

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

FILE NUMBER: H.F. 226
Version: First engrossment

DATE: April 4, 2011

Authors: Davids

Subject: Veterans Cemetery Siting

Analyst: Jim Cleary

This publication can be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please call 651-296-6753 (voice); or the Minnesota State Relay Service at 1-800-627-3529 (TTY) for assistance. Summaries are also available on our website at: www.house.mn/hrd.

Overview

A policy enactment in 2010 directed the commissioner to determine a suitable site and plan for three new state veterans cemeteries, one each in Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southwestern Minnesota (striking the reference to Redwood County specifically). It further directed that the commissioner must consider available public land options and must seek proposals for donated land from any interested local governmental units or veterans organizations.

H.F. 226, as amended, would amend both of these earlier uncodified enactments, as follows:

First, it would amend the 2009 bonding bill language to permit the \$1.5 million appropriation from that enactment to be used more broadly geographically for siting new state veterans cemeteries, to include all three regional areas of interest: Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southwestern Minnesota. It also authorizes the commissioner, upon reimbursement by the USVA for all federally-preauthorized development costs for any new state veterans cemetery, to use the reimbursed monies from the 2009 bonding appropriation (the \$1.5 million) for siting, pre-planning and planning the next state veterans cemetery in one of the remaining two named regions of the state.

Secondly, H.F. 226, as amended, amends the 2010 policy enactment by directing that the *commissioner must give priority consideration* for siting a new state veterans cemetery to land owned and proposed for donation by Fillmore County, in Southeastern Minnesota.

Currently, Minnesota has one state veterans cemetery, located at Little Falls, adjacent to Camp Ripley. (The National Veterans Cemetery at Ft. Snelling is a federal facility.)

- 1 Amending 2009 bonding bill.** Broadens the authorization for the commissioner of veterans affairs to use a \$1.5 million appropriation from the 2009 bonding bill for planning new state veterans cemeteries in three regions of the state - Northeastern Minnesota, Southeastern Minnesota, and Southwestern Minnesota. Initially, that authorization was for new cemeteries in Northeastern Minnesota and Redwood.

This provision of the bill coordinates this funding authorization with the policy language of the 2010 law being amended in section 2 of H.F. 226, which authorizes the commissioner to search for suitable cemetery sites in Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southwestern Minnesota.

Section 1 of the bill also adds language to the 2009 enactment, directing that, upon federal reimbursement for all federally-preauthorized development costs for the first new cemetery, the

commissioner must reuse the \$1.5 million appropriation from the 2009 bonding bill for the second new cemetery, and likewise for the third new cemetery, after which that reimbursed appropriation must be used for asset preservation of the state veterans homes.

- 2 **Amending 2010 policy bill.** Directs the commissioner of veterans affairs to give priority consideration for development of a new state veterans cemetery to a site in Southeastern Minnesota that is owned by the county of Fillmore and being proposed for donation to the state of Minnesota for that purpose.