

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)  
RESPONSES TO THE  
May 12-13, 2015  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS**

**Recommendation 1:** That VA consider providing a plot allowance for eligible spouses and dependents buried in state and tribal Veterans cemeteries.

**VA Response: Concur-In-Principle**

**VA Action Plan:** Because VA's plot allowance is administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) consulted with VBA regarding this recommendation. VBA expressed appreciation for the Advisory Committee's recommendation that VA consider providing plot allowances to eligible spouses and other dependents. Under United States Code 38 section 2303, VA's authority to provide plot allowances is limited to Veterans. Although VBA is willing to consider developing legislative proposals that would expand burial benefits to spouses and other dependents, the near-term focus is on improving burial benefits for Veterans, some of which have not been increased in several years or indexed to inflation. In 2007, VA's Office of Policy and Planning found that VA's burial allowance covered only 23 percent of a deceased Veteran's service-connected burial expenses; similarly, the non-service connected burial benefit covered only 4 percent of burial expenses, and the plot allowance covered only 14 percent of the cost of a Veteran's plot. While Congress periodically enacts legislation which increases the maximum rate payable for each of these allowances, with only a few exceptions, there has been no recent increase to the payment rates for these burial benefits.

**Recommendation 2:** That NCA create a mechanism to report when BOSS outages occur at state, tribal, and National Park Service Veterans cemeteries.

**VA Response: Concur**

**VA Action Plan:** VA agrees that it is important for state, tribal, Department of Interior, and Arlington cemeteries using BOSS are aware when outages occur so that they can manage their application workloads. As such, NCA implemented a process to deliver text emails to these users notifying them when the system is offline and when the system is restored. A distribution list containing e-mail addresses for state, tribal, Department of Interior, and Arlington cemetery BOSS users was created. If BOSS experiences a sustained outage (i.e., greater than 15 minutes), then a notification via email informing users of the outage will be sent to the addresses listed in the distribution. Additionally, after BOSS is restored, a subsequent notification will notify users that the system is restored. The distribution listing will be periodically updated to ensure the email list is current.