Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials
May 7-8, 2014
Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC
Minutes

Committee Members Present:

James Adams
Les Beavers
Wilfred Ebel
John (Jack) Kelly, Chairman
Joe Foster
Rose Elizabeth Lee
Joseph J. Martory
Alford McMichael
Lupe Saldana
Jack Tilley
Debra (American Horse) Wilson

Committee Members Absent:
N/A

Ex-Officio Members Present:
Patrick Hallian - Army National Military Cemeteries
Tom Sole - American Battle Monuments Commission
Brad Bennett- Andersonville National Historic Site

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Attendees:
Jose Riojas, Chief of Staff, VA
Judy Gutcher (OGC), Office of General Counsel
Julian Wright (VBA)

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Participants:
Steve L. Muro, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
Glenn Powers, Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs
Ron Walters, Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
Tom Muir, Deputy Under Secretary for Management
Anita Hanson, Director, Memorial Programs Service
George Eisenbach, Director, Veterans Cemetery Grants Service
Mike Nacincik, Designated Federal Officer
Robin Cooper, Advisory Committee Program Manager
Chris Erbe, Public Affairs Specialist
Richelle Taylor, Public Affairs Specialist
Cathy Cassano, Executive Assistant

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Attendees:
Patricia (Tish) Tyson, Director of Communications and Management Service
Kristen Parker, Public Affairs Specialist
Tom Howard, Executive Assistant
Hillori Schenker, Historian
Sara Leach, Historian
Gus Brooks, Executive Driver

Public Attendees:
None

Wednesday, May 7, 2014
The spring meeting of the VA Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials for FY 2014 was held at the 425 I Street, NW, Washington, DC in Conference Room 4E.400. The Committee convened at 8:00 am for pre-meeting meet and greet.

Call to Order, Welcome, and Pledge of Allegiance
Committee Chairman Jack Kelly called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and gave opening remarks.

Committee members stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Kelly then introduced Robin Cooper who gave an overview of the agenda for the two day meeting and welcomed new Committee members.

Chairman Kelly then introduced Designated Federal Officer Michael Nacincik who welcomed Committee members and gave introductory remarks.

Chairman Kelly then introduced Jane Gutcher, Office of General Council, Ethics Specialty Team, Department of Veterans Affairs, Central Office

VA Office of General Counsel, Jane Gutcher, Attorney

VA Attorney Jane Gutcher addressed the ethics rules for the Advisory Committee members, who are considered Special Government Employees (SGEs). SGE's serve less than 130 days during any 365-day period – with or without compensation. Ms. Gutcher discussed the ethics rules governing SGE's and provided contact information. She provided the annual compliance briefing that covers the two major components of ethics laws: standards of ethical conduct for the Executive Branch (not using public office for personal gain and not giving any unauthorized preferential treatment) and criminal conflict of interest. She reminded the Committee members that they are required to sign and submit their Ethics Review statements upon completion of their training.

Chairman Remarks
Chairman Kelly thanked Ms. Gutcher for her presentation and introduced Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Ronald E. Walters.

Budget/Performance Update, Acting Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, Ron Walters

Mr. Walters' presentation covered a review of the FY 2015 budget submission, key performance measures, an update on Compliance Reviews for the Veterans Cemetery Grants Service**,** and Legislative and Regulatory Issues Impacting NCA.

NCA is funded from four primary discretionary accounts: operations and maintenance (O & M), major construction, minor construction and Veterans Cemetery Grants Services (VCGS). Major construction involves contracts greater than 10M, minor construction, less than 10M. VCGS is a program that assists state and tribal organizations with construction and operations of state and tribal funded cemeteries.

Mr. Walters explained how the 2013 government shut-down affected over 800,000 federal employees, but that NCA continued operations because of a two-year appropriation.

Mr. Walters reviewed the FY 2015 budget request and compared activities to FY 2013 and FY 2014. The FY 2015 request is $372M, resulting in a decrease of $134M. The budget for FY 2014 was $505M and for FY 2013 was $373M. The decrease for FY 2015 is because of a reduction in construction accounts. Major construction was $121M in FY 2014, down in FY 2015 to $10M; Minor construction in FY 2013 was $46M. In FY 2014 it was $89M, down in FY 2015 to $60M.

Mr. Walters discussed the growth of NCA's budget since 2008. NCA had experienced considerable growth between 2008 and 2010. He stated the growth has been challenging to continue to fund operations and meet expanding workloads at cemeteries while maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction. NCA has been able to do so by employing cost-saving strategies.

He provided details of funding for FY 2014 and FY 2015 budget appropriations. For FY 2014, $25M, and FY 2015 $8.1M will be allocated for national shrine projects to raise, realign and clean headstones, markers and repair sunken graves; $2 million each year for non-recurring maintenance projects; and $3.4 million to support new cemetery activations. Two cemeteries in Florida will be the first of the five new cemeteries to open. The cemeteries have been designated as Cape Canaveral National Cemetery and Tallahassee National Cemetery.

Mr. Walters gave details on the Veterans Cemetery Grants Service (VCGS) funding. The funding for VCGS has been consistent from Fiscal years 2013, 2014 and for the 2015 funding request at $46M, for 2013 and 2014, with a $1M decrease for FY 2015. For FY 2014, the total number of pending applications is 61, totaling $156M. Twenty-one grants will be awarded in FY 2014, four of those will be awarded to tribal cemeteries. Within the next five years there will be more open state cemeteries providing services than national cemeteries.

Mr. Walters discussed mandatory payments which include headstones and markers and grave liners and outer burial and receptacle reimbursements. Appropriations for FY 2014 are $101M and for FY 2015, $120M.

Mr. Walters provided an overview of construction activities, stating a total budget for FY 2014 as $210M and FY 2015 as $70M. This funding includes major construction for three new cemeteries and cemetery expansions, and minor construction for cemetery expansions and improvements.

Performance Dashboard

Performance measures include Veterans served, percent of graves marked within 60 days of interment, respondents who rate the service as excellent and percent of respondents who rate appearance of cemetery as excellent. The measures resulted in an 89.5% response rate in FY 2014. The ratings for FY 2013 was the same. The estimate for FY 2015 is 91%. NCA's target to increase percentages in all four categories is 96%, 95%, 100% and 100% respectively.

In regard to workload, four categories are considered. These are:

- Interments –FY 2013 – 124, 787, FY 2014 – 60,339 to date; estimate for FY 2015- 128,100
- Graves maintained –FY 2013- 3.3M, FY 2014- 3.3M, estimate for FY 2015-3.4M
- Developed acres maintained – FY 2013- 8,771, FY 2014-8,794, est. for FY 2015-8,882
- Headstone and marker applications processed –FY 2013-350,027, FY 2014- 170,999, estimate for FY 2015 – 362,900.

Mr. Walters explained burial needs study which is being employed as a recommendation from the Advisory Committee. The study identifies emerging burial trends, Veteran preferences and ensures burial needs are met. It is a multi-part study using literature search, a nationwide Veterans survey, focus groups and specialized study groups from Muslim and Native American Veterans. The results of the study are due in the Summer or Fall of 2014.

Mr. Walters discussed Veterans Cemetery Grants Service compliance review which focuses on strengthening partnerships and enhancing accountability with states and tribal governments. NCA is initiating the review program in October of 2014. The review will measure critical customer satisfaction elements, similar to NCA's Organizational Assessment and Improvement (OAI) Program; encourage achievement of National Shrine standards.

Mr. Walters spoke about the legislative focus on unclaimed remains explaining that Public Law 112-260 (January 10, 2013) was created to provide caskets and urns for certain unclaimed Veterans buried in national cemeteries; provide transportation allowances for all unclaimed Veterans buried in national cemeteries. VA is seeking authority to expand the transportation allowance for unclaimed Veterans buried in grant-funded cemeteries.

He also said there are legislative proposals and planned regulations as part of the FY 2015 request. The proposals focus on medallion applicability date; headstones/markers for spouses/dependents in tribal cemeteries; and funding for crypts in grant-funded cemeteries. The proposed rules address applicant standing for headstones and markers and improve grant processing.

Chairman Remarks

Chairman Kelly thanked Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Ronald E. Walters and recessed the Committee for 20 minutes.

Chairman Remarks

Chairman Kelly called the meeting to order and introduced Under Secretary Steve L. Muro as the next speaker.

Remarks by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Steve L. Muro

The Under Secretary began by welcoming the Committee and thanking the members for their service.

Mr. Muro introduced two employees in new positions. Joshua de Leon newly assigned as Executive Director, MSN I, George Eisenbach newly assigned as Director of Veterans Grants Service Program, and recognized and thanked Don Murphy, Chief, Memorial Service Programs who is being assigned as cemetery director for the new Cape Canaveral National Cemetery.

Mr. Muro discussed new activities at NCA stating that the National Scheduling Office is now supporting all VA cemeteries; bi-lingual agents have been hired to help serve Puerto Rico National Cemetery; as Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery reaches capacity new interments will shift to Miramar National Cemetery; twenty-four names were added to National Medal of Honor Memorial at Riverside National Cemetery; and Yellowstone National Cemetery officially opened Memorial Day 2014 and is the first cemetery to open as part of the rural initiative.

Other cemetery openings in the Rural Initiative will open in North Dakota, Wisconsin, Maine, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada and Utah. An estimated 133,328 Veterans will be served as a result of the cemetery openings.

Mr. Muro cited the Urban Initiative and future cemetery construction scheduled in New York, New York City, Indianapolis, Cape Canaveral Fla., Tallahassee, Fla., Chicago, Nebraska, Colorado, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Western New York.

He commended the staff for NCA achieving the highest ranking of any participating organization on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), for five consecutive times in 13 years of the taking the survey. NCA also received the highest rating, 96%, in the history of ACSI and improved the rating score from 2010.

Overall Customer Satisfaction Measures

Mr. Muro also stated that NCA also conducts an annual customer satisfaction survey. A contractor conducts this survey and collects data from next of kin and funeral directors; 24,000 surveys are mailed to next-of kin and 8,000 to funeral directors 3-12 months after the interment of a loved one. The survey ties to goals in the NCA strategic plan which calls for 100% of respondents to agree that customer service and cemetery appearance are excellent by 2015.

The best news from the 2013 survey is that the percentage of respondents who “strongly agree” about excellent service and appearance continues to increase year-over-year. The percentage of cemeteries that met or exceeded strategic performance targets increased for all strategic performance measures when compared with prior years. The overall satisfaction measures were:

- 98% of respondents were satisfied with their experiences
- 96% agreed service was excellent
- 99% agreed cemetery appearance was excellent
- 97% agreed cemetery staff was courteous
- 96% agreed cemetery staff was knowledgeable, helpful and responsive

- 100% of respondents at the highest-scoring cemetery agreed about staff being courteous, but the lowest-scoring cemetery was still above 92%.
- 99% agreed they would recommend the cemetery to Veteran families during their time of need
- 98% agreed they are willing to rely on NCA to meet the burial needs of Veterans in the future

Satisfaction with Information and Communication

Most common ways next-of-kin find out about NCA benefits prior to time of need is if a family member or a friend is buried at a national cemetery; through a funeral home or through military discharge-related materials. Best way to convey information to next-of-kin about benefits:

- Newsletter/flyer (28%)
- Local newspaper/TV reports (23%)
- VA/NCA Website (18%)
- E-mail (15%)

Where funeral directors get the most information about cemetery policies and procedures:

- Outreach by staff (39%)
- VA/NCA Website (30%)
- VSOs (12%)
- Professional Associations (9%)
-

Best way to convey information to funeral homes about changes in policy or procedures?

- E-mail (38%)
- Letter (30%)
- Phone (15%)
- Fax (11%)

Satisfaction with the Committal Service

Because the committal service is most often what people remember from their experience in our cemeteries, high satisfaction here is important to overall satisfaction.

- 96% of next-of-kin reported satisfaction with committal services
- 74% of families requested funeral honors for their Veteran
- 99% of those were satisfied with the honors provided
- 98% of funeral directors reported receiving the support they needed
- 67% indicated service from national cemeteries was better than or superior to service received from private cemeteries
- 88% found scheduling a service easy or somewhat easy, NCA has some work to do here.

Satisfaction with Visitor Accommodations

Ninety-nine percent of survey respondents are happy with overall cemetery appearance, ranging from niche covers to grounds and trees. However, they aren’t as pleased about some of the accommodations in their cemeteries, and as NCA expands existing cemeteries and design new ones, handicap accessibility and signage are part of the design. Cemeteries will have more family restrooms, for example, to accommodate families with children or elderly parents who might need direct care.

Visitors are less happy with:

- Handicap accessibility (91% satisfaction)
- Availability of restrooms (82% satisfaction)
- Signage (90%)
- Gravesite locators (89%)

Mr. Muro closed his presentation stating, customer satisfaction surveys provide critical insights into ways we can better serve Veterans and families. The survey serves as a basis for action planning in cemeteries/MSN; strategic planning; and show how to close the 4% gap.

Chairman Remarks
Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Muro for his presentation and recessed the Committee for lunch.

Break for Lunch-Noon

Resume meeting at 1:00 P.M.

Committee Chair Remarks
Chairman Kelly resumed meeting. Called for oral public comments, there were none. He then introduced Deputy Under Secretary for Management, Tom Muir.

Remarks by the Deputy Under Secretary for Management, Tom Muir
Mr. Muir's presentation focused on design and construction, contracting, information technology, human capital management, and outreach and history.

Construction

Mr. Muir talked about the construction initiatives underway for new national cemeteries. The five new national cemeteries will be in: Tallahassee, Fla.; Scottsmoor, Fla; Omaha, Neb.; Western New York, and Southern Colorado.

Under the Urban Initiative, NCA is establishing columbarium-only satellite sites in five locations: Chicago, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco (Alameda). Construction of these facilities will better serve urban areas comprised of approximately two million Veterans and address concerns raised by NCA's customers regarding time and distance challenges associated with accessing existing national cemeteries.

Under the Rural Initiative, NCA is establishing national cemeteries located in eight states. These are Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Wisconsin and Maine.

Minor construction

FY 2014 had the highest budget since FY 2005 at $89M. The FY 2015 projection is $60M. The planned project awards in FY 2014 include:

- Design Contracts
    - 3 Gravesite Expansions
    - 11 Building/Site Improvements
    - 3 Irrigation Projects
- Construction Contracts
    - 4 Gravesite Expansions

    - 17 Building/Site Improvements
    - 2 Irrigation Projects
- Design/Build Contracts
    - 8 Gravesite Expansions

Total Planned Project Costs:
- Design Subtotal: $21,924,000
- Construction Subtotal: $45,943,000
- Design/Build Subtotal: $50,840,000

Maintenance and Repair (M & R) and Non-Recurring Maintenance (NRM) for Memorial Service Networks (MSNs)

There are five Memorial Service Networks (MSNs) in NCA. MSNs I-V used a total of $1.8M in M & R funds and a total of $2M for NRM. M & R funds use minor construction funds.

Operation and Maintenance funds are used for NRM.

New Business Processes – NCA Interagency Agreements (IA)
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- General Services Administration (GSA) Public Building Service (PBS)
- Rock Island Foundry [Gettysburg Address Plaques]
- National Park Service (NPS) [rewrite of IA to be completed in June 2014]

Interagency Agreements are a new mechanism to obligate funding and to expedite design and construction process.

Total planned funding obligations are:
- USACE Project Subtotal: $44,670,000
- GSA Project Subtotal: $7,500,000
- Rock Island Foundry Project Subtotal: $320,000

Historical Architect duties:
- Provides Expert Technical Advice Regarding National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and Related Laws
- Prepares Section 106 Compliance Documents for Review
- Performs Inspections for Historic Wall and Lodge Renovation Projects
- Reviews A/E Consultant Qualifications
- Reviews Archeological Surveys

Sarasota National Cemetery, FL Patriot Plaza
- Est. Completion Date: May 31, 2014
- Est. Local Dedication Date: June 2014
- Est. Dedication Date: November 15, 2014
- $10 Million Donation from The Patterson Foundation
- Major Enhancements to the Assembly Area at the Sarasota National Cemetery
- Includes Glass Shelter, Seating and Artwork

Completed Minor Projects

- Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR
- Biloxi National Cemetery, Biloxi, MS
- Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, San Antonio, TX
- Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego, CA
- New Administration Building, Quantico National Cemetery, Quantico, VA

Major Construction

- Fort Sam Houston- Phase B Improvements to Historic Section
- National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific- Columbarium Expansion & Cemetery Improvements
- Cape Canaveral- Phase 1 Development
- Tallahassee- Phase 1 Development

Total cost of construction $112M.

Construction-Design/Build

- Omaha Area- Phase 1 Development - Design/Build- $36M

Master Planning & Phase 1 Development

- Southern Colorado Area
- Puerto Rico
- Western New York Area

Total cost of construction $117M. Total cost of all Major Construction Projects $265M.

Contracting

Type of Contracts Issued by NCA

- Firm Fixed Price (FFP)
- Indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ)
- Commercial Items (CI)
- Minor Construction
- Architectural and Engineering (A & E)
- Schedules (BPA's, GSA)
- Options year contracts
- Sole Source (based on specific requirements)
- Interagency Agreements (IAs)

Type of Procurements NCA Solicits

- Various Equipment
- Inscription Services
- Headstone & Markers- Blanks
- Furniture
- Grave liners
- Turf Renovation/ Maintenance
- Headstone Setting
- Ground Maintenance
- Janitorial Services

- Maintenance and Repair
- Mow/Trimming Services
- Waste Removal
- Fertilizer & Weed Control Services
- Tree Pruning
- Construction – A/E Services
- Repair Historic Perimeter Walls
- Installation of Pre-Placed Crypts
- Construct Columbaria/Memorial Walls
- Renovation of Lodges
- Replace Fences
- Replace Admin & Maint Facilities
- Gravesite Development
- Repair Erosion & Storm Damage
- Repair Sidewalks & Roads
- Repair Irrigation Systems

Total Amount Awarded to Small Business

- 2011: $87,585,368.48
- 2012: $105,730,352.30
- 2013: $186,053,108.47
- 2014 (as of 04/4/2014): $80,267,015.75

Total Amount Awarded by Year

- 2011: $159,130,767.29
- 2012: $123,322,686.14
- 2013: $220,278,852.30
- 2014 (as of 04/4/2014): $101,340,021.01

Performance Levels for Set-Asides

Veteran-Owned Small Business:

- VA FY 2012 Goal: 12% of Total Procurement
- NCA FY 2012 Actual: 84.4% ($95.6M)
- VA FY 2013 Goal: 12% of Total Procurement
- NCA FY 2013 Actual: 66.4% ($146.4M)

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business:

- VA FY 2012 Goal: 10% of Total Procurement
- NCA FY 2012 Actual: 83.8% ($95.0M)
- VA FY 2013 Goal: 10% of Total Procurement
- NCA FY 2013 Actual: 65.2% (143.6M)

Information Technology

Manage & Maintain Systems (IT)

- Maintain & Monitor Systems Operations
- Manage Data Quality
- Preserve and Protect the Privacy of Information
- Manage Business Architecture

Manage IT programs for NCA (Business Requirements)

- Identify Business and Requirements needs
- Provide Program Oversight and roadmap for future state of IT implementation
- Transition to Operations

Support NCACO (Administrative Service)

- Property and Space Management
- Publication and Records Management
- Provide IT support and equipment to all NCA VACO users

NCA Public Information Kiosk Program

- 10 new Kiosks are installed each year
- 81 National Cemeteries have a Kiosk
- 98 Kiosks are in use
- Upgrade all Kiosk laptops to Win 7 in FY14

Accomplishments Fiscal Year 13/14

- Implemented a Corporate View of BOSS
- Deployed Eligibility Office Automation System
- Added Historical Name Information
- Sent Updates to Master Veteran Index (MVI)
- Deployed Gravesite Assessment Reporting (GAR) Enhancements
- Added Memorial Wall Markers
- Improved Reporting Capability
- Posted Updated Cemetery Maps
- Automated Arlington National Cemetery and Prudential Insurance files for First Notice of Death (FNOD) Processing
- Implemented Electronic Marker Order for Arlington National Cemetery
- Implemented Marker Set Notification

Business Requirements Accomplishments

The process of developing and enhancing systems involves several phases, with the writing of requirements being the foundation, and the most critical to ensure an accurate result. This year, the projects listed are in the process of being worked on by NCA and the Office of Information and Technology.

Business Process Improvement Projects under development

- First Notice of Death (FNOD)
- Eligibility Office Automation System (EOAS) Enhancements
- Pre-Need Burial Planning
- MPS Resolution Letters
- Presidential Memorial Certificates (PMC)
- Fax Re-Platform

Fiscal Year 15 - 20 Goals

- Data Normalization
- Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) Electronic form
- Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), Mapping and Navigation capability
- Remains Tracking Automation Automated Dig Slips
- Integrated Schedule
- Reporting:
- Electronic audits
- Dashboards and Ad-hoc Reporting

<u>Enhancements to Modernize Memorial Benefits Management System</u>

Development of requirements for enhancements is an ongoing effort.

Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) electronic Form: Will allow external customers to submit online requests for PMCs.

Geographic Information Systems will allow both internal and external stakeholders access to cemetery mapping information via mobile devices.

Remains Tracking Automation: Will automate the manual (paper) processes in place to track remains.

Automated Dig Slips: Will automate internal manual (paper) processes for managing dig slip instructions.

Integrated Schedule: Will provide automation for NCSO to identify available time slots to schedule burials at the nationwide cemeteries.

Reporting Dashboard will display summarized data based on user needs. Ad-hoc reporting will allow users to generate reports when needed.

Activities To Date (Client-Facing):

- Nationwide Gravesite Locator access through m.va.gov
- Concept Definition phase for requirement development to improve the Veteran, Next-of-Kin, Family, or Public customer's experience

Activities To Date (Internal-Facing):

- Concept Definition phase as part of the Memorial Benefits Management System (MBMS) implementation
- Leverage mobile devices to improve Memorial business processes for cemetery operations management

Imperative (Veteran-Facing):
Enhanced access by Veterans and the public to Memorials Information including:

- the National Gravesite Locator website and National Gravesite Locator Kiosks at all National Cemeteries
- GPS and/or GIS data for directions to and within the cemetery to the exact gravesite
- Pictures of headstones, markers, and memorials within the cemetery linked to the Veteran or family member; future potential to include memorial artifacts such as pictures of the Veteran, mpeg movies or URL links to YouTube, etc.

Imperative (Internal-Facing):
Future NCA programs include the use of mobile technologies for the following business processes:

- GPS survey level data for cemetery construction and expansions to include graves (four corners), headstones/markers, infrastructure (roads, irrigation, sewers, IT lines, telecommunications lines, etc.), monuments, buildings, and trees
- Capturing pictures (markers, gravesites, temp gravesite markers) and linking directly to the graves registry in NCA systems
- Headstone and marker inscription data including receive and set dates
- Barcode data for tagging caskets and urns, as well as electronically tagging the containers to the grave site, the headstone, and the maker, linked to NCA systems
- Maintenance data for the cemetery, facilities, and grounds

Human Capital Management

NCA Workforce At A Glance (As Of March 31, 2014)

- 1749 Employees, 223 Managers/Supervisors
  - Supervisory Ratio: 1/7.84 employees
- % of Veterans Onboard: 74.47%
  - VA Goal: 33%
  - NCA Highest Among All Federal Agencies
- Average Time-to-Hire for FY2014: 41 Days
  - VA Goal: 60 Days
  - OPM Goal: 80 Days
  - VBA: 50 Days
  - VHA: 45 Days

NCA continues to lead VA and all Federal agencies in terms of Veteran hires. Seventy-five percent of NCA employees are Veterans. NCA leads VA in terms of the time it takes to bring employees on board, consistently beating the VA and OPM goals for the metric.

NCA Turnover Statistics

- Average Age: 49.17 Years
- Actual Retirements Rising Steadily
  - FY2009: 34
  - FY 2010: 69
  - FY2011: 90
  - FY2012: 74
  - FY 2013: 76
  - FY2014 (To Date): 36

Loss Rate: 6.20% (Includes Retirement, Termination, Resignation, Transfer, Death)
NCA is facing a succession planning challenge, as our average workforce age is 49.17 years, with a significant number of employees eligible for voluntary retirement.

A steady flow of experienced employees are leaving NCA, requiring aggressive succession planning efforts, mainly through our Employee Training & Development Program, as shown in the next few slides.

- FY2014: 338 Eligible, 66 Projected
- FY2015: 340 Eligible, 67 Projected
- FY2016: 338 Eligible, 68 Projected
- FY2017: 339 Eligible, 64 Projected
- FY2018: 361 Eligible, 69 Projected
- FY2019: 354 Eligible, 64 Projected
- FY2020: 349 Eligible, 68 Projected

NCA Worker's Compensation Program

Program administered through NCA Human Resources Center (HRC)

- 2 HR Specialists manage program
- Total Cost to date in FY2014:
- $338,196.98 Medical Payments
- $493,310.83 Compensation Payments
- Total Cases: 185

Complex and/or long-term cases are now being reviewed by 3rd party providers to ensure all appropriate measures are being taken to reduce costs and return employees to work

NCA Training and Development Program Overview

Employee Performance Enhancement

- Customer service
- Operational standards and measures
- Mandatory coursework for Federal employees

Employee Professional Knowledge and Leadership Development
Knowledge Management/Succession Planning
Training delivery includes custom and off-the-shelf coursework

NCA Training and Development Program National Training Center (NTC)

Established in St. Louis, MO in 2004

- Since then:
  - 72 cemetery directors graduated
  - NCA employees completed over 2,700 classes
  - Coursework includes: Supervision, Turf & Landscape Management, Caretaker Training, Foreman Bootcamp, Cemetery Representative, Payroll and Financial Management, Contracting, and more
  - Training also offered to state and tribal employees, as well as Department of Interior and Arlington National Cemetery employees

NCA Training and Development Program Cemetery Director Intern Training Program

- NCA's flagship training program
- Conducted at NTC and Jefferson Barracks NC
- Year-long, in-residence curriculum designed to instill:
  - Leadership
  - VA Core Values, including NCA's sacred trust
  - Technical knowledge and proficiency
- Graduation for current class is August 8, 2014 in Washington, DC
- Interviews underway to select members of Class of 2015

NCA Training and Development Program Homeless Veteran Apprenticeship Program

- In 2012, in response to VA Secretary's Goal to End Veterans Homelessness by 2015, NCA formulated the Cemetery Caretaker Apprenticeship Program
- NCA partnered with VHA to seek out potential candidates and designate nearby cemeteries to participate
- Apprentices spend a year learning their trade, as well as receiving instruction in such areas as professionalism and conflict management
- The first class was hired in October 2012 and, out of 24 original participants, 13 graduated in 2013
- 24 participants began in the 2014 class, and 22 remain today

NCA Goals, Engagement, Accountability, Results (GEAR) Program

- NCA Piloting OPM's new Performance Management Program for VA
- Reinforces NCA's high-performance culture
- Aligns employee management performance with organizational performance management
- Implements greater accountability at all levels
- Creates a culture of engagement
- Improves the assessment, selection, development and training of supervisors

NCA Outreach

- 65 national events attended in 2013
- Events selected and resourced by NCA VACO staff
- Frequently share booth space with VA counterparts
- Events are national or regional, attended by various NCA stakeholders.
- Resource events by paying for the registration, booth fees, electricity etc.

- Mail materials for the booth such as displays, brochures, miniature Presidential Memorial Certificates, and miniature burial flags
- Coordinate staffing events using employees from field offices and VACO
- In 2013, NCA conducted 3,145 local and national outreach events.
- An estimated 443,000 people were exposed to NCA at these events.

2014 Outreach Overview

- 65 national events scheduled
- Expand to new areas
- Identify populations of Veterans who aren't aware of VA benefits
- Several discussions with public-private partnerships including AARP
- New groups NCA is beginning to focus outreach on
    - Hospice
    - Palliative Care
    - Estate and Trust planners
    - Funeral Industry
    - More state industry events – large Veteran population states

Continued Special Emphasis

- Veteran/VSO conventions
    - Diversity
        - Women Veterans
        - Native American
        - Hispanic
        - Asian Pacific
        - Funeral Industry
        - National Funeral Directors Association
        - Cremation Association of North America
        - State Funeral Director Associations

- Funeral Industry
    - Funeral Director Kit
        - Online
        - http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/features.asp#4
        - Videos
        - Online
        - DVD

  gov.delivery
        - Exploring feasibility
        - Quarterly updates
        - Opt-in system

- Facebook & Twitter Usage
        - Facebook -10,122 fans
        - Twitter- 3,895 followers
        - Dwarfs traditional communications methods
        - Facebook "likes" and twitter "followers" continues to increase

- Mobile Command Outreach Vehicle (MCO)
    - Emergency Preparedness
    - Command & Control
    - Outreach
    - Available to meet mission requirements in May 2014

Outreach Future Initiatives

- Exploring the feasibility of a national advertising contract
    - Primarily newspaper and magazine print advertisements
    - Major newspapers
    - Trade publications
    - VSO, funeral industry, estate planning, end-of-life,Flyer inserts
    - AARP, Social Security

Outreach Training

- Standardized training module for all NCA staff conducting outreach
- New Outreach Materials
- VA Chaplain Brochure

NCA History Program

- Interpretation
    - 150th Commemoration programs
    - Civil War cemetery Interpretive signage
    - History webpage

- Current Projects
    - Monument conservation
    - Lodge stabilization

Ongoing and New Initiatives

- Research projects
- Stand-up of new VA History Office
- National Register of Historic Places nominations
- VA History Office and Archives

Civil War 150th Commemoration: 2011-15

- Civil War-Era Cemeteries
- 77 National cemeteries
- Confederate-related
- Other - Soldiers' lots
    - Commemorative achievements
        - Educational VACO programs
        - Historic preservation projects
        - Web-based exhibits

VACO Educational Programs

- This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War
- Dr. Drew Gilpin Faust, President and Lincoln Professor of History, Harvard University (April 2012)
- History Program & Ancestry.com Project: Digitize/Index 19th Century Burial Ledgers (November 2012)
- Todd Godfrey, Senior Director of Global Content, Ancestry.com
- Legacy of the USS *Monitor &* Burial of two remains in Arlington National Cemetery (February 2013)
- David W. Alberg, Superintendent, *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary
- Native American Service in the Civil War
- (November 2013 - *Native American Heritage Month & Veterans Day)*Dr. Robert Sutton, Chief Historian, National Park Service
- Black Soldiers & Sailors in the Civil War
- (February 2014 - *Black History Month)*Dr. Joseph P. Reidy, U.S. History Professor & Associate Provost, Howard University

Interpretive Signage: Generic National Cemetery Content

191 signs total:

- 79 Civil War-era national cemeteries will have generic signs installed in FY14
- Custom or site-specific cemetery signs:
- Similar signs are coming for (18) Confederate sites (LIST FOR KATHY)
- (94) signs at individual national cemeteries and soldiers' lots (FY15)
- New signs will be proposed for post-Civil War themes including World War POWs.
- (18) Confederate signs are being manufactured for installation in FY14.
- (9) Will be installed in national cemeteries where there are at least 250 Confederate graves.
- (9) will be installed in all-Confederate cemeteries.
- Each unique sign contains the story of how the property was created; the (s*haded*) third (far right) section contains generic text that explains the Confederate headstone.

Historic Resources for the Public on NCA Website

- Civil War/NCA Timeline Preservation Projects
  - Ledger Digitization
  - Lodge Mothball
  - Monument Conservation
  -

Diverse Monument Conservation Projects - FY2012-14

- 72 monuments of 160+/- high-priority memorial objects are being treated

- Pvt. Thompson Grave Marker, San Francisco N/C - Stone statuary such as in San Francisco N/C, the private grave marker commissioned by the family of Pvt. Thompson circa 1900, was a safety issue. Cracks threatened to separate the flag, head and leg from the rest of the figure.

- Confederate Monument, Springfield National Cemetery - Metal statuary, such as the complex treatment needed on the 15-foot-tall bronze sculpture of a Confederate Soldier at Springfield NC, Miss., installed in 1901. Extensive cracks at the ankles indicated the structure was failing.

Historic Preservation Partnership with NPS

- National Park Service provides expertise in historic resource documentation and traditional building skills.

- 2011-13 written histories, select measured drawings of Finn's Point, Alexandria lodge buildings, and rostrums including the one at Poplar Grove National Cemetery (NPS).

- 2013- Programmatic Agreement with Poplar Grove N/C for NCA to provide historic replica headstones/markers.

Conserving Historic Buildings 2012-14 Mothball/Stabilization of Vacant Lodges

- When there is no use or tenant for lodges, NCA may "mothball" them to stabilize them.
- NCA uses National Park Service staff and vendors for this work.

Historic Study on Confederate Cemeteries to be Published in 2014

- Covers (18) NCA-managed Confederate cemeteries
- Provides new scholarship about under-recognized NCA history.
- Book to be published 2014 online and by the Government Printing Office.
- Complies with Section 110, National Historic Preservation Act, for historic documentation.

Historic Resources: Documentation National Park Service Program listing of Federal sites is mandated in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

- List of Cemeteries on the National Register of Historic Places
- (95) cemeteries currently listed
- (20) nominations underway, in part funded by Department
- Upon completion, all NCA properties established by 1964 will be listed.
-

National Historic Landmarks

- (14) cemeteries are included in National Historic Landmark districts

VA Pursuing Department-Level History Office and Archives

- SecVA pursuing establishment of VA Departmental History Office and Archives Facility at Dayton VAMC Campus
- 10-year plan due September 2014 from History Associates Inc.
- NCA History Program providing input to the study and technical assistance.

Committee Chair Remarks
Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Muir for his remarks and introduced Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs Glenn Powers

Remarks by the Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs Glenn Powers
Mr. Powers' presentation covered new leadership in Memorial Service Network (MSN) I and III; VA-NCA – Army National Military Cemeteries (ANMC) Joint Working Group**;** Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for Cemeteries Act; Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012; and Cemetery Director Intern Recruitment.

Mr. Powers announced the selection of Joshua de Leon who officially assumed the position as Executive Director, Memorial Service Network I May 4, and Steve Best, who was selected as the Executive Director, Memorial Service Network III in Denver, effective September 29, 2013. He then talked about the VA-NCA/ ANMC Joint Working Group.

VA-NCA / ANMC Joint Working Group

In March 2013 a charter established NCA / ANMC Joint Working Group. The group includes the Department of Interior and American Battle Monuments Commission. The group provides official forums for senior level interaction between NCA, Army National Military Cemeteries, National Park Service, and ABMC. The purpose of the group is to:

- Identify potential improvements
- Share lessons learned
- Avoid potential duplication
- Develop solutions to common problems
- Group meets each March and September

Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act

- Signed into law on Dec. 20, 2013
- Authority to reconsider decisions of Secretary of Veterans Affairs or Secretary of the Army to inter the remains or honor the memory of a person in a national cemetery.
- Directed VA to disinter Mr. Michael LaShawn Anderson's remains from Fort Custer National Cemetery.
- Disinterment occurred on Feb. 19, 2014

In this case, the family was not available to receive the remains. Therefore, VA contracted with a funeral home for the disinterment, transportation and re-interment services; and purchased a private plot and headstone. The funeral director transported the remains to a vault company where the casket was removed from the Outer Burial Receptacle and placed in a new grave liner. The funeral director then transported the grave liner to a private cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan and reinterred the remains.

Interment of 18 Unclaimed Veterans Quantico National Cemetery, VA -June 22, 2013

Public Law 112-260, the Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act, will assist VA to further serve the burial needs of unaccompanied Veterans. This Act became effective on January 10, 2014. The legislation supports VA's efforts to ensure unclaimed Veterans receive the benefit of burial in a national cemetery and to continue to maintain national cemeteries as national shrines.

VA is establishing a reimbursement program to implement the new law authorizing VA to provide caskets and urns for burial of deceased eligible Veterans in a VA national cemetery if the Veterans have no identifiable next of kin and insufficient resources are available to pay for a casket or urn. VA is drafting a proposed rule for public comment which defined a process under which VA would reimburse third parties who purchase metal caskets or plastic urns for eligible Veterans who died on or after January 10, 2014, within provisions of the new law. Under the proposed rule, the cost of the burial receptacle may be reimbursed up to a maximum amount that would be determined based on the average cost of a metal casket or plastic urn meeting minimum specifications. Interested parties will be able to comment on the proposed rule once it is published in the Federal Register. VA hopes to begin reimbursing for metal caskets or plastic urns for eligible Veterans as described in the final rule once it becomes effective. Parties who wish to seek reimbursement under the program created by this anticipated rule for a casket or urn they have purchased or intend to purchase is advised to keep records regarding the burial receptacle and the purchase price.

The Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 requires VA to:

- Furnish caskets or urns for deceased Veterans
- Receive information from medical examiners and funeral directors
- Expand burial and transportation reimbursement benefits to remains of unclaimed Veterans
- Exclude persons convicted of certain sex offenses from interment or honors
- Ensure wishes of next-of-kin are considered and allow honor guards access to NCA facilities

Cemetery Director Intern Program

- Current class of 14 graduates Aug. 8, 2014
- Now recruiting 15 candidates for incoming class – highly competitive process
- 240 applications; 47 selected for telephone interviews
- Approximately 30 applicants offered opportunity for face-to-face interviews - St. Louis, May 2014
- Start date: Sept. 7, 2014 (subject to change)

Committee Chair Remarks

Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Powers for his remarks and introduced Anita Hanson, Director of Memorial Service Programs.

Remarks by Anita Hanson, Director of Memorial Programs Service

Ms. Hanson reviewed activities for Memorial Programs Service (MPS) for FY 2012 and FY 2013.

Memorial Programs Service – FY 2012 & FY 2013

Headstones and Markers Ordered

- FY 2012 – 352,365
- FY 2013 – 352,544

Timeliness of Processing

- FY 2012 – 88%
- FY 2013 – 79%

Presidential Memorial Certificates Ordered

- FY 2012 – 719,094
- FY 2013 – 654,470

Timeliness of Processing

- FY 2012 – 78%
- FY 2013 – 98%

Veteran Medallions

FY 2012

- 1/ ½' - 1,158
- 3' – 3,942
- 5' – 2,370

Total – 7,470

FY 2013

- ½' – 1,452
- 3' – 4,711
- 5' – 2,832

Total – 8,995

An instructional video on how to affix a medallion to a headstone is available at: www.cem.va.gov/cem/hmm/order_instructions.asp.

New Emblems of Belief:

- Medicine Wheel
- Infinity
- Luther Rose
- Landing Eagle
- Four Directions
- Church of Nazarene
- Hammer of Thor
- Unification Church
- Sandhill Crane

First Notice of Death

FY 2012

- 664,807 NODs processed
- $49,785,836 in Benefits Cancelled

FY 2013

- 705,603 NODs processed
- $57,181,753 in Benefits Cancelled

A total of $198,862,183 in Benefits Cancelled since 2008

Items of Interest

- Regulation – Who May Apply
- Arlington National Cemetery – Assist w/Adding Monument Types to Interment Scheduling System
- Poplar Grove N/C – Major Renovation
- NCA Appeals Unit

Break -2:55-3:10 PM

Resume meeting at 3:10 P.M.

Committee Chair Remarks
Chairman Kelly resumed meeting with the introduction of George Eisenbach, Director of Veterans Cemetery Grants Service

Remarks from George Eisenbach, Director of Veterans Cemetery Grants Service (VCGS)

Mr. Eisenbach's presentation focused on VCGS Program Overview, Grants Process Overview and Strategic Outlook.

VCGS Program Overview

- VA provides 100% of development costs
- More than $529 million awarded since 1980
- 90 cemeteries in 45 states, Guam & Saipan
- 6 new cemeteries under construction
- More than 32,000 interments in FY 2013

New Cemeteries Under Construction – Opening

- Rosebud, SD – Fall 2013 (Rosebud Sioux Tribe)
- Humboldt, CA – Spring 2014 (Yurok Tribe)
- Aguadilla, PR – Summer 2014
- Pine Ridge, SD – Summer 2014 (Oglala Sioux Tribe)
- Covington, LA – Winter 2014
- Preston, MN – FY2015
- Wewoka, OK – FY2015 (Seminole Nation)

Tribal Government Grants

- Awarded in the same manner as states
- 564 Federally recognized Tribal Governments
- Significant interest
- Opportunity to serve more Veterans
- Addressing cultural differences
- FY 2008 first contact w/Federally recognized Tribal Governments
- 10 Grant Pre-applications on the FY 2014 Priority List
- Five Tribal Government Establishment grants awarded since FY 2011
- Rosebud Sioux Tribe (SD)-Grant awarded 8/15/11
- Yurok Tribe (CA)-Grant awarded 9/9/11
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe (AZ)-Grant awarded 9/9/11
- Oglala Sioux Tribe (SD)-Grant awarded 9/7/12
- Seminole Nation (OK) -Grant awarded 9/23/13

2014 Priority List Ranking of Tribal Government Construction Grants

- #21 MT-13-14 Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes, Poplar, MT (offered grant opportunity for 2014)
- #23 MT-13-13 Crow Nation, Crow Agency, (offered grant opportunity for 2014)
- #24 AZ-13-10 San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Carlos, AZ (offered a grant opportunity for 2014)
- #25 OK-12-02 Seminole Nation of OK, Wewoka, **(**grant awarded in 2013)
- #26 SC-13-03 Catawba Nation, Rock Hill, SC (offered a grant for 2014)
- #27 OK-13-03 Ponca Tribe, Ponca City, OK (offered a grant for 2014)

Operations and Maintenance Grants (O & M)

NCA Appearance Standards

- Cleanliness of Headstones, Markers & Niche Covers
- Height & Alignment of Headstones & Markers
- Leveling Gravesites
- Turf Conditions

FY 2014 Priority List

- 87 Total Pre-applications - value $253M
- 16 New Pre-applications - value $35.9M
- 34 Establish New Cemeteries
- 10 Tribal Government Pre-applications – 6 for FY14 funding
- Signed by VA Secretary Shinseki on 9/13/2013

Why is VCGS important to NCA?

- NCA Strategic Goal – 96% Access (2015)
- Partner with States & Tribes to serve Veterans

Who do we work with?

- State Department of Veterans Affairs (e.g., State VA Secretary, Commissioner, Superintendent, Cemetery Directors)
- Federally recognized Tribal Governments (e.g., Tribal Chief, President, Chairperson)

Types of Grant Projects:

- New Establishment
- Expansion
- Improvement
- O & M (Raise & Realign)

Grants Process Overview - Project Priority Groups

- **Priority 1 – *(Burial Option Depletion < 4 yrs.)*** Projects for gravesite expansion or improvements that are needed to continue service at an existing Veterans cemetery. This includes phased development of currently undeveloped land.

- **Priority 2 -** Projects for the establishment of new cemeteries.

- **Priority 3 -** ***(Burial Option Depletion > 4 yrs.)*** Planned phased gravesite developments prior to need.

- **Priority 4 -** Other improvements to cemetery appearance or infrastructure, such as building expansion and upgrades to roads and irrigation systems that are not directly related to the development of new gravesites.

To rank high on the Priority List projects **must** have the following:

- State or Tribal Matching Funds
- State Legislation or Tribal Resolution supporting the project

Important Dates

- July 1st
  - All pre-applications must be in grants.gov by July 1st to be considered for the next year's funding
- August 15th
  - Legislation and Matching Funds must be received by VCGS for highest ranking possible on Priority List

Strategic Outlook

- Challenges/Opportunities ahead
  - Need for continued growth
  - Tribal Veteran Cemeteries
  - Sustainment
- Alignment with NCA Strategic Plan
  - Strategic Goal – New establishments
  - Strategic Goal – Triennial Review Program
  - Strategic Goal – No Service Interruption

Strategic Outlook – New Establishments

- Continued Growth
  - Partner closely with state governments to encourage greater grant program participation
  - Provide data analysis and guidance on areas of opportunity
- Tribal Veteran Cemeteries
  - Conducting outreach with Indian Country
  - Partner closely to establish new cemeteries
- Space Program Guidelines
  - Developing new program guidelines to better align burial rate/cemetery size with structural needs

Strategic Outlook – Sustainment

- Raise & Realign Grant Projects (O&M)
  - Similar to NCA Millennium Projects (R&R)
  - Focus is on cemetery appearance improvement (headstone raise/realign, turf rehab, gravesite leveling

- Site Reviews
    - NCA has a responsibility to ensure state/tribal cemeteries are maintained in alignment with NCA Operational Standards and Measures
    - Existing Program – Triennial Review Program
    - No training requirement for reviewers
    - Lacks in objective/quantifiable measures
    - Highly subjective, inconsistent results
    - Lacks in accountability
    - Pilot Site selected - Maryland
    - Soliciting for State Feedback Group
    - Interim status update presented to USMA

- New Program – Compliance Review Program

  Where are we headed?
    - Conduct review of program components with State Feedback Group
    - Pilot Site to conduct self-assessment/GAR
    - Execute Compliance Review at Pilot Site (Summer 2013)
    - Execute Stakeholder Surveys for Pilot Site
    - Update/Improve program based on feedback
    - FY14: (Pilot Phase 2) Execute 4-5 Compliance Reviews
    - FY15: Implement Full Program Nationwide

N**o Service Interruption**

- Track cemetery data/Monitor depletion rates
- Partner with states to ensure grants are continuously submitted
- Results in expansion projects

Program Improvement – Regulation Re-write

- 38 CFR, Part 39
- institutionalize all these new changes via regulation
- gives us authority to do all things we are doing
- reviewed existing regulations - conducted gap analysis of current regulations
- compared with goals/objectives moving forward
- added greater clarity
- process clarification
- added components that align with our new program changes
- added accountability measures that align with the new compliance review program
- added teeth
- All-encompassing guide for states and tribes when they need info on our program.

Committee Chair Remarks
Chairman Kelly thanked George Eisenbach, Director of Veterans Cemetery Grants Service, for his remarks and then opened the floor for questions. Questions were tabled for day two discussion. Robin Cooper briefed Committee members on logistics for day two.

Meeting Adjourned
Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting at 4:30p.m.

Wednesday, May 8, 2014
The Committee convened 425 I Street, NW at 8:30 a.m. and departed to the U.S. Soldiers' and Airman's Home in Washington, DC for a presentation and tour. The director of the Soldier's home conducted the tour of the grounds including the library, medical buildings, and historic cemetery. The tour ended at 11:00 a.m. The Committee departed the cemetery and returned to the 425 I Street, NW at 11:30 a.m., and then recessed for lunch. The Committee reconvened at 1:00 p.m. to begin the afternoon session.

Committee Chair Opening Remarks
Chairman Kelly opened the floor for oral public comments. There were none and he acknowledged that should a public figure show up during the course of the meeting, time would be allowed for public comments. He then went on to introduce Brad Bennett, Superintendent, Andersonville National Historic Site stating the Mr. Bennett will be promoted to another position and will not serve on the Committee as an ex-officio member.

National Park Service Update, Superintendent Brad Bennett
Mr. Bennett stated the National Park Service has nearly 400 sites, 14 contain national cemeteries and 13 are associated with major battles. The 14th, Andersonville, was a Civil War POW camp. All but two are closed to first interments. Andersonville and Johnson are open.

He stated the mission of NPS is to preserve historic sites. 500 acres are historic site, only 26 acres are national cemeteries. He also talked about cemetery projects and showed slides of each.

They are listed as:

Vicksburg National Cemetery
Vicksburg National Military Park, Mississippi

- 150th anniversary of Vicksburg campaign and siege to be commemorated this summer; Special Memorial Day programming will include a "Shadows of the Past" interpretive program in the cemetery.
- Installed interactive touch-screen kiosks in the visitor center and at USS Cairo museum. Visitors can access all burial records for the National Cemetery (Union burials) and nearby Cedar Hill Cemetery (Confederate burials). Kiosk also provides access to confederate parole records.

Poplar Grove National Cemetery
Petersburg National Battlefield, Virginia

- Local scout troops placed flags for Memorial Day weekend and the Catholic Mass.
- Major rehabilitation project scheduled to begin later this year, during which time the cemetery will be closed to the public. May take up to 18 months to restore cultural landscape to upright markers.
- The annual Veterans' Day luminary went off thanks to the help of soldiers from Fort Lee.

Custer National Cemetery
Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, Montana

- After last winter's high snow pack, some graves had sunken. Graves have been restored.
- Eliminated ordering backlog of 39 headstones; set as they arrived
- Replaced all old PVC section markers with standard granite markers in 2013

Battleground National Cemetery
Rock Creek Park, Washington DC

- Repair to the Entrance Piers and Gate in preparation for commemoration of 150th Anniversary of Battle of Fort Stevens and establishment of Battleground National Cemetery.
- Events for commemoration will be held at Fort Stevens and Battleground National Cemetery on July 11-13, 2014.
- The National Capital Region's Cultural Landscape (CLR) office has completed the first draft of the CLR for Battleground National Cemetery. Key issues that are being looked at as part of this effort are the treatment alternatives to revitalize the landscape which has experienced substantial tree loss over the last several decades and strategies for providing ADA accessibility into the cemetery grounds. The final CLR is anticipated to be ready by Fall 2014.

Soldiers National Cemetery
Gettysburg National Military Park, PA

- Three interments in 2013
- Grave markers cleaned as part of routine preservation maintenance activities.
- First draft of the CLR for cemetery is currently being reviewed by park staff. Complete document expected later in the calendar year.
- Dedication Day and 150th Anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Andersonville National Cemetery
Andersonville National Historic Site**,** Georgia

- Park-wide Cultural Landscape Report underway
- Archeological survey work in support of CLR and in preparation of opening the last remaining unused section for burials.
- Ongoing 150th anniversary programs include scheduled walks in the National Cemetery
- 100th Anniversary of the New York Monument dedication, April 2014.
- 192 burials in 2013
- "Funeral for 13,000" ceremony to honor Civil War dead in Sept. 2015

<u>Committee Chair Remarks</u>
Chairman Kelly thanked Brad Bennett for his presentation and service to the Advisory Committee. He then introduced Tom Sole, Director of Engineering and Maintenance of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

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Remarks from Tom Sole, American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC)
Mr. Sole gave an overview of staff and operating size and history of American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC).

Established by Congress in 1923, the ABMC commemorates the service, achievements, and sacrifice of U.S. armed forces. ABMC manages 24 overseas military cemeteries, and 25 memorials, monuments, and markers. Nearly all the cemeteries and memorials specifically honor those who served in World War I or World War II. Mr. Sole pointed out that ABMC is tasked with "telling the story."

Mr. Sole discussed the ABMC acquisition of Clark Veterans Cemetery located in the Philippines. He stated legislation was signed by the President in January which allows for the acquisition, however an actual agreement must be met between the U.S. and Philippines before any real work can begin.

The legislation dictates that ABMC:

- "Restore, operate and maintain" the cemetery
- Limit burials to eligible Veterans at no cost to ABMC
- Is authorized $5M for restoration "as determined by the Commission"

Mr. Sole talked about the Honolulu Interpretive Center project:

- Iconic site that tell stories about WWII, Korea, and Vietnam Wars, and Japanese-Americans and Hawaiian culture,
- Slated to be a tourist destination and will draw American visitors,
- Has an important military presence and has the support of the Hawaiian Historical Preservation.

Mr. Sole also talked about the importance of monuments and future plans for the new pavilions and explained the ABMC World War I Centennial project.

The activities for the project in include:

- Centennial Commemorative Events
- Lafayette Escadrille Memorial
- Meuse-Argonne AC Interpretation Center
- World War I Mobile Apps
- World War I Timeline Interactive
- World War I Pilot Program – University of North Carolina
- American Armies and Battlefields in Europe (Blue Book)
- NPS: Historic American Landscapes Survey
- National Register Historic Places

New Memorials-New Zealand

- Memorial Park in New Zealand
- Significant Size Memorial
- Design Concept in FY2014
- Design in FY2015
- Construction FY2016 or later

Committee Chair Remarks

Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Sole for his presentation and then introduced Pat Hallinan, Executive Director, Army National Cemeteries, Office of the Secretary of the Army (OSA).

Remarks from Pat Hallinan Army National Cemeteries, OSA

Mr. Hallinan provided an update on Arlington National Cemetery stating that 2014 marks the 150th Anniversary of its existence. Arlington was established as a national cemetery on June 15, 1864.

- **ANC at 150":** Arlington National Cemetery will host a series of events from May through June 2014 to *honor the tradition, remember the sacrifice* and *explore the history* as it commemorates 150 years as a national cemetery.

Planned Events

- **Army Full Honors Wreath Laying Ceremony, commemorating the first military burial** *(Free)* Army Private William Christman, Section 27, Grave 19 May 13, 2014
- **Lecture: History of Arlington National Cemetery**
- **Women in Military Service for America Memorial Auditorium** May 13, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: The American Civil War** May 19, 2014 and June 2, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: Uncle Sam's Little Wars** May 20, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: World War I: Bringing our Heroes Home** May 21, 2014 and June 3, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: World War II: The Greatest Generation** May 22, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: U.S. Military and the Cold War** May 23, 2014
- **Renaming Ceremony for the Old Amphitheater**, **Decoration Day Observance co-hosted with the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War** May 30, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: Late 20th Century to the Present** June 4, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: Monuments and Memorials** June 5, 2014
- **Special Guided Tour: Medal of Honor** June 6, 2014
- **"Arlington at 150" Observance Program: A tribute to Arlington's Past, Present and Future** Memorial Amphitheater June 13, 2014
- **Armed Forces Full Honors Wreath Laying Ceremony, commemorating the official establishment of Arlington as a national cemetery** Tomb of the Unknown Soldier June 16, 2014

Accomplishments

- In less than two years, Arlington National Cemetery has transformed into an industry-leading, state-of-the art cemetery. When issues were discovered at Arlington in 2010, the entire United States Army brought resources to support our Nation's premier Hallowed Ground.
- Modernized cemetery operations using existing Army capabilities and technology. Arlington National Cemetery is no longer a paper-based operation. Arlington became the first national cemetery to geospatially (digitally) manage cemetery operations.
- Arlington has achieved a baseline accountability of its burial records and created a single, verifiable and authoritative database of all those laid to rest at Arlington. This database is linked to the digital mapping system, which allows Arlington to assign, manage and track gravesites electronically. This enabled ANC to transfer almost 150 years of paper records to the National Archives and Records Administration, ahead of the President's Managing Government Records Directive.

- Transformed cemetery operations and its work force. Accomplishments include: implementing industry-standard processes that were previously lacking or inadequate, purchasing cemetery-appropriate equipment (including eco-friendly vehicles and smaller turf-utility vehicles), instituting new training and certificate programs, and implementing the strictest national standards for chain-of-custody of casketed and cremated remains.
- Arlington is now recognized as the military's center of excellence for cemeteries. The Secretary of the Army recognized Arlington's advances, assigning the position, Executive Director, in June 2012 as the HQDA Staff Principal for all Army Cemeteries to enact the same accountability, operational and management standards achieved at ANC across the 40 military cemeteries for which the Army is responsible.
- Arlington is creating a training and certification program that will bring officials from these post cemeteries to Arlington, where they will learn and incorporate Arlington's best practices. First training class will take place in early April 2015.
- Arlington is also perfecting its organizational inspection program to not only objectively evaluate its own operations and performance measures, but as an applicable program for use across Army cemeteries, with personnel traveling onsite with a "train, assist and inspect" approach.

ANC Explorer

- On October 22, 2012, Arlington National Cemetery launched *ANC Explorer*, an application available across common web browsers and mobile smart phones. This app enables family members and the public to find gravesites and explore Arlington's rich history.
- The first version of *ANC Explorer* allows users to locate gravesites, events or other points of interest throughout the cemetery; generate front-and-back photos of a headstone or monument; and receive directions to these locations. This release was map-based and focused on finding gravesites.
- The release for ANC 150 is focused on providing content that enhances a visit to Arlington. The app will have the same functions of the first version, but will have pre-loaded tours, content about points of interests within the cemetery, as well as have the ability to develop customized tours.

What's New in 2014?

- Arlington National Cemetery continues to implement technology to streamline cemetery operations and improve our visitors' ability to explore the rich history of this national shrine.
- In addition to an updated version of ANC Explorer, as part of the Arlington's 150th anniversary commemoration, will release a new Arlington National Cemetery website and the cemetery's inclusion into Google Street View.
- Arlington is also planning to renovate the Display Room in the Memorial Amphitheater—similar to what was done in Welcome Center last year. The renovation will include displays and artifacts that tell the story of the Memorial Amphitheater and the Tomb.

Mr. Hallinan also showed a video of the new construction projects at Arlington.

Remarks Chairman Kelly
Chairman Kelly thanked Mr. Hallinan for his presentation and then called the Committee to discuss old business.

Old Business
Chairman reported the recommendations from last meeting where approved by the Secretary and were provided to leaders of the House and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs and members of the Advisory Committee. He asked for concerns about the report, there were none. He then discussed new business.

New Business
Advisory Committee members Joe Forster and Les Beavers queried state directors of Veteran Affairs offices nationwide. Forty-eight responded to a survey on providing military honors at Veteran interments. Responses indicated there were some problems. The main question asked state directors to rate whether the military honor program was effective, somewhat effective, needs improvement, needs major improvement or ineffective. Forty-five states responded to question. Forty states indicated the programs were effective. Findings also showed that some states take advantage of resources available to make an effective program and others do not. The findings also show a state's ability to provide military honors is based on resources available to i.e., National Guard, VSOs, and other financial resources. The overall issue is the communication between cemetery and funeral directors to coordinate providing the honors. Legislation mandating funeral directors to ask next-of-kin about Veteran status would trigger the question to ask if the family would like funeral honors. Mr. Beavers stated that more should be done to provide military honors and that all Veterans should be getting honors. Mr. Beavers also said that feedback is provided from consumer satisfaction surveys conducted by the states.

Remarks, Chairman Kelly
Chairman Kelly closed discussion on Old and New business and opened the floor for recommendations.

May 7 & 8, 2014 Meeting

Recommendation 1
Establish a marketing plan working group to enhance knowledge of the armed services members, Veterans, their families and survivors of their NCA benefits to include establishing liaison and outreach with the Department of Defense and other appropriate agencies and the business community.
Accepted
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Recommendation 2
Request NCA to coordinate with existing users of mobile applications at cemeteries, national parks and memorials and other new technologies, including engineering, to enhance the experience of individuals utilizing our national and state/tribal cemeteries.
Accepted

Recommendation 3
Request NCA to report back to the Committee actions taken to address concerns raised in the NCA customer satisfaction survey, specifically those related to restroom facilities, signage, grave locators, and handicap accessibility.
Accepted

Recommendation 4
To commend the NCA workforce for their dedication and unswerving service to the challenges that arose as a result of the federal shut-down.
Accepted

Recommendation 5
To commend the Secretary and leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs for their service, commitment, and dedication to the delivery of services and benefits for Veterans and their families and survivors.
Accepted

Under Secretary Closing Remarks
Under Secretary Muro thanked the Committee for their time and recognized the group's effort for its impact in helping NCA meet goals and objectives. He extended his open door policy and encouraged the individuals to contact him on ideas and suggestions throughout the year. He also thanked Chairman Kelly.

Closing Remarks, Committee Chair/Mike Nacincik/Robin Cooper
Mr. Nacincik reminded the Advisory Committee to refer to the packet that they would receive at the end of the session. He talked about future site and date of the next Advisory Committee meeting – slating October as a possible timeline. Robin Cooper informed the group on the procedure for closing the meeting, travel and reimbursement.

Chairman Kelly Closing Remarks
Chairman Kelly thanked the Under Secretary and Committee members for attending and contributing to the overall effort of serving Veterans. He commended NCA Advisory Committee Manager Robin Cooper and Designated Federal Officer Mike Nacincik for hosting a successful meeting. He stated he was honored and proud to be a part of the group and also commended Steve Muro and Glenn Powers for their efforts. Chairman Kelly adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned

Michael Nacincik
Designated Federal Officer