



Informs ■ Educates ■ Advocates

For Immediate Release: November 19, 2024

Contact: Jessica Koth, 262-814-1536, jkoth@nfda.org

NFDA Celebrates Congressional Action to Honor Veterans' Service and Sacrifice

Brookfield, Wis. – Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed [“The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act” \(H.R. 8371\)](#), a comprehensive omnibus package of veterans legislation. Among its many provisions, the legislation includes a vital update to veterans’ burial benefits – and allowance for veterans who die from a non-service-connected disability at home while receiving hospice care furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), a longstanding advocate for improving veterans’ funeral and burial benefits, strongly supported this legislation.

The provision to extend burial benefits to veterans who die under home hospice care is included in Section 301 of H.R. 8371 and is based on [H.R. 234, also known as “Gerald’s Law.”](#) Named for Gerald “Jerry” Elliott, a veteran, this law addresses a gap in current policy that denies terminally ill veterans their VA burial allowance if they die outside of a VA facility while under VA-provided hospice care.

NFDA has a long and proud history of advocating for policies that honor the sacrifices of America’s veterans. As the world’s leading and largest funeral service association, NFDA’s commitment to supporting veterans and their families is rooted in a deep respect for their service and the belief that every veteran deserves dignified recognition in death.

Over the years, NFDA has played a key role in supporting legislation that ensures equitable funeral and burial benefits for all veterans, regardless of the circumstances of their passing. This includes the “Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020,” which established equal burial benefits for all non-service-connected deaths.

NFDA’s advocacy efforts are built on strong partnerships with lawmakers, the VA and other veteran service organizations. Through testimony before congressional committees, direct engagement with policymakers, and mobilization of funeral directors nationwide, NFDA ensures that the voices of funeral directors, veterans and their families are heard.

On November 13, NFDA Lobbyist Lesley Witter, MPA, CAE, testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs in support of “Gerald’s Law.”

“As an association dedicated to honoring and supporting our nation’s veterans, NFDA is thrilled to see the House pass this critical legislation. Extending burial benefits to veterans receiving home hospice care is a long-overdue acknowledgment of their service and sacrifice,” said NFDA President Chris Robinson, CFSP, CCO. “We are proud to have played a role in advocating for this important change. We also thank the Senate for passing this critical legislation and urge the President to sign it into law.”

“Testifying before Congress on behalf of ‘Gerald’s Law’ was a privilege and an extension of the work NFDA does every day to advocate for our members and the grieving families they serve,” said Witter. “This legislation represents a meaningful step forward in ensuring that all veterans, regardless of where they pass away, receive the honors and benefits they deserve.”

About NFDA

NFDA is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, serving 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit NFDA.org.

###