

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 19**

As Amended by House Committee of the Whole

**Brief\***

The bill would authorize the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs to establish and maintain a state system of veterans cemeteries. The Commission would be authorized to request and accept grants, bequests, or other donations of money, or personal or real property for the system. No more than three grant applications could be submitted to the federal Veterans Administration after the effective date of the act.

The Commission also would be authorized to acquire title to real property for the cemeteries. Finally, the Commission would be authorized to enter into contracts for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the system of cemeteries. The Commission would be prohibited from entering into contracts for such system unless the construction costs are covered completely by federal funds.

Under federal eligibility guidelines, state veterans cemeteries are open to veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents.

The bill would become effective upon publication in the *Kansas Register*.

**Background**

The bill was introduced by the Joint Committee on State Building Construction after it studied the topic during the 1998 interim. The study had been requested by a number of individual legislators who had raised concerns about the lack of burial space

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\*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at [http://www.ink.org/public/legislative/bill\\_search.html](http://www.ink.org/public/legislative/bill_search.html)

in existing cemeteries designated for veterans. A number of veterans' organizations had also encouraged the state to address the issue by establishing a state veterans cemetery program. The Committee's complete report is available in *Committee Reports to the 1999 Kansas Legislature: Part II - Joint Committees*, pg 8-1. The report also can be accessed on the Internet at:

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/ksleg/KLRD/genres.html>

The Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs presented information about the proposed veterans cemetery system. Testimony in support of the bill was provided by representatives of the: Military Order of World Wars; Military Affairs Committee of the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Manhattan Chamber of Commerce; State Veterans Cemetery Alliance; Kansas American Legion; and the Association of the U.S. Army. Several individuals presented written testimony in support of the bill. No opponents of the bill presented testimony at the Committee hearing.

The Senate Committee amendment was to clarify the authority of the Commission to enter into contracts in connection with a state veterans cemetery system. The Senate Committee of the Whole amended the bill to limit the number of federal cemetery grants for which the Commission may apply. The Commission has applied for one such grant. Under the bill, three more applications could be made, for a total of four.

The House Committee amended the bill to limit the total number of cemeteries to three and to require that 100 percent of construction costs be covered by federal funds. The House Committee of the Whole amended the bill to authorize a total of four cemeteries in the system.

The fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget states that the Veterans Commission would develop four cemetery sites over the course of four fiscal years. One each cemetery site would be developed at the Soldiers' Home at Fort Dodge, at Fort Riley, at the Veterans' Home in Winfield, and at a site in the northwest part of the state. The Commission estimates that \$12,000 from the State Institutions Building Fund would be needed in FY 1999 for architectural fees at the Fort Riley site.

The agency estimates that operation of the program in FY 200 would cost \$77,057, of which \$71,073 would be from the State General Fund and \$5,984 would be federal reimbursements for burials. Expenditures would include \$62,057 for 2 FTE new positions, \$3,000 for other operating expenditures, and \$12,000 for architectural fees at the Veterans' Home. The fiscal note also states that when all four cemeteries are operational, in FY 2003 expenditures would total \$606,111, of which \$524,867 would be from the State General Fund and \$81,244 would be federal burial reimbursement. In that estimate, over half of the personnel expenditures of \$308,291 would be at the cemetery at Fort Riley. The Commission's estimate is based on the assumption that the cemetery maintenance at the Soldiers' Home and Veterans' Home would be covered by existing staff resources or with inmate labor at the Veterans' Home.

During the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs hearing on the bill, the representative of the State Veterans Cemetery Alliance informed the Committee of a number of factors that could significantly reduce the annual operating cost to the state of a cemetery at Fort Riley. A revised fiscal note, based on that information, has been requested.