

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS
“VETTED” RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 13-14, 2021**

The Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials (Committee) supports VA's mission to increase access to benefits and services for Veterans. In the meeting held on October 13-14, 2021, the Committee voted unanimously to submit the following recommendations to the VA Secretary and Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs:

Recommendation 1:

In the meeting held on June 16-17, 2021, the Committee received a charge from the Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations to review the new HR 7105 Urn/Commemorative Plaque Benefit and to recommend final design options. The benefit is under Section 2207 of the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315). The Committee concurred in principle with the basic concept for the plaque and urn, and Chairman Joey Strickland tasked the Commemorative Plaque and Urn Workgroup to present the final requirements in the Fall meeting. The workgroup members are the following:

- Heather Braatz (lead);
- Kathleen Moakler;
- Floyd Watson; and
- Donn Weaver.

On October 14, 2021, the Commemorative Plaque and Urn Workgroup presented the following recommendations:

Commemorative Plaque

The following design considerations have been recommended by the workgroup:

- **Shape:** The basic shape of the plaque is rectangular.
- **Size/Dimensions:** Approximately 8.5” x 11.5.”
- **Usage:** To hang from the wall or stand up with an easel back stand.
- **Material:** A darker wood, such as cherry, in a glossy or satin finish is recommended.
- **Orientation:** Vertical orientation is preferred over horizontal (landscape) display.

Medallion: The medallion should be placed above the engraving.

Engraving: The engraving should appear on the plaque below the medallion. Some space should be left at the bottom of plaque to allow room for personalization. The engraving should include the following, at minimum:

- Top line (larger font size): Name of the deceased;
- Second line (smaller than name/centered below name): Date of birth; and

- Third line (smaller than name/centered below name): Date of death.

Font: Arial standard line weight should be used to match the folded-flag medallion.

Urn Design

The following design considerations have been recommended by the workgroup:

- **Shape:** The basic shape is cube or cuboid.
- **Size/Dimensions:** A standard, full-size (not keepsake), single-occupancy adult urn with an interior capacity of approximately 240 cubic inches at minimum.
- **Material:** A darker wood, such as cherry, in a glossy or satin finish. The material used should be able to be x-rayed and safe to be transported by airplane.
- **Construction:** An upper ledge along the top and/or lower molding along the bottom of the urn is preferred to avoid slippage and improve ease of handling/carrying. The bottom of the urn should be a wooden plate affixed with screws to allow for easy opening and closing of the urn. A ribbon “pull tab” affixed to the bottom plate should be considered to assist in ease of opening the urn and accessing the interior.



Examples

The following examples of urns are provided for reference only.



Image of proposed urn design

Font: Arial standard line weight should be used to match the folded-flag medallion. A gold or similarly light-colored font fill on the engraving for high contrast and improved readability.

VA Response: Concur. VA appreciates the Committee's time, effort and expertise used to develop the above recommendation. As planned, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) staff will brief the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs on the recommendation so that NCA can continue development of the commemorative urn and plaque benefits which will be available in January 2023.