

The background of the entire image is a warm, orange-toned sunset or sunrise scene. In the upper left corner, the stripes of the American flag are visible, flowing across the frame. On the right side, there is a dark silhouette of a person wearing a military uniform, including a beret and a jacket with a shoulder patch. The person is facing left, looking towards the horizon where the sun is setting or rising, creating a bright, glowing light source. The overall mood is solemn and respectful.

# 10 FACTS

YOU NEED TO  
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BURIAL BENEFITS

# 10 FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR VETERAN'S BURIAL BENEFITS

**I**f you are a Veteran or Veteran's family member, it's easy to feel frustrated trying to sort through all the complicated information about Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Burial Benefits. There are many benefits that are entitlements under law, but it can be difficult to understand how to determine eligibility and to apply.

Keep in mind that many of these benefits apply differently under individual circumstances – which is why many veterans and their families seek out advice in advance from experienced professionals.

**Fact #1: The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits does not cover all the funeral or cremation arrangements of honorably discharged Veterans.**

There are quite a few monetary, recognition, and service benefits that are available to a Veteran's family. However, specific reimbursement for funeral or cremation costs is limited. Typically, funeral and cremation cost reimbursement applies only to Veterans who have:

- Retired from active duty in the Armed Services
- Were disabled in the line of duty
- Died in a VA hospital or nursing home while under VA contract

There are many ways that an experienced advisor can look at a Veteran's service record and help to determine their exact qualifications in this area.

**Fact #2: Families will need documentation that verifies the Veteran's military service.**

To verify military service, the basic document required is form "DD-214", commonly called "discharge papers." The original Department of Defense form, or a verified copy is a must-have for any Veteran and their family, and will be part of the documentation that a Funeral Director will help the family assemble, preferably during pre-planning.





### **Fact #3: A Veteran's family is entitled to an American flag.**

A flag is provided free of charge but must be formally requested. The VA will provide the flag immediately so that it can be used to drape the casket or accompany the urn of the veteran who has passed away. The flag is typically presented to the next of kin for keeping in a place of honor. To obtain this flag, the family simply completes an "Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes" form and provides a copy of the veteran's discharge papers Form DD-214.

### **Fact #4: Military Funeral Honors ceremonies need to be scheduled in advance.**

Federal law states that every eligible veteran must receive a military funeral honors ceremony, including the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of taps, should the family request such a service.

### **Fact #5: With a single exception, the VA does not supply Veterans with a free casket.**

Neither the VA nor the branches of the Armed Services offer a free casket for a deceased Veteran, except in the instance that death occurred while on active duty.

### **Fact #6: A Presidential Memorial Certificate must be requested.**

The Presidential Memorial Certificate is an engraved paper certificate signed by the current President. It is a very special honor in memory of a deceased veteran and becomes a treasured keepsake with a place alongside the Veteran's photo in many homes. To receive this prestigious certificate, the family of the veteran can apply at any VA regional office or online through the VA website.



**Fact #7: For those Veterans who are not buried in a VA national cemetery, monetary burial benefits are limited.**

Veterans may choose to be buried in a private cemetery for many reasons. Being close to family is very important to many Veterans, as well as wanting to be close to home. Available VA cemetery space may not be near surviving family and friends, although the VA always tries to make that happen. The family of a Veteran choosing private cemetery burial is normally eligible for a partial reimbursement to cover burial costs, typically including a \$700 burial allowance and a \$700 burial space allowance.

**Fact #8: There are requirements that must be met to bury a person in a VA national cemetery.**

Those who died while on active duty, and Veterans who were discharged under honorable conditions are entitled to be buried in a VA national cemetery. In addition, certain other kinds of Federal service create VA cemetery eligibility, such as serving in the US Public Health Service. Even if your family member was not in the military, if they had government service in their background you may want to check for possible eligibility.

**Fact #9: Headstones for burial space in a private ceremony must be requested.**

The VA provides an official headstone or marker for the grave of eligible deceased Veterans, but it must be formally requested. Normally this is something that your Funeral Director will handle but it doesn't hurt to be sure that the application has been sent in properly.

**Fact #10: Replacement military service medals or awards must be requested in writing.**

The next of kin is eligible to ask receive replacements of a Veteran's awards or decorations. If the veteran is still alive, they must provide their signed authorization to allow family members to ask for replacements. If asking for a deceased Veteran the actual next-of-kin must make the request, which can be filed through any VA office using a copy of the Veteran's DD-214, and which can also be requested by submitting proof of eligibility online.





**Understanding the benefits that your Veteran is eligible for ensures that they get the kind of burial that fully acknowledges their service to their country. You don't have to handle all this yourself. Both the VA and your Funeral Director are very accustomed to dealing with what can seem like a mountain of paperwork to someone struggling with the death of a loved one. Reach out and ask for help in assuring that they and their survivors receive every benefit that they earned with their service to our country.**

