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June 19, 2014

The Honorable Steve Muro
 Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 VA Central Office (40)
 810 Vermont Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20420

Dear Under Secretary Muro,

I write to seek information on the implementation of the Dignified Burial Act of 2012, as I believe that a comprehensive review of this process may be useful, and procedural adjustments may be merited.

On May 29, 2014, news media reported that 52 unclaimed veterans' remains had accumulated at the Los Angeles County Mortuary over the previous 15 months. This indicated that there was a problem in the process of interring them at Riverside National Cemetery. Although the National Cemetery Administration is now working with County officials to claim those remains, the incident warrants review of NCA's procedures.

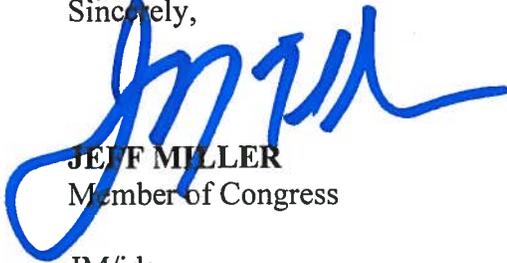
According to NCA staff, when a custodial agent contacts NCA regarding the remains of an unclaimed veteran, NCA determines burial eligibility and then notifies the agent. NCA staff then takes no further action until the agent contacts again to request burial or interment. As NCA cannot force custodial agents to make final arrangements for unclaimed remains, I suggest that NCA staff implement a policy to periodically follow up as to the status of these reported unclaimed remains, to ensure they are not forgotten.

The Los Angeles County situation highlights a larger issue: the great number of unclaimed veterans' remains across the United States that are not buried or interred with the dignity that veterans deserve. Accordingly, I respectfully request NCA commission a study to accomplish the following: (1) conduct an audit to determine how many unclaimed veteran remains are stored across our country; (2) review the effectiveness of NCA's procedures for identifying, claiming, and interring unclaimed remains; (3) identify and assess the state laws affecting NCA's ability to carry out its responsibilities; (4) develop procedural or policy changes to improve the process; and (5) develop recommendations for legislative actions if any improvements cannot be enacted administratively.

I would appreciate if you would provide your views on the issues that I have raised in a timely manner. In particular, I ask for your views on the feasibility of conducting a study as described, as well as information on the time that would be required to complete such study.

Finally, I ask you to continue to work with the Missing in America Project and other organizations working to bring dignified final arrangements to our forgotten deceased veterans. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your work on behalf of our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



JEFF MILLER
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress