Saturday and Sunday Interments in National Cemeteries

VA Conducts Study and Seeks Comments

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published a Request for Information in the August 9, 2017, edition of the Federal Register, relating to VA’s conduct of a study on the feasibility and need for providing increased interments in VA national cemeteries on Saturdays and Sundays. Section 304 of the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-315) (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) requires VA conduct this study.

VA’s notice requests comments and feedback from interested parties to help inform VA as it conducts this study, to include specific questions for comment (see below) with regard to the perceived need for such increased interments. Comments in response to this request for information must be received by VA on or before September 8, 2017.

Section 304 of the Act requires VA to conduct a study on the feasibility and need for providing increased interments in veterans' cemeteries on Saturdays and Sundays. In accordance with section 304(a)(2) of the Act, matters to be studied include:

(1) The number of requests for interments in veterans' cemeteries on a Saturday or Sunday since January 1, 2007;

(2) the number of requests that were granted for interments in veterans' cemeteries on a Saturday or Sunday since January 1, 2007;

(3) an estimate of the number of families that, since January 1, 2007, would have selected a weekend interment if such an interment had been offered;

(4) a review of the practices relating to weekend interments among non-veterans' cemeteries, including private and municipal cemeteries;

(5) a comparison of the costs to veterans' cemeteries with respect to providing regular interments only during weekdays and such costs for providing regular interments during weekdays and at least one weekend day; (6) any other information the Secretary determines appropriate.

Under section 304(a)(3) of the Act, VA must consult with the following groups in conducting this study (VA requests commenters identify if they are members of one of the following groups):

- Veterans who are eligible to be interred in a veterans' cemetery;
- Family members of individuals interred in a veterans’ cemetery;
- Veterans service organizations;
• Associations representing cemetery and funeral home professionals;
• The heads of agencies of State governments relating to veterans affairs;
• The directors of veterans' cemeteries; and
• Any other person the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines appropriate.

VA welcomes comments from individuals outside of these groups as well.

VA requests information related to the questions below:

1. If you are a family member of an individual who was interred in a VA national cemetery since January 1, 2007, would you likely have selected a weekend interment option (interment on Saturday or Sunday) if one had been offered? Why or why not?

2. If you are a veteran or other individual eligible for interment at a VA national cemetery, or family member of such an individual:
   a. Would you prefer a weekend interment (Saturday or Sunday) if such an option were offered? Why or why not?
   b. Would you prefer interment on a Saturday or on a Sunday, and why might you have a preference for one day or the other?

3. If you belong to an association, entity, or business representing cemetery and funeral home professionals, or are a director of a State or tribal veterans' cemetery, please provide a review of practices relating to weekend interment options offered in private and other cemeteries (that are not VA national cemeteries). Specifically:
   a. Do your members, or does your organization or business, offer a Saturday or Sunday interment option? Why or why not?
   b. If a weekend interment option is offered, is it offered on either or both Saturday or Sunday? Why is it offered on only one day or both days?
   c. Is there a difference in costs to the entity to offer and conduct weekend interments versus weekday interments (to include resources like staffing and use of buildings and grounds)? Are these costs passed on to the family in the form of higher fees or charges?
d. What do you perceive to be the advantages or disadvantages of offering weekend interment options in cemeteries and also, specifically, in VA national cemeteries?

4. If you belong to or represent veterans service organizations, or heads of agencies of State governments related to veterans affairs:

a. Have veterans or their family members in the areas you serve expressed a preference for a weekend interment option in VA national cemeteries? Did those veterans or their family members provide reasons why they would or would not prefer such an option, and if so, what were the reasons provided?

b. What do you perceive to be the advantages or disadvantages of VA offering weekend interment options in VA national cemeteries?

How to Submit Written Comments

Written comments may be submitted through www.Regulations.gov, or by mail or hand delivery to the Director, Office of Regulation Policy and Management (00REG), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave. NW., Room 1068, Washington, DC 20420; or by fax to (202) 273-9026 (this is not a toll-free number). Comments should indicate they are submitted in response to “Notice of Request for Information to assist the Department of Veterans Affairs to determine the feasibility and need for providing interments in veterans' national cemeteries on Saturdays and Sundays.” Copies of comments received will be available for public inspection in the Office of Regulation Policy and Management, (00REG), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Ave. NW., Room 1063B, Washington, DC 20420, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday (except Federal holidays). Please call (202) 461-4902 for an appointment (this is not a toll-free number). During the comment period, comments may also be viewed online through the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS) at www.Regulations.gov