



**Department of  
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# **News Release**

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## **VA To Expand Florida National Cemetery**

WASHINGTON – To ensure veterans in central Florida continue to have access to a final resting place honoring their military service, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded a \$20.2 million contract to expand the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell.

“Expanding this cemetery ensures Florida veterans will continue to receive the benefits they earned,” said Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield. “We are keeping our commitment to maintain this national shrine for many years to come as a lasting tribute to the men and women who served our nation.”

QGS Development Inc., of Lithia, Fla., was awarded \$20.2 million to build additional burial sections and infrastructure at the VA cemetery.

The project encompasses nearly 70 acres, which will provide approximately 41,000 additional gravesites. These will include 20,000 pre-placed crypts for caskets, 4,000 other casket gravesites, 9,000 in-ground cremation sites and 8,000 columbaria niches for cremation remains.

The project will also include two new committal service shelters, a public restroom, a storage facility and other improvements. Construction is expected to be finished by late 2009. After expansion, burials for veterans and eligible family members are expected to continue at Florida National Cemetery until about 2020.

Florida’s other national cemeteries are Barrancas in Pensacola, South Florida VA in Lake Worth, St. Augustine and Bay Pines. The Barrancas National Cemetery and South Florida VA National Cemetery have space available for casketed and cremated remains.

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## **Florida National Cemetery Expansion 2/2/2**

Bay Pines has space available for cremated remains and can accommodate casketed remains in the gravesites of previously interred family members. St. Augustine is closed to new interments, but can bury family members in existing gravesites.

In addition to these national cemeteries, VA is planning two more national cemeteries, in the Jacksonville and Sarasota areas.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 125 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict — from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror — are buried in VA's national cemeteries.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for veterans, regardless of whether buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker.

Information on VA's burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

For information on the Florida National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (352) 793-7740.

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