

HR 5469
EIGHTY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

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COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

House of Representatives, U.S.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

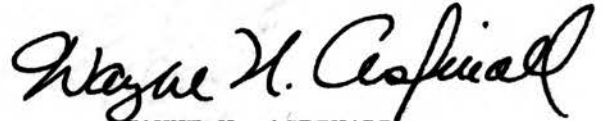
February 14, 1962

Honorable John S. Fogarty
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Colleague:

Attached hereto is a copy of the report of the
Bureau of the Budget on your bill H. R. 5469
which is sent for your information and files.

Sincerely yours,



WAYNE N. ASPINALL
Chairman

Enclosure

File

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BUREAU OF THE BUDGET
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

Fogarty
5469

February 12, 1962

Honorable Wayne N. Aspinall
Chairman, Committee on Interior and
Insular Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Reference is made to your letters of May 2 and subsequent letters concerning various bills (listed in Enclosure A) which would either establish new, or expand present national cemeteries.

While opposition to specific bills with similar objectives has been expressed heretofore, no overall reexamination of policies respecting national cemeteries had been undertaken by this Administration. Now, however, the letters referred to above requested this Administration to recommend an overall policy statement with respect to a national cemetery program. In response to this request, a thorough review of this subject has been conducted within the executive branch. As a result of this review, the Administration has determined that it is opposed to any further expansion of the present national cemetery system. The only exception to this policy should be the Arlington National Cemetery which, for obvious reasons, should be treated as a special case.

The facts, considerations, and reasons underlying the Administration's position are set out in Enclosure B to this letter. In essence, this position is based on the inherent discrimination against the large numbers of veterans who, under any system, would be living in areas not conveniently accessible to a national cemetery, as well as the enormous cost which would be attendant on the provision of burial facilities for even a fraction of the more than 40 million presently eligible individuals. The Administration firmly believes that burial benefits such as those now payable by the Veterans' Administration and under the social security system are far preferable to the furnishing of interment facilities by the Government.

In view of the foregoing, the Bureau of the Budget is opposed to any bill which would run counter to the policy outlined above and advises that enactment of such legislation would not be in accord with the program of the President.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

Phillip S. Hughes
Assistant Director for
Legislative Reference

Enclosures

Enclosure A

List of Bills Referred by the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs

H.R.	96	H.R.	3513
H.R.	370	H.R.	3681
H.R.	409	H.R.	3682
H.R.	644	H.R.	3979
H.R.	754	H.R.	3995
H.R.	773	H.R.	3996
H.R.	922	H.R.	4074
H.R.	943	H.R.	4124
H.R.	1951	H.R.	4249
H.R.	2326	H.R.	4263
H.R.	2453	H.R.	4306
H.R.	2589	H.R.	4347
H.R.	2590	H.R.	4404
H.R.	2591	H.R.	4405
H.R.	2592	H.R.	4508
H.R.	2593	H.R.	4513
H.R.	2594	H.R.	4595
H.R.	2595	H.R.	4671
H.R.	2735	H.R.	5469
H.R.	2753	H.R.	5697
H.R.	2896	H.R.	5785
H.R.	2922	H.R.	6858

National Cemetery Policy - Basic Considerations

The National Cemetery System, consisting of 117 cemeteries and smaller burial plots and monument sites, is administered by the Quartermaster General of the Army. Burial in national cemeteries is provided for those who have served honorably in the Armed Forces, and their spouses and certain dependent children. The Quartermaster General also procures and furnishes headstones and markers free, on request, for the graves of persons buried in national cemeteries and for active duty personnel and veterans who are buried in private cemeteries. These programs were originally established at the time of the Civil War to provide for "soldiers who die in the service of their country." Eligibility has since been widened, and now over 90% of the clientele are veterans and their families.

Over 40,000,000 persons, about 1/4 of our total population, are potentially eligible for burial in a national cemetery. Studies show that 83% of the persons buried in a national cemetery lived within a 50-mile radius of the cemetery. This fact working with the haphazard location and limited number of national cemeteries has served to keep the burial rate at a fraction of those eligible. The close relationship between proximity and use of cemeteries is also shown by the fact that 87% of all the burials in the National Cemetery System occur in nine cemeteries located close to large metropolitan areas. Under the present system, the privilege of burial in a national cemetery is effectively available to only a small part of those who are legally eligible; for example, there are 17 national cemeteries in Virginia but none in New England, Michigan or Ohio. Less than 12% of the veterans who died in 1960 were buried in national cemeteries. Even at this rate, available space in the present cemeteries will soon be exhausted. By 1975 the five cemeteries which now account for 53% of the burials will be full. The courses of action open are:

(1) Planned general expansion of the cemetery system. A planned general expansion would be extremely costly and could never make the privilege of burial equally available to all eligibles. It is estimated that, at present prices, expansion of the system which would provide space for less than half of the eligibles would cost about \$3 billion or more for construction, interments and maintenance over the next 40 years, with a maintenance cost of about \$85 million a year thereafter.

(2) Piecemeal expansion through occasional land acquisition for existing cemeteries or the creation of specific new cemeteries by Congress (bills for this purpose have been increasing in recent years although the last new cemetery was established in 1950). Piecemeal expansion will only perpetuate the present inequities where eligibility is governed by the change of cemetery location instead of logical criteria.

(3) No further expansion of the system. Even with the gradual elimination of this burial privilege, there will still be significant death benefits available to veterans. Wartime veterans and those with peacetime disabilities now receive a burial allowance of up to \$250 granted by the Veterans Administration. This allowance would continue if the burial privilege were discontinued. In addition, almost all veterans would be eligible for burial benefits under the social security program. Both of these burial allowance programs are more equitable than the cemetery program, since they are more equally available to all eligibles. This is shown by the fact that the VA burial allowance is requested for practically all eligible veterans.

Since expansion of the national cemetery system would be discriminatory and very expensive, the logical choice among the above courses of action is the third one, no further expansion of the system, except for Arlington National Cemetery which should be excluded from the policy because of its unique characteristics.