

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 2025

The Honorable Douglas A. Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

The Honorable Samuel B. Brown
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

In re: Funding for Upper Cumberland VA Cemetery

Dear Secretary Collins and Under Secretary Brown:

I am writing to respectfully request your consideration in support of grant funding through the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) for the development of the Upper Cumberland State Veterans Cemetery in White County, Tennessee. This project is essential to honoring our nation's veterans and their families by improving access to dignified burial options in a region currently underserved by existing veteran's cemetery facilities.

The Upper Cumberland region comprises 14 counties and is home to over 25,000 veterans who have proudly served our country. Despite the region's large veteran population, there are currently no state or national veterans' cemeteries within a reasonable distance, leaving many families without accessible burial options. The proposed cemetery would directly align with the NCA's mission to ensure that 95% of veterans have access to burial within a 75-mile radius of their residence.¹

The State of Tennessee purchased the land for the Upper Cumberland State Veterans Cemetery in 2020, demonstrating a long-term commitment to this project. Since FY2022, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Services has submitted multiple grant applications to the NCA seeking funding for construction; however, these applications were not selected. Notably, the NCA's rankings have indicated zero veterans as potential beneficiaries, which contrasts with verified data confirming a veteran population exceeding 25,000 across the Upper Cumberland.

This project has significant and broad-based community support. Local veterans' organizations, public officials, and citizens across the region have raised more than \$225,000 to advance the project. The State of Tennessee has also committed a 10% matching contribution, with the site now fully acquired, zoned, and ready for construction pending federal approval and funding. Environmental and logistical assessments have already confirmed the site's suitability.

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "FY 2025 Budget Submission: Budget in Brief," page 42, <https://department.va.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/fy-2025-va-budget-in-brief.pdf>.

Secretary Collin and Under Secretary Brown
November XX, 2025
Page 2

While I understand that national funding constraints necessitate difficult decisions, the need in the Upper Cumberland is both genuine and pressing. In contrast, I note that in 2023, NCA allocated approximately \$11.6 million to acquire property in rural Meigs County for a new cemetery near Chattanooga, yet most Upper Cumberland veterans, especially those in 11 of our 14 counties, will remain outside the 75-mile service radius from that site.

Establishing the Upper Cumberland State Veterans Cemetery would meaningfully expand access to burial services for thousands of Tennessee veterans while strengthening NCA's mission of honoring those who served. I respectfully encourage your office to give full consideration to Tennessee's grant request as funding priorities are reviewed for this vital project.

Thank you for your continued dedication to serving our veterans and their families. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration, and my office is ready to assist your staff in any way necessary.

Sincerely,



John Rose
Member of Congress



Scott DesJarlais, M.D.
Member of Congress