



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

For more information, contact: Audry Ricketts (South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs) at 605-773-8242 or audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

SDDVA January Column – New Year's Resolution: Planning for the Future

As we welcome a new year, it's a time for reflection and setting new goals, often centered around self-improvement, health, and family. However, one aspect of life that often gets overlooked is planning for the future—particularly in terms of end-of-life arrangements. For veterans and their families, this planning is critical, not just for peace of mind but for accessing the benefits that veterans have earned through their service to our country.

One essential area of planning that veterans and their families should focus on is pre-need burial benefits. These benefits are available through the United States and South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs and can help alleviate the financial burden of funeral and burial costs. Pre-need planning ensures that these benefits are secured in advance, making it easier for loved ones to navigate a difficult time.

Pre-need planning is the process of arranging your burial, funeral, and related services ahead of time. For veterans, the benefits available through the VA include burial in a national, state, or tribal cemetery, financial assistance for funeral expenses, and even a headstone or marker, among other services.

It's also crucial to ensure that all relevant documents are collected and stored in a safe and accessible place. These include discharge papers (DD-214), VA identification, and proof of military service. Keeping copies of these documents in an organized manner will expedite the process when burial benefits are needed.

Veterans should discuss and record their preferred burial locations, funeral service providers, and any specific wishes for their ceremony.

Having open, ongoing discussions about these important topics will help ensure that everything is in order when the time comes. While it can be a difficult subject to discuss, having these conversations can ultimately provide peace of mind, knowing that the future is planned for in a way that aligns with both the veteran's wishes and their family's needs.

This New Year, one meaningful resolution is to act on pre-need planning for burial benefits. Veterans and their loved ones can rest assured knowing that when the time comes, they have a clear plan, and the appropriate resources and benefits are in place.

We encourage all veterans and their families to connect with their local county or tribal veterans service offices for assistance or reach out to the staff at the South Dakota

Department of Veterans Affairs at 605-333-6869. Our team is here to help you learn more about the benefits available to you.