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Pursuant to HB 331, Rep. Massey, et al. removed the residency requirement for interment in state veteran cemeteries. The status of the Bill as of 2/28: it passed the House 96-0; 2/15 (H) Passed Veterans, Military Affairs, & Public Protection Committee; 2/16 to Rules Committee.

The Bill mandates that Kentucky's five veteran cemeteries accept burial of veterans and spouses from all 50 states. While everyone will agree that an honorably discharged veteran has earned the opportunity for burial in a dignified location such as a veteran cemetery, each of our state's five cemeteries has limited acreage.

Our analysis shows a totally different picture.

Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West (KVCW):

- Phase I: 43 out of 80 developed acres. Of the 43 developed acres, KVCW has used 3,005 out of 15,792 for first term interment plots.
- Phase II: An additional undeveloped 17 acres, which has room for 9,000 interment plots.
- Phase III: An additional undeveloped 20 acres, with room for 11,000 interment plots.

KVCW has been open since 2002. Each interment plot is double depth. KVCW has a life span of 143 years based on KDVA's projection of achieving 250 internments per year.

Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central (KVCC):

- Phase I: 45 out of 99 developed acres. Of the 45 developed acres, KVCC has used approximately 6,000 out of 10,000 for first term interment plots.
- Phase II: An additional undeveloped 34 acres, with room for 11,000 interment plots.
- Phase III: An additional undeveloped 37 acres, with room for 15,000 interment plots.

Each interment plot is double depth. KVCC's has a life span of 72 years based KDVA's projection of achieving 400 internments per year.

Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North (KVCN):

- Phase I: 26 out of 99 acres developed. Of the 26 developed acres, KVCN has exhausted 1,875 out of 6,851 first term interment plots.
- Phase II: An additional undeveloped 34 acres and room for 11,000 first term interment plots.
- Phase III: An additional undeveloped 37 acres with room for 19,000 first term interment plots.

Each interment plot is double depth. KVCN has a life span of well over 200 years based on KDVA's projection of achieving 150 interments per year.

Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Northeast (KVCNE):

- Phase I: 30 of 78 developed acres. Of the 30 developed acres, KVCNE has exhausted 900 of 6,000 for first interments plots.
- Phase II: An additional undeveloped 20 acres with room for 10,000 interment plots.
- Phase III: An additional undeveloped 28 acres with room for 10,000 interments plots.

Each interment plot is double depth. KVCNE has a life span of 173 years based on KDVA's projection of achieving 150 interments per year.

Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Southeast (KVCSE):

- Phase I: 10 out of 35 developed acres. Since opening in 2018, KVCSE has completed 79 out of 1,808 for first term interments plots.
- Phase II: An additional undeveloped 13 acres with room for 2500 interment plots.

While KVCSE is the smallest cemetery of the 5, it averages 20 interments per year. KDVA projects that this cemetery has a life span of 215 years.

KDVA's overarching conclusion is that the number of services that are conducted versus the amount of acreage and burial plots available for future phases makes this a non-issue.

This Bill will increase the rate at which the cemeteries are filled, thus jeopardizing the long-term availability of burial plots for Kentucky veterans and family members. This will be particularly acute in the cemeteries in Northern and Central Kentucky, but all will be impacted.

From 2002 -2010, there was not a residency requirement. From 2011- 2021, when the requirement was implemented, interment numbers were unaffected.

CASE STUDY: Consider the following:

During the first thirteen years of KCVN's operation, the veteran population in southern Ohio had a choice between KVCN and Dayton National Cemetery. Cincinnati, Ohio is the same distance for both cemeteries. Most of the veterans residing in Cincinnati are already eligible to be interred at KVCN because they lived/worked/owned property at one time in the Commonwealth.

Fort Thomas, Kentucky was a MEPS station for the Army for several decades, so many Ohio veterans joined the military out of that MEPS station, which makes them eligible for

burial in one of Kentucky's state cemeteries. KVCN has 3,736 pre-applications for future interments, and since 2008 (cemetery dedication) working with all the funeral homes, KVCN has only denied two applications for non-residency. KVCN averages 4 service per week, so if there was to be an increase it would not hamper the operation at KVCN.

KVCC, gets most of their interments from the 31W Corridor, which is from Louisville to Elizabethtown. Indiana is not a big market for KVCC. KVCC has 10,855 pre-applications for future interment. Of those applications, only one has been denied on the basis of residency/lack-of-connection with the Commonwealth.

If the Bill raises the rate of interments, KDVA will address the cost issue with an Additional Budget request (ABR) for more funds and employees, as has been done in the past.

Cemetery staffing is insufficient to handle a significant increase in burials. Currently, Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central in Radcliff is taking up to 30 days to bury a Kentucky veteran. Any substantial increase on an overburdened staff will reduce the quality and availability of services preformed to honor the deceased veteran.

KDVA is aware that it currently takes 7 days for internment at KVCC. There are several underlying factors that are causing this. KDVA reduced the number of services per day from 6-7 down to 4, so that KVCC could improve overall quality control. When running a cemetery, there are four major areas:

1. Internments,
2. Setting Headstones,
3. Cutting grass, weed eating,
4. Preputial care of existing burial plots.

There will be a significant fiscal impact in both staffing and operation of the cemeteries, requiring additional funding and personnel authorization to meet the increase in anticipated burials. This has not been factored into the KDVA budget currently under consideration.

There is already significant impact on staffing and operations at all KDVA cemeteries; this is why KDVA submitted an Additional Budget Request (ABR) for our State Veterans Cemeteries. This ABR was in the final budget for FY23.this ABR gives the Cemeteries Division, the money to hire 8 new employees for all cemeteries. This brought KVCC up to a staff from 10 to16.

This will in effect bring all 5 cemeteries to full staffing levels for the number of services that they currently conduct KDVA had anticipated this and had already taken the steps to mitigate this issue.

There is no urgency in passing this legislation despite KDVA's position that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is currently reviewing possible changes to 38 CFR that could limit federal funds to state veteran cemeteries. Kentucky, to its great credit, has invested considerable time, energy, and resources to ensure that Kentucky veterans are honored for their service and have a dignified burial in a state- operated cemetery is they

so choose. Any action, such as HB 331, that negatively impacts the quality and availability of this service must not be enacted.

As in 2000, the Commonwealth of Kentucky and KDVA entered a partnership with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), National Cemetery administration (NCA) and the Veterans Cemetery Grant Program (VCGP) to build five state Veterans Cemeteries across the Commonwealth to augment the National Cemeteries in Kentucky. The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) stipulates the Commonwealth must eliminate any residency requirement for interment by January 1, 2025. Confirmation will allow KDVA to enter the MOA.

As you can see from the numbers, KDVA's acreage availability and the number of future phases that our cemeteries have planned allow for significant growth without concern of Kentucky veterans being displaced.

There will be multiple requests for grants over the next generation, KDVA is concerned with any initiatives that could jeopardize our federal funding. Over the next 10 years, KDVA and its five state veterans cemeteries will need expansions. All these grants would be 100% fully funded from the NCA and the SCGP, with no requirement of matching funds from the Commonwealth. These future grants would be in upwards of \$10 - \$20 million. KDVA does not want to jeopardize this funding source by a residency requirement that will not result in an issue or crises for veterans of the Commonwealth.