care facility locations
- 3 VA life insurance
- 4 VA home loans
- 5 VA education and training
- 6 VA vocational rehabilitation
- 7 VA burial and memorial benefits
- 8 VA disability compensation and pension
- 9 VA benefits for dependents and survivors
- 10 VA transition assistance
- 11 VA prescription benefits
- 12 Other:

Thank you again for sharing your perspective. It will be very helpful as we work to identify ways to honor our Veterans; feedback from you and other Veterans will be a big part of making improvements to the VA's service offerings. If you would like additional information, please visit www.cem.va.gov

Along with this survey, we are conducting a series of interviews and focus groups with Veterans to better understand their needs regarding this important part of their lives. The topics covered in these activities will be the same as those explored in this survey. If you would like to participate in such an activity in your area, please provide us your phone number and/or email address so that we may set up a time that is convenient for you. Your contact information will NOT be used for any other purpose than to make these arrangements and, along with this survey, will be destroyed at the conclusion of this project.

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL: