

## Policy for Ordering Government Headstones for Civil War Veterans

April 20, 2010

All Brothers of the SUVCW shall be required to follow Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 38.632 (Headstone and Marker Application Process) unless already working through a government agency. The SUVCW Brothers should work with the Veterans Administration (VA) in order to reduce costs for the government to provide headstones to all veterans that have earned them. As stated within (CFR) 38.632, it is vital to try to locate a Next-of-Kin (NOK). This process will be outlined below:

- 1 Complete a genealogical study to try to determine if there are any living NOK. It is not required by the VA to place an advertisement in the local newspaper to try to locate a NOK.
- 2 Talk with cemetery officials to determine if they have information leading to the veteran's NOK.
- 3 If this cemetery is located on private property, talk with the landowner to see if they are, or if they
- 4 know, who are the veteran's NOK.
- 5 You will also note that in the last paragraph of the new policy, it states that a funeral home director may also apply. Please keep in mind that it would need to be the funeral home director who originally buried the veteran.

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The above steps are, at most, time costly, but are not a burden in terms of funds. If you cannot locate the veteran's NOK, you should then request that the cemetery official or the landowner apply for the headstone on the veteran's behalf. It would be up to you to provide any and all of the required documentation which is needed by the VA to process the order. Once this documentation is gathered, copied (3 copies) and reviewed, copies should be used as follows; one copy for your records, **one copy for the Department/National GRO (for review)** (note: review must be completed before you submit to the next entity), and the last copy is presented to the cemetery official or landowner with the started application and documentation. The application will need to be completed (signed), then mailed or faxed to the VA by the official applicant.

**As stated above, any application that is arranged by any Brother of the SUVCW will need to have a copy of the complete application package submitted to their Department GRO. In the case that they are (National) members-at-large or they do not have a Department GRO, they would send their package to the National Graves Registration Officer for his review. Verification of the components will be sent via e-mail and does not need to be included to the VA. If the package is incomplete upon review by the Dept/Nat'l GRO, he will inform you of what is needed to complete the package. This step is to maintain the credibility of the SUVCW with the VA and to ensure that all requests have everything they need to be approved the first time. The completed package will contain:**

1. A completed application (applied for by NOK, cemetery official, or landowner) VA Form 401330, available on the VA website or on the National SUVCW website.
2. Copies (not originals) of military service records or pension records that prove service of the veteran. **These cannot be from an internet source unless they are copies of actual military service records or pension records. It is not recommended to use bio sheets or index cards from National Parks Service (NPS) Soldiers and Sailors System or American Civil War Database, etc. Due to the inaccuracy of these records the VA will not accept them.**
3. Military service records can be Enlistment Papers, Company Muster-In and Descriptive Roll, Company Muster Rolls, Company Muster-Out Roll, Declaration of Recruit, Descriptive Lists, Final Statements, Medical Certificates, Prisoner of War Record, Resignations, or Discharge Papers – **these can be printed or copied. (Also accepted are pages from the Brown Books – if these are used, make sure that you include the whole page with page number, and a copy of the title page).**

4. Pension Records are documents such as; Invalid, Widow's, Minor's, or Other pension that has been approved by the United States Government. This should show a Certificate number which was issued for the pension application (this does not include index cards).
5. **A photo of the existing headstone if the application is for a replacement headstone. Please remember that the VA can refuse to replace a headstone if they feel it is still readable.**
6. **In the case of an unmarked grave you will need to provide proof that the veteran is buried at the location stated. A letter from the cemetery official or landowner or a copy from a Burial Ledger/Statement or Death Certificate/Record will suffice if it states the burial location.**

The information in block #19 of VA Form 40-1330 does not need to be the person who is applying for the headstone (if a cemetery is applying, it should be). This block is for the name and address of who will be receiving the delivery of the headstone. Please read the instructions for the form, as whoever is listed here will need to be available to sign for the delivery. The phone number in block #20 is for the person who is listed in block #19. You should also note that the genealogical study required to locate the NOK does not need to be included in the application package at this time, nor does it need to be part of the package that goes to the Department or National GROs (**however, the DGRO would welcome any genealogical information for the Department files**). Please keep this study for your records. In an effort to ensure that headstones do not need replacing as often, it is recommended that you order them as granite whenever possible, as marble fades and bronze is stolen.

Finally, please remember to register (into the SUVCW Database) the veteran who you are ordering a headstone for, if it has not already been done (**this will be done by the DGRO as soon as the record is posted in the Department database**).

#### Comments from the Department of Michigan Graves Registration Officer

This is the long anticipated National Graves Registration Policy. I believe that the need for such a policy was driven by someone (outside our state) who abused the system and our relationship with the VA - saying that, it is important that we comply. The key issues I have **bolded**, and my interpretive comments I have **bolded in red**.

For those of you who have been successfully ordering headstones from the VA in the past, this "new direction" will not affect you much, for those just starting, it might provide some guidance.

This policy will directly impact the Department Graves Registration Officer, as **all applications sent from the Brothers will need a review. If the application is sent by a cemetery administrator, or by a next-of-kin (NOK), no review is necessary.**

This should not set your time table back greatly, as I will commit to an immediate turnaround (immediate meaning within 2 days if I am not out of town) for your review. The best way to expedite your review would be to scan the applications and backup, and e-mail it to me at [suvmidgro@aol.com](mailto:suvmidgro@aol.com). My s-mail address is 2612 Burns Street, Dearborn, MI 48124-3204. You may follow up the mailing by phone at 313-363-3560. Send a current e-mail return address, this is how I will respond to your request.

This releases all previous restrictions on ordering headstones.