

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That new Section 19 be and it is hereby added to Article 96-1/2 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1964 Replacement Volume and 1972 Supplement), title "Veterans," to follow immediately after Section 18 thereof, and to be under the new subtitle "Veterans' Cemeteries," to read as follows:

19.

(A) THE MARYLAND VETERANS COMMISSION MAY ACQUIRE SITES IN THIS STATE TO BE USED TO ESTABLISH CEMETERIES FOR THE INTERMENT OF MARYLAND VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES AND FOR NEXT OF KIN OF ELIGIBLE VETERANS. THE APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY OF THE COUNTY IN WHICH A PROPOSED SITE IS LOCATED, THE APPROVAL OF THAT COUNTY'S DELEGATION IN THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND THE APPROVAL OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS MUST ALL BE OBTAINED PRIOR TO ANY ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR THIS PURPOSE. THE MARYLAND VETERANS COMMISSION IS HEREBY EMPOWERED TO RECEIVE ANY LANDS GRANTED TO THE STATE OR ANY OF ITS POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS. PRIORITIES SHALL BE GIVEN TO THOSE LANDS WHICH ARE ADJACENT TO OR HAVE A PROXIMITY TO NATIONAL MEMORIAL BATTLE SITES.

(B) THE VETERANS COMMISSION SHALL SUPERVISE, MAINTAIN, AND CONTROL VETERANS' CEMETERIES ESTABLISHED UNDER THIS SECTION, AND IT MAY EMPLOY NECESSARY PERSONNEL FOR THIS PURPOSE, WITH THE SALARIES OF REQUIRED PERSONNEL TO BE PROVIDED IN THE ANNUAL STATE BUDGET. ALL EMPLOYEES SHALL BE UNDER THE STATE MERIT SYSTEM AS PROVIDED IN ARTICLE 64A OF THE ANNOTATED CODE OF MARYLAND.

II(C) ANY VETERAN WHO MEETS THE QUALIFICATIONS AS ESTABLISHED IN SECTION 1 OF THIS ARTICLE IS ELIGIBLE FOR BURIAL IN A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY. II

(C) ANY VETERAN WHO RECEIVED AN HONORABLE DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES AND WAS A LEGAL RESIDENT OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR BURIAL IN A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY.

(D) ANY QUALIFIED VETERAN , OR NEXT-OF-KIN, MAY [[RESERVE]] APPLY FOR A BURIAL PLOT IN A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY [[BY APPLYING]] BY SUBMITTING A REQUEST TO THE MARYLAND VETERANS COMMISSION ON FORMS TO BE SUPPLIED BY THE COMMISSION. THE VETERANS COMMISSION SHALL ALLOT AVAILABLE BURIAL PLOTS, AT A SITE CLOSEST TO THE VETERAN'S HOME, ON A FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS. THERE SHALL BE NO CHARGE MADE FOR ANY BURIAL PLOT AND THE INTERMENT PROVIDED TO ANY ELIGIBLE VETERAN.

(E) ANY MEMBER OF THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY OF A VETERAN WHO QUALIFIES FOR BURIAL AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION MAY ALSO QUALIFY FOR BURIAL IN A STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY, IF THE INTERMENT OF THE FAMILY MEMBER IS IN THE SAME BURIAL PLOT AS THAT PROVIDED FOR THE VETERAN, AND THE INTERMENT IS EITHER ABOVE OR BELOW