

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date

3/22/99

## MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Representative Susan Wagle at 1:30 P.M. on March 16, 1999 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Reps. Freeborn & Edmonds, both excused

Committee staff present:

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes  
Russell Mills, Legislative Research  
Judy Swanson, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Anderson Chandler, KCCI  
State Representative Gerald Geringer  
State Senator Lana Oleen  
State Senator Greta Goodwin  
Donna Deck, Commission on Veterans Affairs  
John Sajo, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance  
Dick Jepson, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance  
Gary LaGrange, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance  
Buzz Bruzina, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance  
Orris Kelly, Chaplain  
Chuck Yunker, American Legion

Others attending:

See attached list

Rep. Benlon made a motion to introduce a Committee bill concerning public funding of campaigns. Rep. Finley seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Hearing was opened on **SB 19**, Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, state system of veterans cemeteries. Russell Mills, Legislative Research, explained the bill which would authorize the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to develop a plan to establish, operate and administer one or more state veterans cemeteries in Kansas. (Attachment #1)

Anderson Chandler, Chairman, Military Affairs Committee, Kansas Chamber of Commerce & Industry, testified in favor of **SB 19**. He said National cemeteries and military cemeteries are in the eastern third of the state, and a veterans' cemetery should be considered farther west and south in Kansas. (Attachment #2)

State Representative Gerald Geringer testified that if this bill passed cemeteries would be in Ft. Dodge, Winfield, Ft. Riley and a location in northwestern Kansas. (Attachment #3) The Federal Government says that the military should not be in the burial business.

State Senator Lana Oleen testified in favor of **SB 19**. (Attachment #4) She said this issue has been a grass roots movement for the past two years. The bill passed the Senate with a vote of 37-3. Federal money is available to create the cemeteries. She said the fiscal note as written concerns her, but it is wrong because they had to use Federal data to prepare the note. The reason cemeteries are limited in Kansas is because of geographic area that needs to be covered. If this bill is passed, Ft. Dodge will be included even though it is underway.

State Senator Greta Goodwin testified that according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Kansas was listed as having leverage in obtaining funds. She said there is a dire need in Kansas for a State system for veterans cemeteries. (Attachment #5)

Donna Deck, Fiscal Officer, presented testimony for Don Myer, Executive Director of Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. (Attachment #6) She testified the veteran population of Kansas is creating a need for more burial spots. The State would accept 100% of the operating costs for those cemeteries for 20 years.

John Sajo, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance, testified that this bill would fill the need of veterans in

Kansas. He said 20 states already have state operated veterans cemeteries including all states bordering Kansas. (Attachment #7)

Dick Jepson, Chairman of the State Veterans Cemetery Alliance, testified in favor of **SB 19**. (Attachment #8) He said he thought it would be economically wise to plan a veterans cemetery system for the state.

Col. Gary LaGrange, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance, testified Ft. Riley's current cemetery is nearing closure and this bill would be of benefit to expansion. Ft. Riley has set aside and begun the process of transferring up to 100 acres to the State for a site at Ft. Riley. (Attachment #9)

Buzz Bruzina testified this would be a good opportunity to minimize the cost and fill a void in the State of Kansas for burial of veterans. (Attachment #10)

Orris Kelly, former Chaplain, testified a veterans cemetery is part of a nation or a state or a community. It is a reminder to not forget patriots who have served. (Attachment #11)

Chuck Yunker, Kansas American Legion, testified the delegates to the Kansas American Legion's State Convention voted unanimously to endorse the concept of having a state veterans cemetery system. (Attachment #12)

Committee discussion followed. Rep. Ruff expressed her appreciation of the military when her father was laid to rest. LaGrange said any veteran who served an honorable tour of service in the military and their family would be eligible for burial in a veterans cemetery. Jack Streukel, Cemetery Alliance, said all land on which a veterans cemetery is placed in Kansas must be owned by the State. He said they were not talking about leasing any of the land at the four sites. LaGrange said an eligible veteran was someone who had been in the service over 120 days, and general discharges would be included.

Deck said the discrepancy in the cost of sites is because of the size, and the fact that some already have staff. Ft. Riley is committed to giving the land. Their expected operational cost would be approximately \$180,000, but net cost would be about \$31,000 because Ft. Riley could use already existing personnel to care for property. LaGrange said it is crucial that this legislation be passed in order for Ft. Riley to receive the Federal funds. He was not sure if it would be possible to apply this bill only to the Ft. Riley site. Jepson said it is their goal to have good access to all veterans in the State to a cemetery. LaGrange said Ft. Riley risked the \$80,000 up front to do their environmental and ecological studies because their cemetery is almost full. It was stated a veteran pays \$150 to be buried in a veterans cemetery and a family member pays \$250. Rep. Cox said a traditional cemetery plot costs about \$900.

The fiscal note was the original fiscal note prepared by the Division of Budget for \$616,000 according to Russell Mills. This is annually for maintenance. He said that cost is now \$358,000, but no new fiscal note has yet been prepared.

Hearing was closed.

Chair Wagle announced that action will be taken on a parental consent bill at tomorrow's meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 P.M

**HOUSE FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS  
GUEST LIST**

DATE: 03-16-99

| NAME                 | REPRESENTING  |
|----------------------|---|
| Donna Deck           | KCVA  |
| KRIS Kelly           | Manhattan   |
| Anderson Charles     | KACT  |
| DENNIS (BUZ) BRUZINA | GEARY CITY STATE VETERANS <sup>SVCA</sup> CEMETERY ALLIANCE |
| Mick Jensen          | SVCA Manhattan  |
| Chris Bragdon        | Adjutant General's Dept                                     |
| Paul [unclear]       | SWA Junction City   |
| Charles M Yunker     | KANSAS AMERICAN REGION                                      |
| DORRILL BEUCKEN      | KANSAS VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS                             |
| Randy Scott          | KCVA  |
| Ron Gaches           | McGill, Gaches & Associates                                 |
| EDWARD ROWE          | LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/KS                                   |
| <del>Debra</del>     | <del>CHIPPEN</del>  |
|                      |   |
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# JOINT COMMITTEE ON STATE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

## VETERANS CEMETERY\*

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends introduction of legislation that would authorize the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to develop a plan to establish, operate and administer one or more state veterans cemeteries in Kansas.

### BACKGROUND

This study topic was requested by several individual legislators due to concern about the lack of burial space available in existing cemeteries designated for veterans. Several veterans groups around the state have encouraged the state to address this issue by establishing a state veterans cemetery program.

#### National Cemeteries

Any honorably discharged veteran with wartime service is eligible for burial in a national veterans' cemetery. The federal Veterans Administration (VA) operates a national cemetery at Leavenworth. The cemetery, which is open to veterans from across the country, is expected to be full in 2015. The VA also runs a national cemetery at Fort Scott; it is not expected to be completely full until 2030 or later. The VA has developed policies for building new veterans' cemeteries based upon veteran populations, but those efforts will focus on states with larger populations than Kansas.

One possibility being discussed at Leavenworth is expansion of the current cemetery onto Leavenworth military hospital

grounds. This is characterized as a cost effective alternative for the federal government because it would make use of federal land. However, the plan calls for several very old buildings to be razed for construction of the cemetery expansion. Concern from historical preservation groups may be an obstacle for the VA in pursuing this option. If the VA decides to expand the cemetery at Leavenworth, the entire expansion would be federally funded. The VA estimates that the expanded cemetery will be capable of servicing the area until 2030 or later.

#### Military Cemeteries

Military cemeteries are run by the Department of Defense. Under the terms of the National Cemetery Act of 1973, the national cemeteries were turned over to the VA and individual posts were allowed to keep their cemeteries open until they were full. Military cemeteries are open only to those who die while on active duty or to military retirees—a small portion of the veteran population. Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth each have a military cemetery.

**Fort Riley.** The military cemetery at Fort Riley is expected to close in mid-1999. It could be granted a waiver of federal policy and allowed

\* Proposed legislation not available at time of publication.



to expand slightly. However, this would provide a small number of additional burial spaces which could be filled only by military retirees or those who die while on active duty.

### **State Veterans' Cemetery Program**

Under this program the VA subsidizes establishment of a veterans' cemetery. Currently, grants are available for 100 percent of the cost of construction, while land acquisition would be the responsibility of the state. After construction, all of the staffing and operating costs would fall to the state. State veterans' cemeteries are open to veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents. Currently, Kansas does not participate in the state veterans' cemetery program.

**Fort Riley.** Interest has been expressed in the establishment of a state veterans' cemetery at Fort Riley. It is possible this could be constructed on land donated from the military. No definite agreement has been made and negotiations have not begun. Fort Riley estimates study costs of \$80,000 to determine if the land is suitable for construction of a cemetery.

**Fort Dodge.** The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs (KCVA) has approved a change in mission for the cemetery at the Kansas Soldiers' Home at Fort Dodge, allowing the Soldiers' Home to seek a VA grant under the state veterans' cemetery program to expand that cemetery. If the grant is awarded, the cemetery would become a state veterans' cemetery. The current cemetery is open only to residents of the Kansas Soldiers' Home pursuant to informal KCVA policy. If it becomes a state veterans' cemetery, it would be open to any member of the United States Armed Forces who died while in the active military, naval, or air service or was discharged therefrom, other than dishonorable. The state can establish residency requirements for burial at state veterans' cemeteries (as is done currently for residence at the Kansas Soldiers' Home) but these have been successfully chal-

lenged. The VA also requires that state veterans' cemeteries conform to its standards and guidelines pertaining to site selection, planning, and construction. The Kansas Soldiers' Home is in the process of applying for a VA grant.

**Winfield.** Another possible site for a state veterans' cemetery is at the Kansas Veterans Home currently under construction on the grounds of the former Winfield State Hospital. This cemetery would need to meet all of the requirements for state veterans' cemeteries described above. At this time, no site has been established and no grant applications have been made for construction of a state veterans' cemetery at Winfield.

### **Veterans in Kansas**

The VA estimates 5,895 veterans will die in Kansas in 1999, 5,990 in 2000, and 6,070 in 2001. Estimated numbers of veteran deaths in Kansas peak in 2003 at 6,180, and then decline rapidly; to 3,225 for 2010. The anticipated rise in the death rates has sparked concern from some Kansas veterans' groups about the lack of space in veterans' cemeteries in Kansas. No one has determined the actual demand from veterans wanting to be buried in a veterans' cemetery.

### **COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

At its October meeting, the Committee received a background memorandum from the Kansas Legislative Research Department describing the types of veterans' cemeteries and the current veterans' cemetery situation in Kansas. The Committee held hearings on this topic in November. Conferees at the hearings included members of the Kansas Legislature and representatives of Kansas veterans' groups who urged the Committee to support establishing a state veterans' cemetery program in cooperation with the VA. Additionally, the Committee received information on the state veterans' cemetery program by a representative of the VA.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends introduction of legislation that would authorize the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to develop a plan to establish, operate, and administer one or more state veterans' cemeteries in Kansas.

# LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY



*The Unified Voice of Business*

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SB 19

March 16, 1999

## KANSAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Testimony Before the

House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

by

Anderson Chandler  
Chairman, Military Affairs Committee

Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Anderson Chandler, Chairman of Fidelity State Banks, headquartered in Topeka, and Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The committee, composed of nearly 100 business leaders from across the state, is dedicated to the retention and expansion of Kansas' largest economic generators, the military; to preserving a strong national defense; and to the support of our men and women in uniform, past and present.

The Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) is a statewide organization dedicated to the promotion of economic growth and job creation within Kansas, and to the protection and support of the private competitive enterprise system.

KCCI is comprised of more than 3,000 businesses which includes 200 local and regional chambers of commerce and trade organizations which represent over 161,000 business men and women. The organization represents both large and small employers in Kansas, with 47% of KCCI's members having less than 25 employees, and 77% having less than 100 employees. KCCI receives no government funding.

The KCCI Board of Directors establishes policies through the work of hundreds of the organization's members who make up its various committees. These policies are the guiding principles of the organization and translate into views such as those expressed here.

*House Fed + State  
03-16-99  
Attachment # 2-1*



is in this interest we are pleased to support SB 19, providing for a system of state-operated veterans' cemeteries.

Kansas currently is the home to two national cemeteries, at Leavenworth and Fort Scott. It is our understanding that these Federal facilities are at capacity, and can no longer provide for those veterans who served their country well and wish to be interred there.

The cemetery needs of Kansas veterans is regrettably increasing. Perhaps some of you have read Tom Brokaw's book the Greatest Generation about the men and women who served in World War II. The Veterans Administration estimates 1,000 U.S. veterans nationwide die each day. In Kansas they estimate 5895 veterans will die this year, 5990 in 2000, and 6070 in 2001. It should peak in 2003 at 6180 and decline rapidly to 3225 by 2010. It is time to provide for this increase in cemetery needs now. No one has determined the actual demand from veterans wanting to be buried in a veteran's cemetery. One thing to consider is that the National cemeteries and military cemeteries are in the eastern third of the state, and perhaps a Kansas veterans' cemetery should be located farther west and south in Kansas. Families of veterans buried there would not have to drive so far to decorate the graves on Memorial Day or other special occasions.

SB 19 would enable the state to provide for these men and women and their families in the future, by taking advantage of the Veterans Administration State Cemeteries Grants Program. By our count currently, 32 states and U.S. territories operate state veterans' cemeteries. To date the VA has assisted over 40 such cemeteries in 21 states. In addition to the development grant, a portion of the cost of operations is reimbursed by the VA on a per-burial basis.

The citizens of Kansas owe a debt of gratitude to its sons and daughters who have served, or are now serving, in the nation's defense. Adoption of this enabling legislation is one way to honor them for that service.

If I can answer questions I will do my best to do so or someone from the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs can do a better job. An advisory board has been established for this purpose.

**Fort Riley.** The military cemetery at Fort Riley is expected to close in mid-1999. It could be granted a waiver of federal policy and allowed to expand slightly. However, this would provide a small number of additional burial spaces which could be filled only by military retirees or those who die while on active duty.

### State Veterans' Cemetery Program

Under this program the VA subsidizes establishment of a veterans' cemetery. Currently, grants are available for 100 percent of the cost of construction, while land acquisition would be the responsibility of the state. After construction, all of the staffing and operating costs would fall to the state. State veterans' cemeteries are open to veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents. Currently, Kansas does not participate in the state veterans' cemetery program.

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**Winfield.** Another possible site for a state veterans' cemetery is at the Kansas Veterans Home currently under construction on the grounds of the former Winfield State Hospital. This cemetery would need to meet all of the requirements for state veterans' cemeteries described above. At this time, no site has been established and no grant applications have been made for construction of a state veterans' cemetery at Winfield.

SENATE BILL 19 REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STATE VETERANS CEMETERY SYSTEM HAS PASSED THE KANSAS SENATE ON A 37-3 VOTE.

THE BILL AUTHORIZES THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A STATE SYSTEM OF VETERANS CEMETERIES BY THE KANSAS COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. ALTHOUGH THE EXACT SITES HAVE NOT BEEN SELECTED, SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO INCLUDE THE FORT DODGE SOLDIERS HOME CEMETERY, A SITE NEAR THE KANSAS VETERANS HOME NEAR WINFIELD, A SITE IN THE FORT RILEY AREA AND A SITE TO BE SELECTED IN NORTHWEST KANSAS.

THE BILL IS A CULMINATION OF THE EFFORTS BY THE STATE VETERANS CEMETERY ALLIANCE. THIS IS A GROUP OF VETERANS FROM GEARY, RILEY AND SHAWNEE COUNTIES. THIS GROUP BELIEVES THAT PLANNING FOR A CEMETERY SYSTEM IS APPROPRIATE AND WISE. SUCH A SYSTEM WILL SUPPORT THE DEMAND FOR PROPER RECOGNITION OF A VETERAN'S MILITARY SERVICE.

THE NEED FOR A VETERAN CEMETERY SYSTEM STEMS FROM SEVERAL ROOTS. THE VETERANS POPULATION IS AGING, RESULTING IN A RAPID INCREASE IN THE NEED FOR BURIAL CAPACITY. THE MILITARY CEMETERIES ARE FULL OR NEARLY SO AND CANNOT BE EXPANDED BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE MILITARY SHOULD NOT BE IN THE CEMETERY BUSINESS. THE 250,000-PLUS MEN AND WOMEN VETERANS OF THIS STATE DESERVE RECOGNITION OF THEIR SERVICE BY BURIAL IN A

*House Fed & State  
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Attachment #3-1*



**VETERANS CEMETERY.**

**IT IS IRONIC THAT ALL OF THE BORDERING STATES HAVE A VETERANS CEMETERY SYSTEM BUT KANSAS DOES NOT. THERE ARE NO VETERANS CEMETERIES WITHIN A REASONABLE DISTANCE FOR MANY VETERANS IN LARGE AREAS OF THE STATE.**

**AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC REASON FOR DEVELOPING A STATE CEMETERY SYSTEM IS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, IS FINANCING 100 PERCENT OF THE CONSTRUCTION COSTS, INCLUDING ROADS, BURIAL VAULTS AND NECESSARY BUILDINGS, PLUS THE COST OF THE INITIAL EQUIPMENT TO OPERATE THE CEMETERY. ANOTHER ECONOMIC REASON IS THAT THE ARMY IS OFFERING UP TO 100 ACRES OF LAND FOR A VETERANS CEMETERY LOCATED ON FORT RILEY, ACCORDING TO GARY LAGRANGE, THE LOCAL CEMETERY GROUP'S COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN. BOTH OF THESE OFFERS COULD FADE AWAY AT SOME FUTURE TIME.**

**THE STATE WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATING COSTS BUT THESE COSTS CAN BE MINIMIZED THROUGH CONTRACTS, WORK PROGRAMS, GRANTS AND OTHER INNOVATIVE MEASURES.**

**JOHN SAJO, VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, STATES THE KANSAS LEGISLATURE MUST INITIATE ACTION FOR A VETERANS ADMINISTRATION GRANT.**

LANA OLEEN  
 SENATOR, 22ND DISTRICT  
 GEARY AND RILEY COUNTIES



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

CHAIR: FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS  
 CHAIR: CORRECTIONS/JUVENILE JUSTICE  
 CHAIR: LEGISLATIVE POST AUDIT  
 VICE CHAIR: JUDICIARY  
 MEMBER: EDUCATION  
 CONFIRMATION OVERSIGHT  
 LEG. EDUCATIONAL PLANNING  
 KANSAS SENTENCING COMMISSION

LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE  
 1-800-432-3924

March 16, 1999

Chairman Wagle and  
 Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee

The following are points to consider on **SB 19-Veterans Cemetery System**

This subject came to Senate Federal and State from Joint Building Construction Committee after their study last summer.

During the Committee's consideration it learned that:

- Currently, there is only one state veterans' cemetery in Kansas. It is located at Ft. Dodge and is operated by the Kansas Soldiers Home.
- The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs envisions four cemeteries: one each at the Kansas Soldiers Home, the Veterans' Home and Ft. Riley and a fourth one in the Northwest portion of the state.
- The VA estimates that approximately 23,000 veterans will die in Kansas in the next 4 years. Many veterans' organizations are concerned about the availability of burial space for those veterans.
- The Veterans Administration subsidizes the establishment of state veterans' cemeteries.

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 03-16-99  
 Attachment #4*

- Currently grants are available for 100% of construction costs of veterans' cemeteries.
- That leaves the state to bear only the cost of land and operations. The Senate Committee learned during its hearings that Ft Riley may be willing to donate land for a cemetery and some labor for on-going operation and maintenance.

The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee held three days of review and hearings on this bill and was pleased to receive the information about Ft. Riley's generous offer of assistance with this important effort.

The Committee passed the bill unanimously with only a minor, clarifying amendment. It passed on the Senate floor 37-3.

This may be the best opportunity we will ever have to address a serious need of the brave Kansans who have valiantly served this country. Federal money is available and a generous offer of assistance is on the table.

I urge your favorable action on this bill.



RANKING MINORITY MEMBER:  
 JUDICIARY  
 CORRECTIONS/JUVENILE JUSTICE

MEMBER: ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION  
 ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
 TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM  
 STATE BUILDING CONSTRUCTION  
 HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATIVE  
 OVERSIGHT  
 KANSAS SENTENCING COMMISSION  
 JUDICIAL COUNCIL PROBATE  
 LAW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**GRETA H. GOODWIN**  
 SENATOR, 32ND DISTRICT  
 COWLEY AND SUMNER COUNTIES

STATE CAPITOL BUILDING  
 ROOM 403-N  
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 420 E. 12TH AVE.  
 WINFIELD, KANSAS 67156  
 (316) 221-9058



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

**TESTIMONY****BEFORE THE HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE****SENATE BILL NO. 19****March 16, 1999**

**Madam Chair and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee:**

**I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of SB 19 which authorizes the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a state system of veterans cemeteries.**

**I am a member of the Joint Committee on State Building Construction. During the 1998 interim this committee held hearings on this issue. Without exception the committee room was filled to over capacity as we heard the need for the State of Kansas to establish area veterans cemeteries to assure honorable burial for the deceased veterans of our state.**

**Mr. Jayne, Director, State Cemetery Grants Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, of Washington, D.C., in explaining grant money available for state cemeteries, said Kansas is listed as not having used federal funds for cemeteries and thus Kansas would have leverage in obtaining federal funds. For the fiscal year 1999, the VA had funded requests for an estimated \$22 million at 100 percent funding. I believe this indicates Kansas should move forward to assure a grant application is on file for one or more state cemeteries.**

**There are 25 million veterans living today. The 1990 census showed 277,000 veterans living in Kansas. Based upon the VA projections, the annual average veterans deaths in Kansas are 1,600 with perhaps one-fourth of those veterans choosing to be buried in a veterans cemetery. Adding in a factor for dependents, yields an annual burial rate of 614 for the next 20 years. Based upon these projections, the minimum grave sites that would be needed in Kansas would be 12,000. We heard testimony estimating that 5,895 veterans will die in Kansas in 1999, 5,990 will die in our state in year 2000, and 6,070 veterans will die in our state in year 2001.**

**I believe the above estimates reflect the dire need for Kansas to move forward in the establishment of a state system for veterans cemeteries. The lack of burial sites in the state will not allow for the honorary burial our veterans deserve if action is not taken at the state level soon.**

**I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of SB 19 and ask for your favorable consideration of this bill. I will be glad to stand for questions.**

*House Fed + State  
 03-16-99  
 Attachment # 5*

**Testimony by Donna D. Deck,  
Fiscal Officer,  
Presented for Don A. Myer,  
Executive Director  
Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs  
On a State Veteran Cemetery System  
Before the  
House Federal and State Affairs Committee  
March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1999**

Madam Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Donna Deck and I am the Fiscal Officer of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs (KCVA). On behalf of the KCVA I wish to thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. I would also like to introduce the Chairman of the Kansas Veterans Commission who is with us today, Mr. Jack Strukel. I am here today to provide information about the proposed State Veterans Cemetery System as described in Senate Bill No. 19. Any time I use the pronouns "he" or "him", or at any time make masculine reference to veterans, I am referring to both the men and women who served our country.

Presently, limited choices are available to veterans in the State of Kansas who wish to be buried in a veterans cemetery (Slide 3). Two veterans cemeteries are operated in the State of Kansas by the National Cemetery System (NCS), a division of the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. NCS is a system of cemeteries and other monuments to the service of our nation's veterans. These are located in Leavenworth and Ft. Scott. Currently, these facilities are projected to reach maximum capacity in FY 2015 and 2030, respectively. Also, military cemeteries operated by the Department of Defense are located at Ft. Riley and Ft. Leavenworth. The cemetery at Ft. Leavenworth has reached maximum capacity and has closed. The Ft. Riley cemetery is projected to close during this fiscal year (FY 99). Military cemeteries serve only those service men and women who die on active duty and retirees and their eligible dependents. Finally, there is a state veterans cemetery located at Ft. Dodge, operated by the Kansas Soldiers' Home at state expense.

At the same time veterans cemeteries are closing or reaching a plateau of capability, the veteran population of Kansas is creating an increasing need for this service. Even though the total veteran population of Kansas is currently over 250,000, shown in Slide 5, this total population is declining. However, Slide 6 shows that while the total number of veterans is declining, the percentage of veterans over 65 years of age is increasing, as is the absolute number of veterans in this age bracket. In fact, the total number of veterans over 65 is projected to reach 118,000 out of 205,000 veterans in 2010, with the over-85 veteran population projected to reach 17,500 that same year. Slide 7 depicts the number of veteran deaths projected through year 2040. As you can see, the projected annual death rate will remain at the current level of over 5,700 deaths (or higher) until approximately year 2016, reaching a peak of 6,100 deaths in year 2006.

In September 1998, the Joint Committee on State Building Construction requested information about veterans cemeteries from Veterans Service Organizations, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs (KCVA). After evaluating the information provided, the Joint Committee asked the KCVA to develop its vision of the scope and form for a State Veterans Cemetery System. In December of 1998, the KCVA provided a concept which envisioned a system of four state veterans cemeteries, to be established at the Kansas Soldiers' Home, the Kansas Veterans Home, Ft. Riley, and a fourth site to serve the Northwest quadrant of Kansas. Specific facts and assumptions were used in the development of this vision.

Information used to develop the KCVA state cemetery system concept was received from the Department of Veterans Affairs, which operates the National Cemetery System. The mission of the NCS is shown on Slide 8. The strategy for providing service to our nations veterans is shown on Slide 9. As you can see, the NCS strategy for providing continued service is multi-faceted and includes establishing new cemeteries near national population centers, expanding existing NCS cemeteries where possible (i.e., Leavenworth), and encouraging states to establish State Veterans Cemeteries through the State Cemetery Grant System. The State Cemetery Grant Program is summarized on Slide 10 and 11. Through this grant program, the NCS reimburses states for 100% of the total construction cost to establish a veterans cemetery, in addition to an initial equipment allowance. If the state receives grant approval and establishes a cemetery through this program, the state then has a financial obligation to fund 100% of operational cost to maintain that cemetery for a minimum of 20 years.

Slide 12 and 13 lists the facts established by the KCVA in determining the form of a proposed cemetery system. In addition to facts already discussed, the Kansas Soldiers' Home currently has an expansion grant approved which will add approximately 25 acres to the existing cemetery and projects over 20 years of continued operations at the Kansas Soldiers' Home. In addition, Ft. Riley has offered to transfer approximately 100 acres of land to the KCVA to be utilized as a state veterans cemetery.

The VA has developed planning assumptions for state cemetery systems based on market research and operational experience (Slide 14).

1. Veterans and their families will utilize NCS or state veterans cemeteries located within a 75-mile radius of their home.
2. County death rates provided by VA are accurate.
3. State cemeteries will attract 25% of the veterans who die within this radius. The KCVA assumed a utilization rate of 20%, as shown in slide 15.
4. Staffing ratios were determined using several factors including annual number of interments, number of graves maintained, and number of acres maintained.

Considering all of the VA facts and assumptions, the KCVA evaluated the following three courses of action (COA): (Slide 16)

1. Do nothing.
2. Provide a cash burial allotment to all veterans in Kansas.
3. Create a statewide system of veterans cemeteries.

COA #1 "Do Nothing": Advantages and disadvantages are shown on Slide 17. COA



#1 incurs no new costs to the State of Kansas but also offers no service to State of Kansas veterans beyond the currently approved cemetery expansion at the Kansas Soldiers' Home at Ft. Dodge.

COA #2 "Provide a cash burial allotment": Advantages and disadvantages are shown on Slide 18. Several states currently offer this benefit, at rates varying from \$100 to \$250 per beneficiary. However, the state cost associated with a "cash allotment" plan quickly increases and provides minimum benefits for veterans and their families (Slide 19).

COA #3 "Create a statewide system of veterans cemeteries" supports the KCVA vision of the scope and form of a Kansas State Veterans Cemetery Program. This Program would truly benefit veterans of the entire State of Kansas, in contrast to the strategic goals of the VA which concentrate on population centers (Slide 20).

Taking these factors into consideration, the KCVA determined the optimum sites of the four Kansas cemeteries to be the Kansas Soldiers' Home, the Kansas Veterans Home, Ft. Riley, and a site, to be determined, to serve the Northwest quadrant of Kansas as shown on Slide 21.

Chairman Strukel has established an advisory board, chaired by KCVA Commissioner Udell S. Grant. Advisory Board members include representatives from The American Legion, The Veterans of Foreign Wars, and The Disabled American Veterans. The mission of the Advisory Board is to recommend the best location for the cemetery in the NW quadrant of Kansas.

The advantages and disadvantages of this course of action are listed on Slide 22.

VA requirements and criteria were utilized in determining costs for the proposed state system.

1. FTE requirements were determined as outlined in Slide 23. Administrative and support staff are required at each location. A Program Consultant would be required in the KCVA Central Office.
2. Operational costs were projected by reviewing costs of state cemetery systems of other states. The average operational cost per acre is shown in Slide 24. Total annual projected costs of \$538,000 for the entire system are shown on Slide 25. Construction of the four sites would be phased in and the entire system would be operational by FY 2003. Actual expenditures would increase from \$25,000 in FY 99 to the total projected annual cost of \$538,000 by FY 2003 (Slide 26).

The construction schedule assumptions are as follows:

1. One new grant per year would be successfully submitted to and approved by the VA.
2. One new cemetery per year would become operational.

I have outlined for you the facts and assumptions used in the development of the KCVA vision of a Kansas Veterans Cemetery System.

At this time I would be glad to stand for any questions from the Committee.

6-4

Briefing to the Federal and  
State Affairs Committee  
of the Kansas House of  
Representatives  
on a State Veteran Cemetery  
System

by the Kansas Commission on  
Veterans Affairs

Jack Strukel, Chairman

# State Cemetery System

- Background
- Proposed System
  - Facts
  - Assumptions
  - Courses of Action
  - Vision
- 2

6-5

6-5

6-6  
9-9

# Background: Current Kansas Facilities

- National Cemetery System
  - Ft. Scott - FY 2030
  - Leavenworth - FY 2015
- Military Cemeteries:
  - Ft. Riley - FY 1999
  - Ft. Leavenworth - Closed
- State Veteran Cemetery: Ft. Dodge

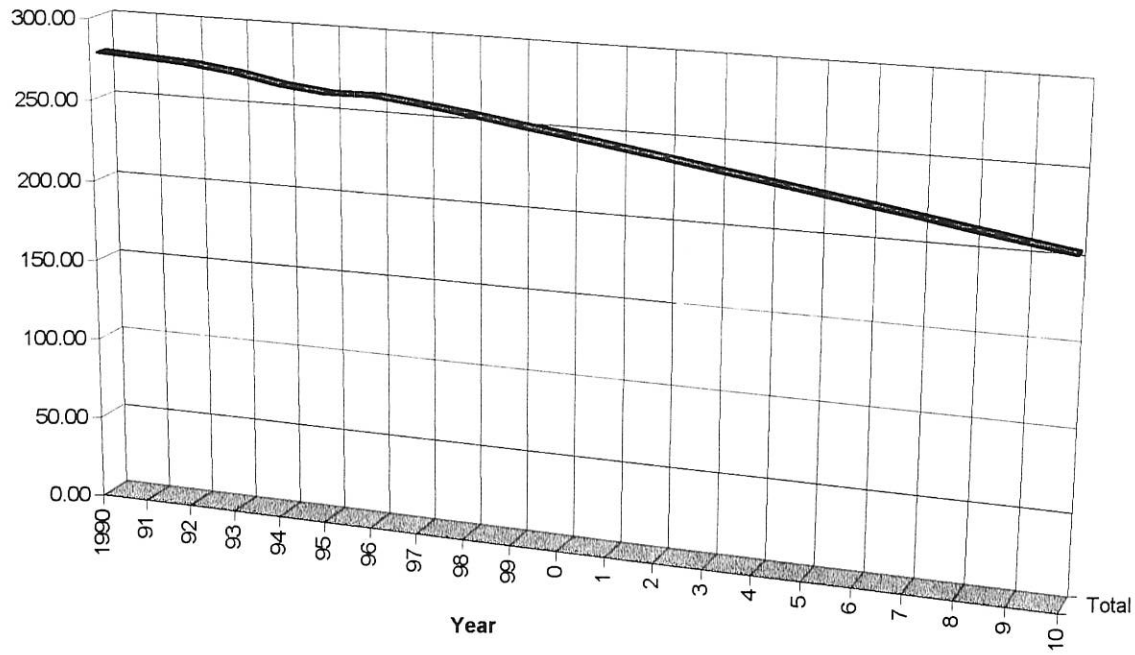


# Background: Situation

- Limited Veteran Cemetery services in Kansas
- Veteran Population declining, but death rate accelerating
- State cemetery at Ft. Dodge expansion
- State Cemetery Grant Program enhanced
- Joint Committee on State Building Construction information requests information/vision

6-8

### Kansas Total Veteran Population Projection

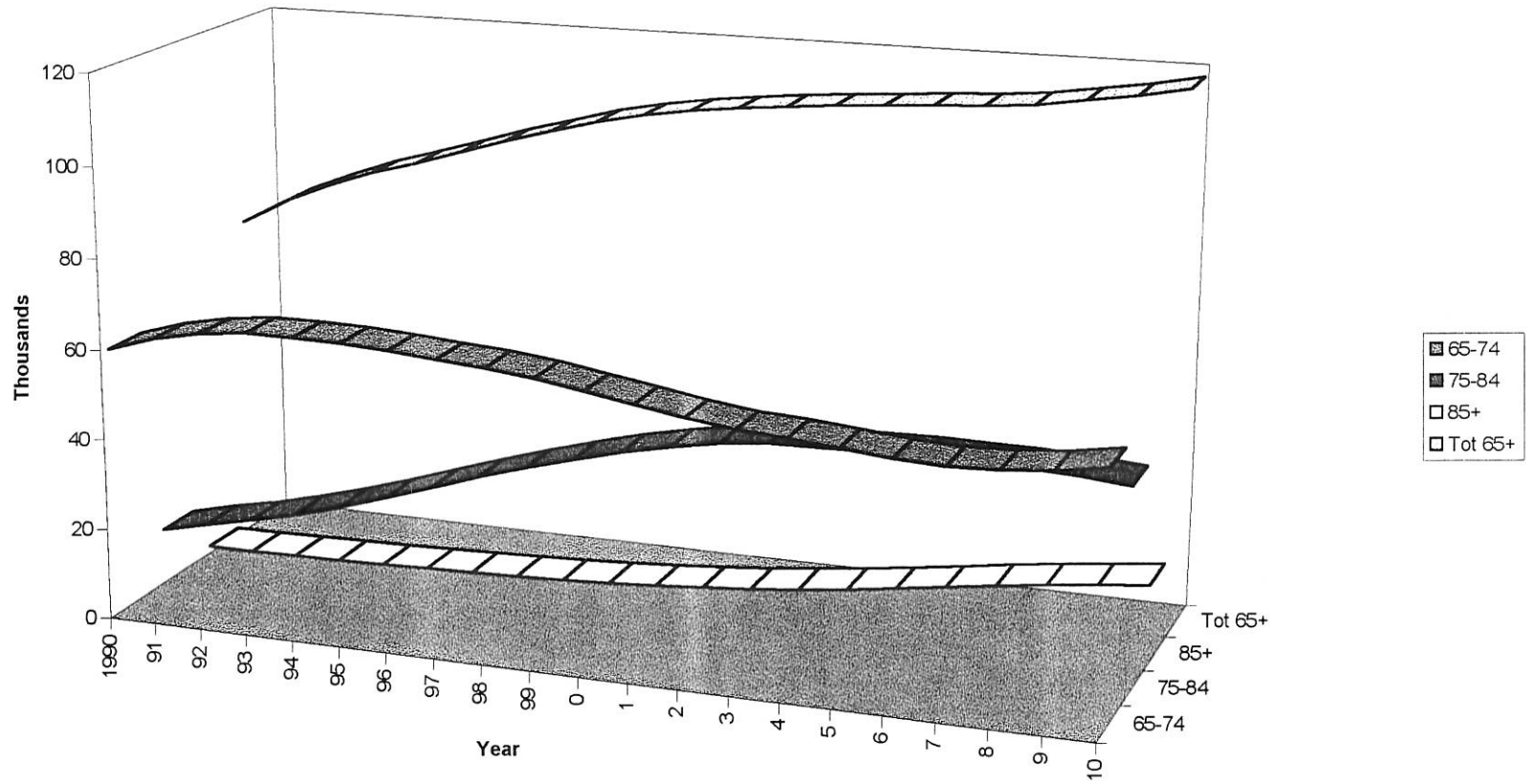


Total

6-8

6-9

### Kansas Veteran Population by Age Group

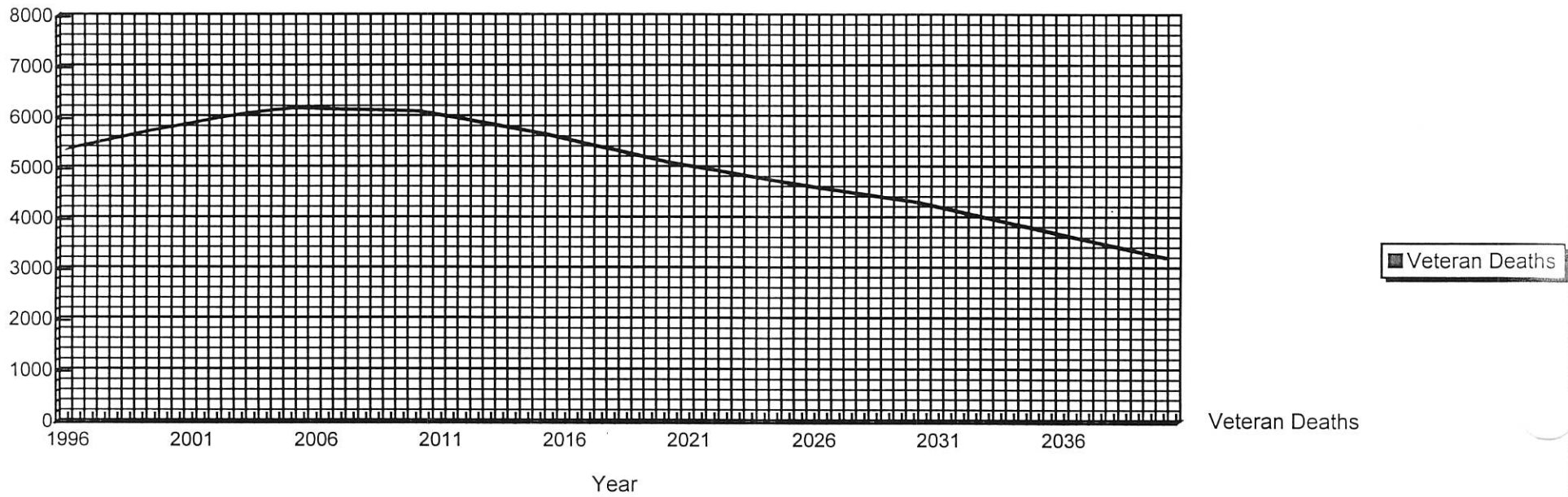


6-9

6-10

# Projected Kansas Veteran Deaths

1996 -2040



Veteran Deaths

■ Veteran Deaths

6-9

# NCS Mission

- **Provide burial space for veterans;  
maintain cemeteries as National Shrines.**
- **Administer grants program to establish,  
expand or improve State Veterans  
Cemeteries.**
- **Furnish headstones & markers.**
- **Administer the Presidential Memorial  
Certificate Program.**



# NCS Strategy

- **Build new cemeteries - Five Nationals Scheduled:**
  - **Dallas Ft. Worth**
  - **Seattle, Washington**
  - **Albany, NY**
  - **Cleveland, Ohio**
  - **Chicago, Illinois**
- **Acquire land adjacent to current cemeteries, and develop currently owned land**
- **Enhance State Cemetery Grants Program**

6-12

6-12

# State Veteran Cemetery Grant Program

- **Established by Public Law 95-47, October 18, 1978.**
- **Mission - To aid States in the establishment, expansion or improvement of State-owned cemeteries for veterans.**
- **The State Cemetery Grants Program complements the National Cemetery System (115 cemeteries, 3 Area Offices & 34 monuments, soldier's lots, Confederate plots etc) by providing additional gravesites for veterans and their dependents in areas not adequately served by National Cemeteries.**

6-13

6-13

# State Veteran Cemetery Grant Requirements

- Title to the cemetery/land must be vested in the State.
- A grant request can only be made by a state official.
- The State must have written approval from VA of the final working drawings and specifications before the project is placed on the market for bidding.
- Fifty percent of the cemetery acreage must be usable for burials.
- The law forbids retroactive approvals (Ex. Do not go out for bids using documents/plans VA has not approved).
- The cemetery must have a 20 year lifespan.
- The VA standard for computing gravesite yield from net burial acreage is 600 (5' by 10') gravesites per acre.

# State Cemetery System

## Facts

- Death Rate increasing
- VA requires 20 year operational life
- Grant system to 100% construction costs
- States must fund operational costs:
  - Personnel
  - Maintenance: Grounds and Gravesites
  - Maintenance: Buildings and Equipment
  - Capital Expenditures
  - Interment costs
- KSH expansion grant approved
- KVH/ other state sites could offer economies



# State Cemetery System Facts (cont.)

- Precedent for direct transfer of DOD land to states
- Ft. Riley willing to contract for maintenance
- Ft. Riley willing to provide military honors

# State Cemetery System Assumptions

- VA planning factors are valid:
  - 75 mile radius “propensity to use” area
  - Projected death rates by county accurate
  - Actual use rate of 20%
  - Dependent use ratio 1.5
  - 600 gravesites per acre
  - 50% land appropriate for use
  - FTE requirements determined by:
    - # interments
    - graves maintained
    - acres maintained

| Year | Deaths | 20%  |
|------|--------|------|
| 1996 | 5390   | 1078 |
| 1997 | 5500   | 1100 |
| 1998 | 5605   | 1121 |
| 1999 | 5710   | 1142 |
| 2000 | 5805   | 1161 |
| 2001 | 5895   | 1179 |
| 2002 | 5990   | 1198 |
| 2003 | 6070   | 1214 |
| 2004 | 6135   | 1227 |
| 2005 | 6180   | 1236 |
| 2010 | 6120   | 1224 |
| 2015 | 5675   | 1135 |
| 2020 | 5115   | 1023 |
| 2025 | 4685   | 937  |
| 2030 | 4320   | 864  |
| 2035 | 3770   | 754  |
| 2040 | 3225   | 645  |

8/18  
6-18

8/18

# State Cemetery System Courses of Action

1. Do nothing: Continue Ft. Dodge operations only.
2. Provide Cash burial allotment to all veterans in the state.
3. Create statewide system of veteran cemeteries.



# State Cemetery System COA 1

- Do Nothing.
  - Advantages:
    - No cost increase to the state
  - Disadvantages:
    - No service offered beyond current capability

# State Cemetery System COA 2

- Provide cash burial allotment
  - Advantages:
    - Equitable distribution of benefit to all veterans of the state.
  - Disadvantages:
    - Could be cost prohibitive
    - Provides minimal level benefit

6-22

### Cash Allotment

|         | Veteran Deaths | Burial Allotment | Total Cost     |
|---------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| FY 2000 | 5805           | \$100.00         | \$580,500.00   |
|         |                | \$150.00         | \$870,750.00   |
|         |                | \$200.00         | \$1,161,000.00 |
|         |                | \$250.00         | \$1,451,250.00 |
| FY 2001 | 5895           | \$100.00         | \$589,500.00   |
|         |                | \$150.00         | \$884,250.00   |
|         |                | \$200.00         | \$1,179,000.00 |
|         |                | \$250.00         | \$1,473,750.00 |
| FY 2001 | 5990           | \$100.00         | \$599,000.00   |
|         |                | \$150.00         | \$898,500.00   |
|         |                | \$200.00         | \$1,198,000.00 |
|         |                | \$250.00         | \$1,497,500.00 |

6-22

# State Cemetery System Location Criteria

- No cost land available
- Transportation network
- Underserved areas:
  - none current
  - none projected (by VA)
- Veteran population
- Economic efficiency

# State Cemetery System Locations

- Kansas Soldiers Home
- Kansas Veterans Home
- Ft. Riley
- NW/N Central Quadrant of Kansas

6-29

6-29



# State Cemetery System

## COA 3

- Create statewide system of veteran cemeteries.
  - Advantages:
    - Provides expanded service
    - Covers underserved portions of state
    - Large concentrations of veterans served
  - Disadvantages:
    - Operational Costs covered by state
    - NW location require land solicitation
    - FTE requirements

# FTE Requirements

Supervisory/Administrative: 1 Per site or per 229.9 interments.

|                 |               |                        |
|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Central Office: |               | 1 (PROGRAM CONSULTANT) |
| Other:          |               | 1                      |
| Ft. Riley       | $567/229.9 =$ | 2.4                    |
| KSH             |               | 0                      |
| KVH             |               | 0                      |
| Subtotal        |               | 4.4                    |

Maint/Support: 1 per 250 interments; 1 per 7844 graves maintained; 1 per 10.7 acres

|                 |               |              |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| Central Office: |               | 0.00         |
| Other:          |               | 1.00         |
| Ft. Riley:      | $567/250 =$   | 2.20         |
|                 | $34.5/10.7 =$ | 3.22         |
| KSH             |               | 1.00         |
| KVH             |               | 1.00         |
| Subtotal        |               | 8.42         |
| <b>Total</b>    |               | <b>12.82</b> |

6-26

6-26

Le-9

**Multi-state average**

| <b>Acres</b> | <b>Annual<br/>Operational<br/>Cost</b> | <b>Cost per<br/>acre</b> |
|--------------|--|--------------------------|
| 47           | \$429,000                              | \$9,128                  |
| 23           | \$314,759                              | \$13,685                 |
| 68           | \$272,480                              | \$4,007                  |
| 28.5         | \$303,896                              | \$10,663                 |
| 5            | \$147,500                              | \$29,500                 |
| 30           | \$1,118,000                            | \$37,267                 |
| 4            | \$15,683                               | \$3,921                  |
| 85           | \$289,000                              | \$3,400                  |
| 12           | \$142,755                              | \$11,896                 |
| 14           | \$98,333                               | \$7,024                  |
| 13.8         | \$24,900                               | \$1,804                  |
| 9            | \$106,000                              | \$11,778                 |
| 28.275       | \$271,859                              | \$9,615                  |

Le-9

6-28

|                | Acres | Kansas<br>Projected<br>Annual<br>Operational<br>Cost |
|----------------|-------|--|
| KSH            | 100   | \$3,000  |
| KVH            | 23    | \$110,570  |
| Ft. Riley      | 35.4  | \$340,364  |
| Other Site     | 4.8   | \$46,151   |
| Central Office | -     | \$38,000   |
| Total          |       | \$538,086  |

6-28

6-29

**Veteran Cemetery System Expenditures**

| FY   | SGF       | Fee       | Total     | Adjusted SGF | Total     |
|------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| 99   | \$25,000  | \$0       | \$25,000  | \$25,000     | \$25,000  |
| 2000 | \$123,599 | \$16,458  | \$140,057 | \$98,599     | \$115,057 |
| 2001 | \$393,364 | \$117,823 | \$511,187 | \$318,364    | \$436,187 |
| 2002 | \$231,621 | \$221,773 | \$453,394 | \$181,621    | \$403,394 |
| 2003 | \$299,037 | \$239,373 | \$538,410 | \$299,037    | \$538,410 |

**FTE Requirements**

| FY   | FTE Requirements |
|------|------------------|
| 99   | 0                |
| 2000 | 2                |
| 2001 | 9                |
| 2002 | 10               |
| 2003 | 12               |

6-29

KANSAS COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

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PRESENTATION BEFORE THE HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
SUSAN WAGLE, CHAIR  
MARCH 16, 1999

MADAME CHAIR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I'M JOHN SAJO, A MEMBER OF THE VETERANS CEMETERY ALLIANCE. THANK YOU FOR LETTING OUR GROUP SPEAK TO YOU TODAY. THE MATERIAL WE WILL COVER IS ADDRESSED IN MORE DETAIL IN THE BROCHURE PROVIDED EACH MEMBER OF YOUR COMMITTEE. THE BILL WE SUPPORT AUTHORIZES ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYSTEM OF STATE VETERANS' CEMETERIES. LET ME BRIEFLY ADDRESS THREE ASPECTS OF THAT CONCEPT -- THE NEED, WHAT WE MEAN BY A SYSTEM, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT PROGRAM.

FIRST, LET ME SPEAK TO NEED. THERE ARE MORE THAN 260,000 VETERANS IN KANSAS. TWO NATIONAL CEMETERIES, AT LEAVENWORTH AND FORT SCOTT, ARE AVAILABLE TO VETERANS. BUT THESE SERVE ONLY THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE STATE. THERE IS ONE STATE OPERATED VETERANS CEMETERY AT THE SOLDIERS HOME AT FORT DODGE. BUT IT SERVES ONLY THE SOUTHWESTERN CORNER OF THE STATE. THUS, A LARGE PORTION OF THE VETERAN POPULATION OF KANSAS IS UNSERVED. TO FILL THAT NEED, WE PROPOSE A SYSTEM OF FOUR STATE OPERATED VETERANS' CEMETERIES LOCATED SO AS TO REASONABLY SERVE AS LARGE A MAJORITY OF THE VETERAN POPULATION OF KANSAS AS POSSIBLE.

AMERICANS HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF RECOGNIZING AND FILLING THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO PROTECTED THEIR FREEDOM. THE FINAL NEED OF MANY VETERANS NOW MAY BE THEIR FINAL RESTING PLACE. CONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE CEMETERIES WOULD BE FUNDED BY GRANTS FROM THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. CENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM BY THE KANSAS COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS WOULD PRODUCE ECONOMIES AND EFFICIENCIES, AND CONSISTENCY OF OPERATION.

THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS GRANT PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED TO ASSIST STATES IN HONORING THEIR VETERANS. THE VA GRANT PROGRAM IS A "TURN KEY" OPERATION. IT FULLY FUNDS THE COSTS OF CEMETERY CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING ADMINISTRATION, ROADS, LANDSCAPING, AND EVEN PRE-PLACED VAULTS, AND TURNS A COMPLETELY "READY FOR USE" FACILITY OVER TO THE STATE. THE STATE IS THEN RESPONSIBLE FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CEMETERY. AN APPLICATION SUBMITTED TO THE VA FOR IMPROVEMENTS OF THE CEMETERY AT FORT DODGE HAS BEEN APPROVED. HOPEFULLY, WORK WILL START THERE IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE.

TWENTY STATES ALREADY HAVE STATE OPERATED VETERANS CEMETERIES, INCLUDING ALL STATES BORDERING KANSAS. AND WE UNDERSTAND THE VA NOW HAS MANY ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS FOR CEMETERY GRANTS. WE BELIEVE ESTABLISHING A STATE SYSTEM IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, AND NOW IS THE RIGHT TIME TO DO IT. SINCE THE VA WILL, IN THE FUTURE, CONSTRUCT NATIONAL CEMETERIES ONLY IN THE MOST HEAVILY POPULATED AREAS, STATE OPERATED CEMETERIES APPEAR THE BEST ALTERNATIVE FOR STATES LIKE KANSAS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

*House Fed & State  
03-11-99  
Attachment #7*



## Presentation to House Federal & State Affairs Committee

Susan Wagle, Chair

Good afternoon. I am Dick Jepsen from Manhattan . I am a combat infantry veteran of WWII and was a member of the Kansas National Guard in the Berlin Callup in 1961.

I am the Legislative Process Committee Chairman of the State Veterans Cemetery Alliance. There are several members of the Executive Committee here today. This committee has been instrumental in efforts leading to the proposed legislation before you.

We believe it to be economically wise to plan a veterans cemetery system for the state. More veterans and their families can be served for less money by planning ahead for their needs. The infusion of federal funds to construct the cemeteries will be a boost to the state's economy.

This legislation proposes to establish a state veterans cemetery system and charters the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to organize that system within its organizational structure.

The Executive Committee has gained the support of a sizable constituency consisting of citizens of the state, various veteran organizations and other groups.

### What must be done to establish a state veterans cemetery system?

1. It is not cast in stone that the VA will continually fund 100% of the cost of constructing a state veterans cemetery or that land at Ft. Riley will be forever available to the state for a veterans cemetery. Thus we believe positive action is necessary as soon as possible to pass this bill.

2. The proposed legislation must be passed forming the Kansas State Veteran Cemetery System under the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. This legislation allows the State to accept donated land such as the offer of up to 100 acres of Ft. Riley land for cemetery purposes.

3. The state must allocate resources to the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs so that it may proceed with this endeavor **without** taking funds or detracting from other veteran programs.

4. The Commission must move to enhance and construct state veterans cemeteries.

I recognize the concern for committing the state to long term operating costs. However we believe these costs can be considerably less than estimates obtained by using VA data for computing costs. Also, it is fashionable to be against taxes. In my political experience as a Riley County Commissioner during a high anti-tax period many citizens came to our commission requesting the establishment of a benefit district for a road, sewer or water system they desired. And they would vote to increase their taxes to pay for the improvement. Once they understood the need for a program they were often supportive of it. We believe we represent a large group of people in the state who desire this veterans cemetery system and are willing to pay the nominal costs involved.

March 16, 1999, Dick Jepsen, Chairman, Legislative Process Committee, State Veterans Cemetery Alliance, 2409 Lookout Drive, Manhattan, Ks 66503, Tel. 785-539-4816.

*House Fed + State  
03-16-99  
Attachment #8*

Testimony before the Kansas State House of Representatives, Committee on Federal and State Affairs, pertaining to the State Veterans Cemetery System, by Colonel Gary L. LaGrange, US Army Retired and Director of Logistics, Fort Riley, Kansas, 16 March 1999.

I testify in three capacities. First as a 28 year Army veteran and holder of three Purple Hearts, a previous commander of Fort Riley, and as a concerned Kansas citizen. I beg your approval to allow me to be buried one day among my comrades at Fort Riley.

Secondly, as a member of an organization representing a sizable constituency across our State, I implore you to approve this legislation so that deserving veterans across our State might have the privilege of being buried near their comrades if they so choose as do veterans in our surrounding states.

Third as a principal member of the Fort Riley staff, I report to you that Fort Riley wholeheartedly supports the establishment of a State Veterans Cemetery System. Today we support veteran's burials across the entire

*House Fed + State  
03-16-99  
Attachment #9-1*

state and we feel strongly that this system with attendant cemeteries at strategic points in the state is fundamentally right for our State's veterans.

Fort Riley's current cemetery is nearing closure which could bring an end to a service offered veterans at that site since 1853. Because of this urgency and in anticipation that this initiative will be approved, Fort Riley has set aside and begun the process of transferring up to 100 acres to the State for a site at Fort Riley. It is a particularly beautiful and fitting site with a value of \$400,000 to be given to the State.

Further, Fort Riley will defray the \$80,000 requirement to conduct an environmental and archeological survey required by the Department of Veteran's Affairs grants program. The work is now underway.

Operation of the cemetery can be contracted to Fort Riley at a significant savings. The expected annual \$180,000 cost of operation, considerably below the Department of Veteran's Affairs guidelines costs, can be further mitigated by fees and charges that, when multiplied by the anticipated burial rate, could reduce annual

operating costs to \$31,000. Other state cemeteries have experienced such savings and we have chosen to benchmark with similar cemeteries in North Carolina.

I invite your attention to the book before you which contains these and many other facts.

This is a wonderful opportunity for our veterans but it is perishable. Therefore, I ask you to move with haste in approving the legislation before you. It is the right thing to do for our veterans. Please tell them that you will not forget them.

**PRESENTATION**

**TO**

**1999 HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE  
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 16, 1999**

**By  
Dennis (Buz) Bruzina  
Financial Committee Chair  
State Veterans Cemetery Alliance**

House Fed + State  
03-16-99  
Attachment #107

## **Presentation to the 1999 House Federal and State Affairs Committee**

Madam Chairman, I am Dennis (Buz) Bruzina, and reside in rural Geary County since retiring from the Army in 1983. My family and I chose Kansas as our permanent home because we appreciated the fundamental principles that are still maintained by the people of Kansas as compared to other regions in this country. Residing in close proximity to Fort Riley also assured close ties not only to the military and its facilities but also to Junction City and the rural area as well. I might add my family has the best of all worlds.

Upon death my plans included burial at the Fort Riley Cemetery. When it was announced that the Fort Riley Cemetery is rapidly running out of burial space and cannot be expanded (and I have no immediate plans to pass away) I joined a group of concerned citizens to seek an alternative solution. As a result our group discovered that the problem of veteran burials is not just limited to Fort Riley but the State of Kansas as a whole. There is no State Veterans Cemetery System in the State of Kansas as compared to states surrounding Kansas. In addition the U.S. Government is presently supporting 100% funding for construction of a State Veterans Cemetery System. Fort Riley has stepped forward and is formally making available to the State approximately 80 to 100 acres of land for a State Veterans Cemetery.

What better opportunity is there than now to minimize the cost and fill a void in the State of Kansas for burial of our veterans wherever they are located under a four site system that includes Fort Riley as one of those sites.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before this Committee.

Dennis (Buz) Bruzina

FORT RILEY CEMETERY PROPOSAL  
Chaplain (Major General) Orris E Kelly, US Army, Retired

**Talking Points**

We appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning and present to you our concerns in support of Senate Bill 19, authorizing a State Veterans Cemetery System.

I am former Chief of Chaplains of the United States Army and then served three years on the National Advisory Committee to the Veterans Administration on National Cemeteries.

I want to stress some intangibles that are part of a Veterans Cemetery System. You can't measure them in dollars and cents nor implant them as part of the construction of the grave sites, but they are at the heart of our consideration when we remember the veterans and their families. These intangibles are the deep feelings, the expectations, the tears, the griefs and even the coming to closure of wartime experiences. These intangibles are nothing new to you. You may have experienced them or been with family members who are part of your life. I am simply reminding all of us so we can input them as part of our decision making.

- A Veterans Cemetery is unique. It contains the memories of our friends, our comrades and our families who served our country and may have paid the price with their lives. When you visit, it conjures up all the blocked memories that you would like to forget. It is both emotional and healing.

- Veterans often feel the need to be buried as if they were among their "old buddies." The old expression, "A Band of Brothers" expresses this need. Tom Brokaw's book, "The Greatest Generation" picks up this heartfelt need from a Marine who said, "It's hard to explain, but my friends are like my family. I found out in the Marines what that can mean in life, and I'm still that way today." One young woman said to a chaplain, "Daddy wanted to be buried here."

- A Veterans Cemetery is part of the "ethos" or spirit of a nation or a state or a community. It is a reminder that we will not forget those patriots who served. We won't leave a body unrecovered nor will we fail to remember the sacrifices of our service members and their families.

- Vietnam taught me the value of symbols. Symbols stay with us when memories fade. When we bury a veteran and present the family with a flag (symbolizing service to our nation) and render the honor of "taps", we are demonstrating to the family that they are not alone. We are saying in effect, WE ARE GRATEFUL. WE WILL NOT FORGET.

House Fed & State  
03-16-99  
Attachment #11



TESTIMONY IN FAVOR  
OF SENATE BILL 19  
PRESENTED TO  
HOUSE FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS  
BY CHARLES YUNKER, DEPT. ADJUTANT  
KANSAS AMERICAN LEGION  
MARCH 16, 1999

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 19 which calls for the establishment of a State Veterans Cemetery System. My name is Charles Yunker and I serve as Adjutant for the Kansas American Legion.

During the closing session of the Kansas American Legion's State Convention last May, the delegates to that Convention voted unanimously to endorse the concept of a State Veterans Cemetery System. This vote was taken after the reading of a resolution which identified the immediate and future lack of veterans cemetery plots in Kansas.

That is; the Department of Defense will no longer build or expand cemeteries on military installations. The existing cemetery at Ft. Leavenworth is already filled to capacity and Ft. Riley's is very near the same level. Thus Kansas veterans desiring to be buried in a veterans cemetery have three existing choices; the National Cemeteries at Leavenworth and Fort Scott, and the Kansas Soldiers Home at Ft. Dodge.

Unless a veteran lives, or dies, near one of those three locations their survivors are faced with transportation costs in order to

House Fed + State  
03-16-99  
Attachment # 12-1

fulfill a veterans desire to be interred in a Veterans Cemetery. Therefore the call to consider establishing a State Veterans Cemetery System to provide a proper burial place for veterans who reside in the central, south central and northwestern portions of our state.

With the exception of Kansas Soldiers Home at Ft. Dodge the concept of a State Veterans Cemetery is new to Kansas and must be explored thoroughly. Assuming such a system would be administered by the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs a long term, permanent, funding source should be clearly defined so as not to detract from the KCVA's current tasks of maintaining the Ft Dodge Soldiers' Home, Kansas Veterans Home at Winfield and the statewide veterans services operation for which the KCVA was originally founded.

In closing I would say that there is wide spread interest in a State Veterans Cemetery System which could prove to be a valuable asset to the State of Kansas while at the same time providing a final service to those who have served this nation in the Armed Forces. Such a program, if adopted by the legislature, deserves to be a top rate operation with budgeting independent of any other veteran or non veteran program.