

Newman-Keyes, Mary Testimony 7/20/23 \*AM

Good morning Chair Manning, and committee members,  
I am Mary Newman-Keyes, Director of the Douglas County Veterans Service Office.

Thank you for allowing me to speak about this truly important Bill which will allow ALL of our unclaimed veterans who are languishing in mortuary storage facilities, to be interred in their place of Honor in our National Cemeteries. This will also allow them to be located by friends and family.

I have a small update for the Committee  
In addition to Douglas County taking care of 28 unclaimed Veterans at NO COST, Two other Counties have tested the procedures with great success.

I would like to respond to Ms Kimmel's statements that the task of finding and honoring unclaimed Veterans' cremains and facilitating their burial at National Cemeteries would:

1. Cost counties a lot of money  
The Oregon Legislature (through ODVA) provides significant funding to every County and Tribal Veterans Service Office (T&CVSO). It is not unreasonable to set aside a small amount of this funding to be used for any minor expenses incurred by the C&TVSO Offices.
2. Take an extraordinary amount of CVSO time—overworking CVSOs.
  - a. These deceased Veterans deserve equity with our living Veterans. Having less fortunate than others, at the end of their lives they had no family or friends to pay for their funeral expenses. What they DID have was eligibility for interment in a VA National Cemetery. Mortuaries should have taken care of that, especially since in many cases, VA paid for the transportation cost to a National Cemetery and for many others, the cost of the cremains.
  - b. The process can take as little or as much time as an Office allows. Douglas County took more time than would normally be used by other offices because more than 28 Veterans were found in just one mortuary. Having found that many it was decided to make the ceremonies over three days. One county took about 8 hours and another took about 20 hours.
3. Not be in compliance with FOIA/PA and HIPAA

- a. FOIA/PA is only involved to the extent of Discharge Document from VA Regional Office Unclaimed Veterans Staff or National Personnel Records Centers Staff who specialize in burial paperwork. Those offices are happy to provide these records to Accredited C&TVSOs.
  - b. HIPAA. C&TVSOs work to HIPAA requirements and comply with HIPAA EVERYDAY so C&TVSOs comply with HIPAA in everything to do with medical issues.
4. There is a database system already in place in every C&TVSO office in the State per requirements of Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. It is a secure database that is used for all our LIVING Veterans claims as well.