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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

VA Planning for Dignified Burial Reimbursement Program

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register July 2, 2014, beginning a 30-day public comment period. The proposed regulation would implement new statutory authority provided in section 101 of Public Law 112-260, the "Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012," by establishing procedures to provide reimbursement for privately purchased caskets or urns for burial of deceased eligible Veterans in a VA national cemetery if the Veterans have no identifiable next of kin and insufficient resources are available to pay for a casket or urn.

Congress mandated that the new casket/urn authority become effective one year after the date of the enactment of the public law, or January 10, 2014.

The proposed rule includes minimum physical specifications for caskets and urns. The procedures proposed under this rule may require the submission of an application and other documents that VA would use to: (1) determine the purchase price of the burial receptacle; (2) determine whether the product complies with certain specifications; and (3) verify payment. Under the proposed rule, the cost of the burial receptacle may be reimbursed up to a maximum amount that would be determined based on the average cost of a metal casket or plastic urn meeting the minimum specifications.

Interested parties may comment on the proposed rule in the Federal Register by searching "Reimbursement for Caskets and Urns" at www.regulations.gov and VA will respond to comments when issuing a final rule. VA hopes to begin reimbursing for metal caskets or plastic urns for eligible Veterans as described in the final rule once it becomes effective.

For individuals who have purchased burial receptacles in anticipation of the new casket/urn program, VA plans to process claims retroactively to the effective date of the benefit, January 10, 2014, once the regulation is final. Any party who wishes to seek reimbursement under the program created by this anticipated rule for a casket or urn they have purchased or intend to purchase is advised to review the content of the proposed regulation and keep records regarding the burial receptacle and the purchase price.

