



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs
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Press Release

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State Veterans Cemetery in SE Minn to Break Ground

Community to honor state's heroes through ceremony just before Veterans Day

SAINT PAUL, Minn. – The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) will break ground Nov. 8 at 11 a.m. on a new State Veterans Cemetery in southeastern Minnesota. The 169-acre site was donated by Fillmore County and is located just off Highway 52 in Preston, Minn.

Earlier this month MDVA received official approval of the \$10 million construction grant from the Federal Cemetery Administration for this project.

“We are pleased to expand burial service to Veterans in Southeastern Minnesota, where more than 50,000 Veterans live,” said Larry Shellito, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner. “Often, burial is the only benefit our Veterans claim. This generous land donation from Fillmore County was the first step toward completing the new cemetery and honoring our heroes.”

Olympic Builders General Contractors, Inc. has been awarded the construction grant. The overall project budget is \$10.1 million, with construction costs of \$8.2 million. Design work has been led by Stantec, an engineering and design firm in St. Paul. Phase 1 will develop approximately 28 acres and include a main entrance, cortege assembly area, administration building, maintenance facility, roads, assembly area, committal shelter, pre-placed crypts, cremation burial areas, columbarium, landscaping and a memorial walk. The donated land was a community effort by Fillmore County and the City of Preston.

“To honor our Veterans in this way means everything to us, and it is an especially fitting honor to donate this beautiful land on the river,” said Fillmore County Commissioner Chuck Amunrud. “I want to thank our Veteran Service Organizations, citizens and Veterans for their support, and for helping us along with this project.”

The cemetery is scheduled to open in 2015. Minnesota’s other State Veterans Cemetery, located in Little Falls, continues to receive local and national accolades. In 2012 approval ratings exceeded 97 percent for the handling of burials, overall appearance of grounds and availability and courtesy of staff. The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls was also selected as a winner of the prestigious federal Excellence of Appearance Award from the National Cemetery Administration. This award is one of the highest honors a state cemetery can receive from the Federal VA. Minnesota is currently one of only three states in the country to be recognized and receive this award.

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The addition of this State Veterans Cemetery in Minnesota is part of a nationwide campaign by the National Cemetery Administration to provide burial within 75 miles of a Veteran's home. The closest VA national cemetery to this site in Preston is Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn., which is approximately 120 miles away. The closest state cemetery is Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner, Wis., which is approximately 193 miles away.

Burial at a State Veterans Cemetery is open to all Veterans discharged from active military service under conditions other than dishonorable. Their spouses, minor children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children, are also eligible for burial. Eligible spouses may be buried, even if they predecease the Veteran. Also eligible for burial are members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps who die while on active duty for training or performing service or who have 20 years of service in reserve components of the Armed Forces creditable for retired pay.

For more information on Minnesota's State Veterans Cemeteries visit www.MinnesotaVeteran.org.

About MDVA

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs is a cabinet level state agency dedicated to serving Minnesota Veterans and their families. In addition to overseeing the five State Veterans Homes, MDVA helps eligible Veterans and families secure state and federal benefits and provides programs and services relating to higher education, benefits, burial, claims, outreach and Veterans employment. Veterans and their families are encouraged to visit www.MinnesotaVeteran.org or call 1-(888)-LinkVet for more information. about benefits.

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