

AROUND HEADQUARTERS

National Cemetery Administration to Introduce New Burial Benefit

The National Cemetery Administration will introduce a new burial benefit this summer. Veterans and family members will soon be able to order a bronze medallion that can be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a veteran.

The medallion, depicting a three-dimensional folded flag surrounded by a laurel wreath with the veteran's branch of service displayed beneath, will come in three dimensions designed to fit on various-sized headstones, grave markers and columbarium niche covers. The sizes are 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 1/2 inches in diameter.

This new product will be furnished in lieu of a traditional government headstone or marker to veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave is marked with a pri-



COURTESY OF NCA

vately purchased headstone or marker. Eligible veterans are entitled to either a traditional government-furnished headstone or marker, or the new medallion, but not both.

After accepting a claim for the new benefit, VA will mail the medallion along with a kit that will allow the family or

the staff of a private cemetery to adhere the device to a headstone, marker or niche cover.

VA created the medallion in response to Public Law 110-157, passed by Congress Dec. 26, 2007. The law gave VA authority to "furnish, upon request, a medallion or other device of a design determined

by the Secretary to signify the deceased's status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker furnished at private expense."

NCA arrived at the distinctive folded flag design after a long deliberation process. Memorial Programs Service personnel, members of the Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials and the Army Institute of Heraldry participated in the development of the medallion. After months of exchanges in meetings, workshops and focus groups, NCA submitted the current design to VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. The Secretary approved it on Jan. 13.

The manufacture of the medallion is now in the solicitation phase and NCA is planning a publicity strategy to make the public aware of this new benefit. More information is available at www.cem.va.gov.