

## NOTABLE PERSONS INTERRED OR MEMORIALIZED IN VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES

**1. PURPOSE:** This notice establishes criteria for identifying notable individuals interred or memorialized in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries administered by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

### **2. BACKGROUND:**

a. The Communication and Outreach Support Division (COSD) of NCA maintains National Cemetery Web Pages that provide general information about individual VA national cemeteries, including listings of “notable persons.” These lists recognize certain individuals interred in VA national cemeteries as “notable” because of military or civilian distinction, lasting achievement, or historical standing that raises that individual to a position of national interest/significance and long-term impact. The NCA History Program documents the history of individuals interred or memorialized in VA national cemeteries as a means of explaining and recognizing the story of military and civilian service to the United States.

b. Although all veterans interred or memorialized in VA national cemeteries are special because of their service to the Nation, the individuals that fall under one or more of the following criteria are considered extraordinary due to their singular accomplishments or the circumstances of their life or death. Review and revision of the existing lists of notable persons and implementation of the criteria listed below will ensure consistency in the designation of individuals as notable at a state, national or international level.

**3. CRITERIA:** In order to be designated as notable on the National Cemetery Web Pages posted by COSD, the decedent must be acclaimed, unique, of significant historical interest, and/or characterized as a person of distinction in military service or as a civilian on an international, national, or state level. Examples of those individuals who would be designated as notable include (but are not limited to):

- Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor
- Individuals recognized at a national or international level for a particular military or civilian achievement, skill, knowledge, or talent (e.g., Olympic gold medalists, Code Talkers)
- Recipients of significant civilian national or international awards (e.g., Nobel Peace Prize, Pulitzer Prize)
- Individuals of national or international distinction (e.g., military leaders, United States (U.S.) Presidents and Vice Presidents, members of Congress, U.S. Supreme Court Justices, writers, poets, educators, explorers, scientists, inventors, doctors, or well-known media personalities)
- Individuals associated with national or international “firsts” or “lasts” (e.g., last Civil War veteran, first black Navy officer)
- Elected State officials: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Senators or Representatives (or equivalent)
- Individuals with significant achievements associated with military conflicts, national or international disasters, tragedies, or significant news events, of lasting impact (e.g., casualties of explosions or fires, leaders of rescue efforts)

- Noteworthy individuals who, *in their time*, made exceptional contributions to events affecting larger patterns of American history; or who were prominent, distinguished, famous or infamous at the international, national, or state level (e.g., spies, women, African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, Japanese-Americans)
- Individuals of special historical interest (e.g., foreign nationals who died as U.S. prisoners of war, or under other circumstances that led to interment or memorialization in a national cemetery)

#### 4. ACTION

##### UPDATING/ADDING TO LISTS

###### a. Reviewing/updating existing lists:

(1) NCA History Program staff will conduct an initial review of all existing lists of notable persons as posted on the NCA public website by the COSD, marking for deletion the names of individuals who do not meet the criteria stated in this notice.

(2) History Program staff will work with the Office of Field Programs and Memorial Service Network (MSN) offices to arrange individual cemetery participation in the review/update process. Each Cemetery Director will receive a copy of the proposed revised list for their cemetery. They should then prepare a response that indicates agreement/disagreement with the proposed changes.

(a) In some cases, History Program staff may ask for further justification or documentation when more information is needed to make a determination on whether a name should be on the list.

(b) Any time the cemetery recommends retaining a name that was proposed for removal, the response must include a justification and all available supporting documentation (from cemetery history files, newspaper or magazine articles, etc.) that would help History Program staff in making a determination. (*NOTE: Even if a name is removed from the list posted by COSD, a Cemetery Director may choose to prepare and make available an expanded list of individuals interred or memorialized in that cemetery who may be of special interest to the local community.*)

(3) Final response packages should be forwarded through the MSN office to the History Program (the MSN office should send a copy of the cover letter to the Director, Office of Field Programs).

###### b. Handling future recommendations for additions to COSD-posted lists:

(1) If the recommendation originates at the cemetery, the Cemetery Director should forward a recommendation package to the NCA History Program Office (with a copy of the cover letter sent to the appropriate MSN office and Director, Office of Field Programs).

(2) If the recommendation comes from a member of the general public, cemetery staff should explain how requesters can send their own recommendation package directly to the NCA History Program Office.

(3) NCA History Program Office staff may independently recommend modifications to existing "Notable Persons" lists based on research or information received from other sources.

c. "Notable" recommendation packages should include:

(1) A specific recommendation giving the full name and all relevant identifying information (military rank, branch of service, government affiliation, nationality, etc.) of the individual being recommended.

(2) Identification of the individual making the recommendation and contact information.

(3) A narrative justification of why the recommended individual is acclaimed, unique, or of significant historical interest, and/or characterized as a person of distinction in military service or as a civilian on an international, national, or state level.

(4) Documentation from at least three reliable sources - examples of potentially valid sources of documentation include:

- Primary or secondary documents from archival repositories
  - Newspaper or magazine articles or clippings
  - Website articles/entries
  - Book excerpts
  - Transcripts or recordings of television or other news media segments
- NOTE:** *Other forms of documentation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

(5) Complete citation information for each source document, including:

- The source publication's name
- Author's name, and full title of the book, magazine, article, website, etc.
- The date of publication/presentation/Internet access
- Relevant page numbers
- Website URL and file name, or television/radio station location and broadcast affiliation (if applicable)

### RECOMMENDATION REVIEW/RESULTS

d. NCA History Program staff will review all recommendation packages. They will evaluate all supporting documentation provided, verify information from research and other sources as possible, and consult with NCA staff and others as necessary before providing a final recommendation.

e. History Program staff will provide a final recommendation regarding each notable designation for action by the Director, Office of Field Programs.

f. The History Program Office will maintain an up-to-date NCA-wide list of notable persons. Individual cemetery listings will be updated and posted on the NCA public website by Communication and Outreach Support Division.

g. COSD-posted listings will identify decedents notable for military service first, and then those notable for non-military reasons. The listing will provide, at a minimum, the decedent(s) name, date of death, reason for distinction, and specific grave location information.

**5. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** NCA, Office of Field Programs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this notice.

**6. RESCISSION:** None.

**7. EXPIRATION:** The information contained in this notice will remain in effect until it is incorporated into an official directive or handbook.

/s/

Steve L. Muro

Director, Office of Field Programs

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