

Government Furnished Headstones, Markers, Medallions

Several options are available to the survivors of eligible retirees for obtaining government-furnished headstones, markers, medallions.

The Department of Veterans Affairs will furnish upon request, at no charge, a government headstone or marker for the grave of any eligible deceased veteran in any cemetery around the world. Headstones and markers are furnished to eligible spouses and family members of veterans who are interred in a national, military post/base, or state veterans cemetery. For veterans who have chosen columbaria inurnment, niche markers are also available.

A new public law affects already-marked graves. Public Law 110-157, signed Dec. 26, 2007, allows the VA to furnish a government headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans who died on or after Nov. 1, 1990, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Under the previous law, when the grave was already marked, only veterans who died on or after Sept. 11, 2001, were eligible.

This public law also gives 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.” This benefit will be available in lieu of a government-furnished headstone or marker, for veterans in privately marked graves who died on or after Nov. 1, 1990.

VA officials currently estimate the medallion will be available in summer 2009. People interested in the new medallion can visit the “New Headstone Device” Web page at <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm/hmtype.asp> for updated information regarding this new benefit.

Eligible veterans are entitled to either a government-furnished headstone or marker, or the new device, but not both. People interested in submitting a claim for the new medallion can submit a claim once a contract has been awarded for manufacturing the new product. Claim instructions will be posted on the headstone device Web site. If, after seeing the final new medallion design, people change their mind, they will still have the option to apply for a traditional government-furnished headstone or marker.

There is no charge for the headstone or marker itself; however, arrangements for placing it in a private cemetery are the applicant’s responsibility and all setting fees are at private expense, according to VA officials.

There is no change in eligibility for veterans in unmarked graves. Regardless of the date of death, VA will furnish, at no charge to the applicant, a government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. More information on government-furnished headstones and markers can be found on <http://www.cem.va.gov/>