

**Supporting Statement for
Generic Clearance for the National Cemetery Administration
Customer Satisfaction Surveys
(2900-0571)**

A. Justification

1. In response to Executive Order 12862, "Improving Customer Service through Effective Performance Management", the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will conduct surveys to determine the level of satisfaction with existing services among their customers. The surveys will solicit voluntary opinions and are not intended to collect information required to obtain or maintain eligibility for a VA program or benefit. Baseline data obtained through these information collections are used to validate customer service standards. This submission is a request by NCA to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the following approval:

- a. Grant NCA a three-year extension of its generic clearance authority;
- b. Allow NCA to establish a maximum number of annual burden hours against which burden will be charged for each survey actually used; and
- c. Allow for the submission of summary of objectives, specific burden estimates, and final survey instruments (focus group scripts, test questions, etc.) covered by the generic clearance from OMB (and inclusion in the OMB public docket) prior to their use.

2. The National Cemetery Administration will continue to conduct customer satisfaction surveys under this generic clearance for the purpose of implementing the Executive Order. If surveys are not conducted, NCA is unable to comply with the Executive Order and will lack the information needed to improve established standards for the best possible customer focused service. NCA plans to use the information gathered to determine what services are satisfactory and meet customer needs and expectations. Additionally, NCA will gain insight into areas for improvement. Participation in the surveys is voluntary and the generic clearance will not be used to collect information required to obtain or maintain eligibility for a VA program or benefit. Voluntary customer surveys are not program evaluations and will not be used as substitutes for traditional program evaluation surveys that measure objective outcomes. In order to maximize the voluntary response rates, the information collection will be designed to make participation convenient, simple, and free of unnecessary barriers. The National Cemetery Administration anticipates that the surveys will identify those aspects of services that are most important to their customers - the Veteran. NCA requests that once approved by OMB, this generic ICR becomes a generic clearance that remains in place for the PRA's maximum approval period of three years. Individual surveys will be sent to OMB for clearance as individual information collections ("IC") prior to collecting data. NCA shall track the usage of all collections approved under this clearance including instruments, methodology, respondents, and total burden hours to ensure compliance with the description of collections approved under this generic clearance.

In the next submission of these collections to OMB for review, NCA shall provide a summary report addressing all collections conducted under the generic clearance during this approval. Surveys developed under this generic clearance number will contain questions similar to those that might be asked in the customer satisfaction surveys included in this initial Generic ICR package. Again, prior to use, each individual survey or IC will require a separate submission to OMB (through the generic IRC process, with a short OMB review) with the exact questions and with burden hours specified.

3. Information technology will be used wherever possible to reduce the information collection burden these activities place on the public. In most instances, surveys sent to NCA customers will be paper based. This customer requirement was derived through focus sessions with NCA customers. Customers (mostly elderly) felt that receiving a survey over the phone or electronically so soon after the death of a loved one would be insensitive, hurtful and impact on the grieving process. Using a paper survey ensured consistency in message and tone. Additionally, they noted that most NCA customers are elderly and do not have access to computers for electronic surveys.

4. The NCA will use VA's internal review process to examine each information collection to prevent duplication of effort or redundancy in the information collected. No information currently being collected in VA can be used to meet the requirements of the Executive Order. The information gathered from the surveys overall, is unique and not available from any other sources.

5. Small businesses, such as directors of funeral homes, are involved in this collection of information.

6. Most customer satisfaction surveys are recurring so that ongoing measures can be created to measure satisfaction and to determine how well the agency meets customer service standards. The burden consists only of that information which is essential to maintain the validity and accomplish the goals of the Executive Order. The NCA will use a variety of activities including focus groups and surveys to gauge customer perceptions of VA services as well as customer expectations and desires. The results of these information collections should lead to improvements in the quality of the NCA service delivery.

7. There are no special circumstances that require the collection of information to be conducted in a manner that is inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. The agency notice was published in the Federal Register on April 8, 2013 at pages 21008-21009. The notice solicited comments relating to the organizations' customer satisfaction survey proposals. One comment was received in response to this notice on April 14, 2013 which stated, "There is no information concerning honor of female where cemeteries are concerned." NCA responded to the comment June 13, 2013 stating that the organization does not provide burial benefits based on gender. Additionally, NCA noted that eligible female Veterans are allowed their own gravesite that is

separate from their Veteran husband.

9. There are no plans to provide payments or gifts to respondents. However, participants in focus groups may be reimbursed for travel expenses.

10. The identities of individuals and organizations contacted will be carefully protected. Names and personal identifiers will be used to locate survey participants and will thereafter be stripped from any files kept for analysis purposes.

11. Questions of a sensitive nature will not be asked.

12. Estimate of the Respondent Burden:

Most customer satisfaction surveys will be recurring so that the National Cemetery Administration can determine how well the administration meets the requirements of its customer service standards. Each collection of information will consist of the minimum amount of information necessary to determine customer needs and determine how well NCA meets those needs. NCA expects to conduct 15 focus groups annually involving a total of 450 hours annually during the approval period. In addition, NCA expects to conduct the National Customer Satisfaction and State and Tribal Cemeteries surveys by mail with a total annual burden of approximately 15,000 hours each. NCA anticipates distribute Comment Cards with a total annual burden of 208 hours. NCA also plans to conduct mail surveys of customers that receive headstones or markers at private cemeteries and Presidential Memorial Certificates to determine levels of customer satisfaction and how well NCA meets the customer's needs and expectations. These customer surveys are estimated at 1000 burden hours annually during the approval period. All individual surveys or ICs will included a Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) statement and burden estimates. When conducting focus groups, the focus group moderator will clearly provide this information to all participants.

I. National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Next of Kin (5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2013	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2014	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2015	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Funeral Directors (5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
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2013	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2014	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2015	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Veterans Service Organizations
(5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2013	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2014	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2015	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

II. National Cemetery Administration Visitor Comment Cards (Local Use)

National Cemetery Administration Visitor Comments Cards (2,500 respondents/5 minutes per card)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	2,500	208 hours	Annually
2014	2,500	208 hours	Annually
2015	2,500	208 hours	Annually

III. National Cemetery Administration Mail Surveys

National Cemetery Administration Next of Kin National Customer Satisfaction Survey
(Mail, 15,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2014	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2015	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Funeral Directors National Customer Satisfaction Survey
(Mail, 4,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	4,000	2,000	Annually
2014	4,000	2,000	Annually
2015	4,000	2,000	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Veterans-At -Large National Customer Satisfaction Survey (Mail 5,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually
2014	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually
2015	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Next of Kin State/Tribal Cemeteries Customer Satisfaction Survey (Mail, 15,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2014	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2015	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Funeral Directors State/Tribal Cemeteries Customer Satisfaction Survey (Mail, 4,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	4,000	2,000	Annually
2014	4,000	2,000	Annually
2015	4,000	2,000	Annually

IV. Program/Specialized Service Survey

National Cemetery Administration Memorial Products Survey (Next of Kin and Funeral Directors) (Mail, 6, 000 surveys/10 minutes each)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2013	6,000	1,000 hours	Annually
2014	6,000	1,000 hours	Annually
2015	6,000	1,000 hours	Annually

V. Total Burden Hours Per Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number of Respondents (all surveys)</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>
2013	51,650	23,158
2014	51,650	23,158
2015	51,650	23,158

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

14. The estimated costs for these surveys including contract support, travel costs, and other direct costs is \$1,204,250.00. This figure also includes all costs for the surveys, focus groups, and structured interviews.

15. The burden hour increase is due to a change in the number of prospective survey participants and the inclusion of participants for the State and Tribal Cemeteries survey.

16. The results obtained from these information collections will be disseminated to management officials, VA employees, and the public.

17. Survey instruments do not display an expiration date and if required to do so, would result in unnecessary waste of the existing stock. For this reason, VA continues to seek an exemption that waives the displaying of the expiration date.

18. There are no exceptions to the "Certification of Paperwork Reduction Act Submission."