

MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS



The National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2000 states that all eligible veterans are entitled to Military Funeral Honors. In response to this legislation, the Department of Defense provides a two-person funeral detail to honor eligible deceased veterans, upon request. The deceased veteran's family should request military honors for their loved one through their funeral director. The funeral director contacts the appropriate branch of the military's regional office responsible for Military Funeral Honors details. The regional office then coordinates with active duty, National Guard or reserve units to arrange the detail, which, at a minimum, includes two Service members who fold and present the American flag to the next of kin or other designated family member. At least one Service member must be in from the deceased veteran's parent Military Service. The other may be from the same Service or another Military Service. Prior to this new law, military honors were provided by the military services as resources allowed. The legislation also requires the playing of "Taps." If a bugler is unavailable, a high-quality recorded version may be used. Any veteran who served in the Armed Forces and received a discharge under honorable conditions is eligible for Military Funeral Honors.

In addition to requiring a two-person detail for to provide Military Funeral Honors, the law also recognizes the valuable role that members of VSOs play in honoring our veterans. Subsection 578(d) authorizes members of VSOs, and other approved organizations, to participate with the Military Services in providing funeral honors. It stipulates that the Department of Defense may reimburse their expenses and may provide the training necessary to augment a two-person honors detail. VSOs can assist the military by providing additional elements such as a color guard, pallbearers or a firing party. The law does not address ceremonies in which VSOs or other organizations render honors without military representation, nor does it authorize the Department to provide uniforms for VSOs.

The Authorized Provider Partnership Program

In a related step, the Department of Defense recently unveiled a new initiative that focuses on using volunteers. This new program, known as the Authorized Provider Partnership Program (or AP³), trains volunteers to assist in providing Military Funerals as “Authorized Providers.” Volunteers may provide funeral honors elements in addition to flag folding and sounding of “Taps.” Volunteers can augment a DoD detail in several ways including participation as firing party members, pallbearers, honor guard members, or as buglers. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000 allows for reimbursement of expenses for these Authorized Providers. It is important to note that the law authorizing this reimbursement of expenses for these Authorized Providers. It is important to note that the law authorizing this reimbursement stipulates that Authorized Providers can only be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred when they participate with the military in rendering funeral honors. If there are members of an organization who may have an interest in assisting in the Military Funeral Honors ceremony, they or their organization should contact the military units in their area. The Department of Defense maintains a Web site with additional information on Military Funeral Honors at www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil



Honoring Those Who Served