



National Service & Legislative Headquarters
807 Maine Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024-2410
Phone (202) 554-3501
Fax (202) 554-3581
www.dav.org

**STATEMENT OF
JEREMY M. VILLANUEVA
DAV ASSOCIATE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SEPTEMBER 5, 2018**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting DAV (Disabled American Veterans) to testify at this legislative hearing of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. As you know, DAV is a non-profit veterans service organization comprised of more than one million wartime service-disabled veterans that is dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. DAV is pleased to offer our views on the bills under consideration by the Subcommittee.

H.R. 4312, the Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act

H.R. 4312, the Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act, would prevent the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) from barring the display of the Battlefield Cross. The Battlefield Cross is a memorial used in wartime to honor a fallen service member consisting of a military helmet, pair of boots, and an inverted rifle with the dog tags of the fallen hanging from it. Currently, NCA guidelines bar memorials that depict "actual or realistic replicas of ordnance". In October 2017, a similar monument was removed from a National Cemetery in Ohio but was replaced after the VA determined that its policy was misinterpreted.

DAV does not have a resolution that addresses this issue and takes no position on this bill.

H.R. 6420, to permit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a grant program to conduct cemetery research and produce educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program.

H.R. 6420 would permit the Secretary to establish a grant program with institutions of higher learning to conduct cemetery research and produce educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program (VLP). The VLP is NCA's educational outreach initiative whose mission is to memorialize our nation's veterans through sharing their personal stories and military history. The NCA partners with universities,

schools, teachers, professors, and students at all levels to research veterans interred in NCA cemeteries and learn how they contributed to their country and their communities.

This bill would streamline the funding process for the VLP by forgoing the contract process and creating a grant program. Currently, the NCA sponsors research for the VLP through federal contract, which has a different purpose than a grant. The government uses grants and cooperative agreements as a means of assisting researchers in developing research for the public good, whereas it uses contracts as a means of procuring a service for the benefit of the government. Grants are also much more flexible than contracts. Typically in federal contracts, changes cannot be made to the scope of work or budget, whereas in grants these changes can usually be made with the university's approval. Failure to deliver under a federal contract can have potential legal or financial consequences to all parties at the University, whereas in the case of a grant, typically a final report explaining the outcome is sufficient.

While DAV does not have a resolution specific to this program, we support the intent of the program to remember those who have served and sacrificed and are laid to rest in our National Cemeteries and therefore have no objection to its passage.

H.R. 6409, the Honoring Veterans' Families Act

H.R. 6409, the Honoring Veterans Families Act, would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to make an inscription on a veteran's grave regarding their spouse or dependent child if that veteran is buried in a non-VA cemetery. It would also allow the VA to replace a veteran's grave marker to add such an inscription if the veteran predeceased their spouse or dependent child and already has a marker. Current law does not provide for any inscription honoring spouses or dependents.

DAV does not have a resolution that pertains to this issue but we would not oppose its passage.

This concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. DAV would be pleased to respond for the record to any questions from you or Subcommittee Members concerning our views on these bills.