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NWA VETS UNITE TO SAVE PROPERTY FOR CEMETERY EXPANSION

VETERAN LEADERS FROM NORTHWEST ARKANSAS TO WORK WITH CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND FAYETTEVILLE CITY COUNCIL

For release on June 24, 2009

Fayetteville – In a joint gathering today, leaders of several Northwest Arkansas veterans' groups announced two major moves to ensure the availability of burial grounds for residents of Northwest Arkansas who served in the military.

Jim Buckner, Senior Vice Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Arkansas, announced today that U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln, U.S. Senator David Pryor and U.S. Congressman John Boozman will be asked to work together to earmark money to guarantee that the Fayetteville National Cemetery will be able to acquire and develop adjacent property needed to serve the burial needs of NWA's 40,000 living veterans. The specific land now for sale is the Washington County Livestock Auction, neighboring the Fayetteville National cemetery.

Because of the immediate availability of this land, a petition for rezoning the property from "Light Industrial" to "Downtown General" has been proposed to the Fayetteville City Council. A "first reading" of the rezoning request occurred before the council on June 16. Because of the vocal opposition of about 12 veterans, the issue was held on the first reading. The ordinance to rezone the sale-barn property will come up for its second reading at the Fayetteville City Council at 6 p.m. July 7 and the third reading at 6 p.m. July 21 in Room 219 of Fayetteville City Hall.

Buckner also announced that he has contacted leaders of veterans' organizations throughout Northwest Arkansas to invite them and their members to the future meetings of the Fayetteville City Council to speak against the proposed rezoning of the Washington County Auction property. Buckner further said, that, if the rezoning to "Downtown General" is passed, a student-housing developer, Campus Crest of North Carolina, will purchase the property for student-housing development. In fact, the developer's contract for sale of the auction-barn property is contingent on its being rezoned to "Downtown General." This rezoning would permit Campus Crest to build multi-story student housing adjacent to the Fayetteville National Cemetery. To the veterans and numerous others in Northwest Arkansas, the rezoning and subsequent building of student apartments next door to the Fayetteville National Cemetery is absolutely unacceptable, Buckner said.

"I fully expect hundreds of vets from all over Northwest Arkansas will come to the Council meeting to let the aldermen know how important it is to preserve this land for future burials of our fallen veterans. Without this land, the cemetery will be filled in only 13 years and Northwest Arkansas vets will suffer immensely," Buckner said.

Background: The Fayetteville National Cemetery is at 700 Government Avenue, just off Martin Luther King Boulevard but the facility is running out of space. Capacity will be reached by 2023. To preserve the neighborhood and maintain the solemnity of the cemetery, the best space for our fallen is to the east where the Washington County Livestock Auction now stands. The sale barn and the more than 10 acres where it stands are for sale. A residential housing company, Campus Crest Development LLC of North Carolina has made an offer to purchase the sale barn property in order to develop student housing space for University of Arkansas students. This offer has been accepted by Mr. Billy Bartholomew, owner of the sale-barn property, subject to rezoning of 8.87 acres of the parcel from "Light Industrial" to "Downtown General."

Donations for property acquisition for the National Cemetery may be mailed to
Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation
Attn: Harold Crivello, Treasurer
P.O. Box 4221
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72702