

**STATEMENT OF
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NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION (NCA)
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

June 30, 2026

Chairman Luttrell, Ranking Member McGarvey, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of NCA.

Since Congress first authorized the transfer of 82 national cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration in 1973, our mission has been among the most sacred in Government: to honor Veterans and their families with final resting places that reflect the dignity of their service and sacrifice.

Today, NCA maintains 157 VA national cemeteries. Every gravesite, every headstone, and every interaction with a family represents a promise fulfilled on behalf of a grateful Nation. Beyond burial and memorialization, the Veterans Legacy Memorial and Veterans Legacy Grants Program ensure that the lives and sacrifices of those interred in our national cemeteries are never forgotten and continue to inspire future generations.

Since its founding, NCA has been guided by a simple principle: We only get one chance to get it right for a Veteran and their family. That responsibility shapes every aspect of our work, from maintaining our national shrines to supporting families at a time of loss. Families place extraordinary trust in us during some of life's most difficult moments. In 2025, NCA earned the highest customer satisfaction score ever recorded

by the American Customer Satisfaction Index for any public or private organization, reflecting the compassion, professionalism, and commitment of our workforce.

Today, nearly 5.3 million people are honored through burial in VA national cemeteries. This includes more than 4 million Veterans who served from the Revolutionary War to present day, as well as the eligible family members who share in the legacy of their service.

NCA is strengthening how we serve Veterans and their families in four important ways by: 1) expanding outreach; 2) modernizing operations; 3) reinforcing accountability; and 4) building strong community partnerships. Through these efforts, VA ensures every Veteran, who seeks this benefit, receives a dignified burial and lasting memorialization.

First, in expanding outreach, a key focus of today's hearing, NCA recognizes that eligibility alone is not enough. Veterans and their families must understand their benefits and be able to access them in a timely manner. To that end, NCA is strengthening partnerships with Veterans Service Organizations, state and tribal agencies, and community stakeholders. We are expanding pre-need eligibility determinations and improving digital tools so families can plan with clarity and confidence. We continue our work with the Department of War to honorably disinter the remains of unknown Service members from World War II and the Korean War, identify them, and return them to their families.

We are also working across VA and with Congress to ensure geographic access remains a priority, particularly in underserved areas. NCA measures success by the experiences of the families we serve. This means timely access to burial benefits, clear communication during moments of grief, and cemeteries maintained to the highest standards.

Second, NCA is not resting on its laurels. To sustain the excellent service NCA is famous for, we must also evolve. NCA is modernizing scheduling systems and strengthening data integration across the Department. We are fostering a culture that values innovation and strengthening trust with staff and stakeholders to improve service

to Veterans and their families. Delivering the proper experience depends on our people. Cemetery directors, ground crews, schedulers, and support staff are the backbone of this mission.

Thus, third, accountability underpins all our work. We are reinforcing a culture where leaders own outcomes, teams learn from challenges, and performance is continuously measured and improved. This strengthens trust within the organization, with Congress, and with the public we serve.

Sustaining excellence and holding each other accountable requires investment in our workforce. We are prioritizing training, mentorship, and leadership development to ensure continuity of the mission. Every team member plays a role in preparing the next generation to carry this responsibility forward.

Operational effectiveness requires timely, informed decision-making. We are reducing internal silos, streamlining policy interpretation, and empowering leaders at every level to act with clarity and common sense. Increasingly, decisions are made closer to the point of service where they have the greatest impact on families.

We are also creating administrative efficiencies, improving tools and systems, and empowering field leadership to focus on what matters most – serving families with dignity, compassion, and precision.

Fourth, community partnerships are critical. We rely on community organizations and volunteers to extend the reach and impact of our mission. NCA works closely with the American Battle Monuments Commission; the Department of the Army; the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency; the Department of Interior; and state, tribal, and local cemetery partners. These partnerships strengthen local engagement, reinforce national standards, and ensure continuity of honor and remembrance across generations.

Another guiding principle central to this hearing is that the condition and appearance of our cemeteries are essential to maintaining public trust. These are not simply burial grounds; they are national shrines. NCA maintains some of the highest standards in the Federal Government, supported by rigorous inspections, long-term

infrastructure investment, and strong local leadership. We remain committed to preserving these sacred spaces with the care and reverence they deserve.

Through strengthened outreach, rigorous upkeep, and enduring partnerships, NCA is ensuring that every qualified Veteran receives a dignified burial and lasting memorialization.

We remain committed to serving Veterans and their families with dignity, compassion, and excellence for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued support and oversight. I look forward to your questions.