

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 27, 2018

Mr. Randy C. Reeves
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
National Cemetery Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Under Secretary Reeves:

We write in support of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs' (SDDVA) application for the establishment of a new veterans cemetery in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, through the Veterans Cemetery Grant Program. We respectfully ask that the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) give strong consideration to the SDDVA's application when determining NCA's priority list for fiscal year 2019. As the Congressional delegation for the state, we echo the hopes of regional veterans and their loved ones to one day establish a solemn testament to the service and sacrifice of South Dakota's veterans.

South Dakota has a proud history of military service by the men and women of our state. Over 8.3 percent of the state has answered the call to serve, and we have over 72,000 veterans living in and contributing to our communities. Of these, approximately 50,000 reside in the eastern part of the state, with over 42,000 living within a 75-mile radius of Sioux Falls. While many of these veterans are eligible for burial benefits in distant national cemeteries, this benefit is seldom put to use. The nearest national cemeteries for those in the eastern part of the state are located in Sturgis, South Dakota, which is over 360 miles to the west of Sioux Falls, and Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, which is over 220 miles beyond the state line. An NCA grant to establish an "East River" veterans cemetery would provide a peaceful resting place to honor and remember these veterans.

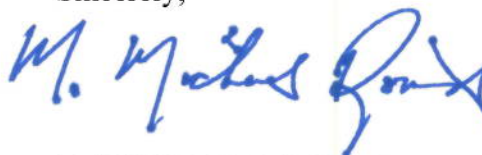
The city of Sioux Falls has pledged up to 50 acres of land to be gifted to the state of South Dakota for the construction of a state veterans cemetery, and legislation authorizing its establishment and funding have been approved by the South Dakota State Legislature. A veterans cemetery would help ensure our veterans receive the recognition they deserve for their selfless service and permit them to be laid to rest with honor next to their fellow service members.

Thank you for your consideration of the SDDVA's grant application. We appreciate NCA's effort to ensure that all of America's veterans are dignified and honored.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator



KRISTI NOEM
Member of Congress