

**Question for the Record**  
**Representative Tim Walz**  
**House Veterans' Affairs Committee**  
**Honoring Heroes: Memorializing Our Nations' Veterans**  
**June 7, 2018**

**Question 1:** According to the VA's current policy, a national cemetery may be established if there are 80,000 or more unserved veterans within 75 miles of a proposed cemetery site. California's Central Coast tri-counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo run approximately 180 miles up the coast, and the closest national cemeteries are in Bakersfield and Riverside, approximately 150 miles away. In 2017, the VA estimated there were more than 80,000 veterans in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties. Given the distance and population needs, is establishing a Nationals Veterans Cemetery in Ventura County possible?

**VA Response:** VA and the National Cemetery Administration are committed to honoring the military service and contributions of our Nation's Veterans. The Department's policy is to establish new national cemeteries in areas where at least 80,000 Veterans residing within a 75-mile radius of a proposed location do not have reasonable access to a burial option in either a VA national or a VA funded state Veterans cemetery.

Based on the latest veteran population data, in 2018, VA estimates there are approximately 80,000 veterans currently residing in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties. However, approximately 40,000 of these Veterans already have access to an existing national or state Veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence. Veterans residing in the County of Ventura and parts of the Counties of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo are in the service area of Bakersfield National Cemetery, which is projected to remain open beyond 2060. Additionally, an expansion project underway at the Los Angeles National Cemetery will re-open that cemetery in late 2019 to columbarium interments, enhancing access for Veterans in that area, including Ventura County, through 2060. Given that there are approximately 40,000 Veterans remaining in the three counties under consideration that do not have access to a Veterans cemetery within 75 miles of their residence, this area does not meet VA's policy threshold for establishing a new national cemetery. VA would be happy to work with the State of California to establish a state veterans cemetery in the area through VA's Veterans Cemetery Grants Program to provide additional burial options for California Veterans.