



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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Proposal: New State Veterans Cemetery – Northwestern Minnesota

Bill: HF 4336 (Rep. Bliss)/SF 4362 (Sen. Pappas)

Background: MDVA is seeking legislative authority to plan for a fifth State Veterans Cemetery (SVC) near Bemidji to serve Northwestern Minnesota. Legislative authority is needed to submit a pre-application for construction funding to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

This proposal aligns with the Federal NCA strategic goal of providing 95% of Veterans with a burial option within 75 miles of their home. In addition to the NCA-managed Fort Snelling National Cemetery, the State of Minnesota currently operates four SVCs in Little Falls, Preston, Duluth and Redwood Falls. This leaves Northwestern Minnesota unserved and includes an estimated 10,000 Veterans and their families that live within 75 miles of Bemidji. The next closest Veterans cemeteries are the NCA-managed Fargo National Cemetery and Little Falls. This proposal would eliminate the remaining gap in the state.

Future needs: Adding a fifth cemetery would require additional state funding for the operation and maintenance of a new cemetery. 7.5 FTEs are needed to staff a cemetery.

Language: Sec. 23. PLANNING NEW VETERANS CEMETERIES.

(a) The commissioner of veterans affairs shall determine a suitable site and plan for ~~three~~ four new state veterans cemeteries, one to be located in northeastern Minnesota, one to be located in northwestern Minnesota, one to be located in southeastern Minnesota, and one to be located in southwestern Minnesota. In determining the site for a cemetery, the commissioner shall consider available public land options and shall seek proposals for donated land from interested counties, local communities, civic organizations, veterans service organizations, and individuals.

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