

VA Announces \$19.5 Million Construction Contract for Houston National Cemetery

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded a nearly \$19.5 million construction contract for gravesite expansion and improvements at the Houston National Cemetery in Texas.

"We are pleased to continue to develop this national shrine," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Shinseki. "VA is committed to providing the best possible service to the Veterans of Texas by developing new burial areas and improving existing facilities at Houston National Cemetery."

The contract was awarded to Decatur Construction, Inc., a service-disabled Veteran-owned small business from New Braunfels, Texas, for \$19,482,000. The project is scheduled for completion in early 2013 and will develop the cemetery's fourth phase.

Construction will include approximately 30 acres to support 10 years of projected burial needs. Plans call for 18,860 pre-placed crypts for casket burials; 5,750 columbarium niches for cremation remains; a new public information center; new funeral cortege lanes; new public restrooms; two new storage buildings; a new committal shelter; new detention/irrigation ponds; renovations to the entrance; new roadways and improvements to existing ones; walkways, grading, drainage, fencing and landscaping; and utility distribution and storm sewers designed for environmental preservation and mitigation.

The project will incorporate Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) improvements. The LEED Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction.

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Also eligible are military personnel who die on active duty, their spouses and eligible dependents.

Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, a government headstone or marker, or a service medallion for a private marker. Families may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment.

In the midst of the largest expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3.5 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres of land.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000.

To make burial arrangements at the time of need at any VA national cemetery, call the national cemetery scheduling office at 800-535-1117. For information on Houston National Cemetery, contact the cemetery staff at 281-447-8686.