

June 20, 2003

A Meaningful Increase in Burial Benefits is Long Overdue

9.3 million veterans are 65 or older.
1,500 veterans die every day in the United States.

Dear Colleague,

Burial benefits provided to our nation's veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs have seriously eroded due to inflation, leaving states and families to make up the cost. With so many of our national heroes dying every year, paying for the burial expenses of veterans is a growing concern to families and state veteran cemeteries.

On May 22nd, I introduced the **Veterans Burial Benefits Improvement Act of 2003, H.R. 2217**. This legislation:

- Increases the Department of Veterans Affairs plot allowance from \$300 to \$670 for the burial costs of veterans who are buried in a state veteran cemetery or a private cemetery.
- Increases burial allowance benefits from \$2,000 to \$3,713 for veterans who die as a result of service connected injuries and are buried in a national cemetery.
- Increases the burial allowance for a veteran who wishes to be buried in a national veteran cemetery and whose cause of death is not related to military service, wil from \$300 to \$1,135.

The **AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America**, and the **Veterans of Foreign Wars** fully support this legislation. Please see the reverse side for their letter of support. The **National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs** and the **Fleet Reserve Association**, which represents all enlisted personnel in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard, also strongly support this legislation.

I encourage you to support this important improvement to veterans benefits. For more information, or to cosponsor, please contact Christine Lamble at 5-5965.

Sincerely,

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SHELLEY BERKLEY
Member of Congress