

## **Government Grave Marker Requests Made Easier**

**WASHINGTON (June 5, 2003)** -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has revised its application form to make requesting a VA grave marker easier. The new form, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker (VA Form 40-1330), includes updated information about changes that expand eligibility for a government marker. The new form and instruction sheets also permit better communication between VA and veterans' families.

For deaths on or after September 11, 2001, Public Laws 107-103 and 107-330 made government markers available for use on veterans' graves that were already marked with privately furnished headstones or markers. Previous law prevented VA from furnishing markers when a grave was already marked.

The laws require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to report to Congress by Feb. 1, 2006, on the effectiveness of this benefit and to recommend whether it should continue. One of the changes made to the application form will allow VA to report on this new benefit by tracking its use.

In January 2002, VA introduced a toll-free fax service for submitting applications. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as an alternative to regular mail. Instructions, as well as the fax number, 1-800-455-7143, are on the VA website at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) <http://www.cem.va.gov/>. The application form on the website can be filled in and printed for submitting by mail or fax. Questions about a headstone or marker application can be directed to VA's Memorial Programs Service applicant assistance unit at 1-800-697-6947.

"We have received many compliments about the free fax submission line," said David Schettler, director of VA's Memorial Programs Service. "Funeral homes and veteran's service officers are finding they can reduce the time to process a request by up to seven days and avoid postage costs."

VA handles more than 1,000 requests daily for veterans' markers. Last year, more than 348,000 headstones and markers were furnished for veterans' graves worldwide, generally within 60 days of VA receiving the application.

To view and download VA news releases, please visit the following Internet address: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel>