

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a new national cemetery in the State of Hawai‘i, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. HIRONO introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a new national cemetery in the State of Hawai‘i, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Hawai‘i National Cemetery Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) Veterans, members of the Armed Forces, 9 spouses, and dependents may be eligible for burial in 10 a national cemetery pursuant to regulations pre-

1 scribed under section 2402 of title 38, United States
2 Code.

3 (2) As part of the National Cemetery Adminis-
4 tration's strategic goals, the Secretary of Veterans
5 Affairs seeks to ensure that 95 percent of veterans
6 live within 75 miles of a national, State, or Tribal
7 veterans cemetery.

8 (3) The National Cemetery Administration's
9 Long Range Plan, as detailed in the budget submis-
10 sion of the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal
11 year 2026, sets goals that seek to improve burial
12 benefits, including the following:

13 (A) Veterans and eligible family members
14 will have increased access to burial benefits.

15 (B) More veterans and eligible family
16 members will use such burial and memorial
17 benefits.

18 (C) Veterans will be memorialized through
19 enhanced tributes befitting their service and
20 sacrifice to the Nation.

21 (D) Stakeholders will place greater trust in
22 the National Cemetery Administration based on
23 enhanced accountability.

1 (E) Stakeholders will be served more efficiently and effectively by internal capacity of
2 the National Cemetery Administration.
3

4 (4) The goals described in paragraph (3) do not
5 account for veterans in Hawai‘i who prefer to be
6 buried in a national cemetery even if other options
7 exist. Hawai‘i’s only national cemetery, the National
8 Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, has been essen-
9 tially closed to casketed burials since 1991 and will
10 stop accepting cremated remains by 2036. Should a
11 veteran in Hawai‘i prefer an inground burial in a
12 national cemetery, they are forced to select a ceme-
13 tery at least 2,500 miles away. This distance can
14 create significant financial and logistical burdens
15 compared to veterans in the continental United
16 States, as air travel that is often cost-prohibitive is
17 required for casket transportation and visitation.

1 six phases and such a cemetery can take more than
2 eight years to construct.

3 (6) While Hawai‘i is home to many great State
4 veterans’ cemeteries, establishment of a new national
5 cemetery would align with the National Cemetery
6 Administration’s access goals and increase options
7 for veterans and other beneficiaries in the Pacific.

8 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NATIONAL CEMETERY IN**
9 **THE STATE OF HAWAI‘I.**

10 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—In accordance with chapter
11 24 of title 38, United States Code, and the National Envi-
12 ronmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.),
13 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a new na-
14 tional cemetery in the State of Hawai‘i.

15 (b) **SITE SELECTION.**—In selecting a location for the
16 national cemetery described in subsection (a), the Sec-
17 retary shall—

- 18 (1) give priority to a location that—
19 (A) is near population centers;
20 (B) is accessible by existing modes of
21 transportation; and
22 (C) minimizes environmental impact; and
23 (2) consult with—
24 (A) the Governor of Hawai‘i;

1 (B) local representatives of veterans serv-
2 ice organizations; and

3 (C) other entities the Secretary determines
4 appropriate.

5 (c) REPORTS.—

12 (2) PROGRESS REPORTS.—Not later than two
13 years after the date of the enactment of this Act,
14 and annually thereafter until the national cemetery
15 described in subsection (a) is operational, the Sec-
16 retary shall submit to the appropriate congressional
17 committees a report regarding the establishment of
18 such national cemetery, including progress regarding
19 the following elements:

20 (A) Site selection.

21 (B) Environmental impact assessment.

22 (C) Land acquisition.

23 (D) Master planning and design develop-
24 ment.

1 (E) Preparation of construction docu-
2 ments.

3 (F) Award of construction contracts.

4 (G) Completion of construction.

5 (H) Beginning of operations.

6 (d) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

7 DEFINED.—In this section, the term “appropriate con-
8 gressional committees” means—