

## **A. Justification**

1. The National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) mission is to honor Veterans with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service to our nation. NCA strives to serve all Veterans and their families with the utmost dignity, respect, and compassion. Currently, NCA maintains approximately 3 million gravesites at 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. In 2009, VA estimated that 653,000 US Veterans died, and approximately 14 percent choose to be buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery. It is expected that more Veterans will select VA national and state cemeteries as a final resting place, and it is NCA's intention to open more VA cemeteries in the future. National cemeteries currently offer two main types of interment: full casket burial and interment of cremated remains.

NCA has over the past several years made significant efforts to evaluate its burial program. In 2008, NCA completed the first comprehensive evaluation of its burial benefits program, which included a nationwide survey of Veterans that, among other things, assessed the reasons that Veterans choose – or do not choose – burial in a national cemetery. Although the survey assessed what types of interment practices were currently available through NCA and evaluated Veterans' preferences for existing interment practices, it did not determine Veterans' preferences for interment options that were beyond what was currently offered by VA at that time. NCA now seeks to update both their understanding of the Veterans' satisfaction with NCA's current services and to understand what additional interment options might be of interest to our Veterans and how they would view the inclusion of these options at the national cemeteries or other venues.

2. This survey and the focus groups will form the basis for review of various policies and the performance of follow-on research into specific emerging interment options. The objective is to collect approximately 15,000 completed surveys. Twenty focus groups, consisting of between eight and ten Veterans apiece, will be conducted with two focus groups held in each field location. Five structured interviews, consisting of individual Veterans and their loved ones, will also be held in each field location. The primary objective of the survey is to measure interest in and perceptions of emerging burial practices for inclusion in NCA cemeteries. The survey results will provide the NCA with detailed and statistically significant insight into Veterans' awareness of their VA burial benefits and emerging burial practices. It will also measure levels of interest in these emerging burial practices, in addition to evaluating whether Veterans perceive such practices to be appropriate for the national shrine environment of an NCA. The primary objective of the focus groups and structured interviews is to provide increased insight into the survey results, including delving into specific trends and findings exposed by analysis of the survey data. The structure of focus groups and interviews allows for detailed follow-on questions and requests for clarification, which can be used to supplement the purely quantitative results of the survey itself.

3. The approach to data collection for this survey combines two methodologies, deliver and return of paper surveys using the US Postal Service and conducting an identical survey on-line. The on-line methodology is considered the primary data collection method and respondents are guided to that

methodology through a series of communications that begins with a letter from the NCA asking them to participate and providing the information necessary to complete the survey on-line.

4. The NCA has not collected this information in the past and is unaware of any government or commercial entities that collect this very specific satisfaction information for their unique customer base.

5. None of the population surveyed will be small businesses.

6. There are many emerging burial options becoming available in the commercial markets both domestically and internationally. Some of these practices may be of interest to our Veteran population. Carefully measuring their level of satisfaction with the current services and, at the same time, measuring their interest in these other options will help guide potential new service offering by the agency. Without this refreshing of the burial service offering, Veterans may come to view this benefit as less and less appealing and will decrease their use of the system.

7. None of the special circumstances are applicable to this collection.

8. The Department proposed notice for comments was published on September 13, 2012, pages 56713-56714. There were no comments received in response to this notice.

9. No remuneration will be made to any of the survey participants

10. The following assurance is displayed in the introduction to the survey, both electronic and paper versions. Respondents identify will be carefully protected by adhering all applicable privacy laws as well as separating any survey responses from personally identifying information. Completed surveys do not contain any PII and are identified only by a respondent number.

#### **Data Privacy**

All survey responses will be kept private to the extent permitted by law 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.

11. The survey requests participants to provide a variety of standard demographic data, some of which may be considered sensitive, including religious preference. It is necessary to collect this information to fully understand the populations' interest in the various burial practices. The choice of an interment option is tightly bound to various cultural/ religious beliefs, life experiences, and economic circumstances. Our survey looks at each of the categories to determine which may or may not drive the individual's decision-making process.

12. The three methods of data collection included in this ICR are a 14-minute survey completed either on-line or by returning a paper survey, eight respondents per focus groups, will be conducted at ten locations (two per location), and five respondents per structured interviews will be conducted at the same locations. We expect to have 5,051.31 survey respondents complete the survey on-line with the remaining 10,255.69 coming from the USPS paper surveys. It is approximately a one third, two thirds

split: 33% on-line, 67% paper. This is a one-time customer satisfaction survey with accompanying qualitative collections conducted after the survey to provide context and deeper understanding of the survey results. The survey is a low burden for each respondent, approximately 14 minutes. The focus groups will be from 60-90 minutes in length and the structured interviews will be the same length. The specific calculations are contained in the table below. Survey duration was derived through testing. Along with testing done by contractor personnel, the research team recruited eight military Veterans to read and respond to the mail survey. Five respondents were interviewed in-person, while three returned their responses electronically. The respondents were Veterans of the Army, Marines, Coast Guard, and Navy whose terms of service had ranged from 5 to more than 30 years. Each respondent was asked to fill out the survey and provide their interpretation of survey language as they proceeded. Respondents suggested changes to the survey instrument and cover letter that improved its utility and minimized burden.

Survey pre-testing included administering the survey to approximately one dozen individuals, eight of whom were veterans themselves.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Participation Time (min)</b>	<b>Burden (hours)</b>
<b>Survey</b>	<b>US Veterans</b>	15,307	14	3,572
<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>US Veterans</b>	160	90	240
<b>Structured Interviews</b>	<b>US Veterans</b>	50	90	75
<b>Total:</b>		<b>15,517</b>		<b>3,887</b>

13. There is no cost to the respondent to complete the survey.

14. The one-time costs for this research project including contract support, travel costs, and other direct costs is \$899,697. This figure includes all costs for the survey, focus groups, and structured interviews.

15. This is a new data collection.

16. The results of this study will not be published.

17. The survey will display the required OMB approval number and date.

18. This information collection request requires no exceptions to the statements identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83-I.