



# COUNTY OF ORANGE

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## **Orange County Board of Supervisors Applauds Governor Newsom for Signing Legislation for Orange County's Veterans Cemetery**

**Santa Ana, Calif.** (September 27, 2022) – The Orange County Board of Supervisors expressed their gratitude today after the announcement that Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 1595 into law.

"This is an historic day in Orange County for our Orange County veterans, their families and their loved ones," said Chairman Doug Chaffee, Fourth District. "Due to the Governor's and Assemblymember Quirk-Silva's dedication to our County's veterans, we are so much closer to making this cemetery a reality."

Authored by Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva, the bill sponsored by the County of Orange allows the California Department of Veterans Affairs (Cal Vet) to study, acquire, design, develop, construct and equip a state-owned and state-operated Southern California Veterans Cemetery in Orange County. As this legislation contains an urgency clause, AB 1595 became law immediately upon the Governor's signature.

"Our Veterans, allied Veterans, and first responders have always had our backs, and it's time we have theirs," said Supervisor Donald P. Wagner of the Third District. "It was an honor to lead the bipartisan coalition with our Veterans and community. A local Veterans cemetery reflects not only our military history, but a vision for the future: service, respect, and love of country."

Under AB 1595, any local governmental entity or private organization in the County of Orange may request Cal Vet to conduct an acquisition study on a designated property to assess the feasibility and costs for a state-owned and operated veterans cemetery. The requestor is required to pay for the study costs in advance through a newly created Southern California Veterans Cemetery Study Fund.

"Today is a monumental day for Orange County veterans," said Supervisor Andrew Do, First District. "We have come a long way since 2018 when the Board unanimously voted to approve a proposal that I brought forward with then-Supervisor Todd Spitzer to transfer approximately 283 acres of County-owned space to the OC Cemetery District for a State Veteran's Cemetery. It is both a privilege and an honor to be in a position where I can help to properly give back to those who have served us all so valiantly with a final resting place."

On September 13, 2022 the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to formally request in writing – upon signature of AB 1595 into law – that Cal Vet conduct an acquisition study in order to assess feasibility and costs of construction of a Southern California Veterans Cemetery at Gypsum Canyon location in Anaheim Hills. The Board's action also authorized the immediate payment of an



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amount not to exceed \$700,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act to Cal Vet which will be deposited into the Southern California Veterans Cemetery Study Donation Fund.

“Our Orange County veterans, Allied veterans and first responders are so deserving of this cemetery. We’re grateful to see Governor Newsom, our state delegation, and every city in Orange County finally united for these brave men and women to provide them their final resting place in Orange County,” said Supervisor Katrina Foley, Second District.

“The County is thrilled to see our local and state partners aligned in supporting the Veterans Cemetery which will also serve as a final resting place for Allied veterans and first responders.” said Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, Fifth District. “While there is still more hard work to do, it is our sincere hope that we will break ground in the near future and make this monumental project a reality.”

## Background on County Actions Related to the Orange County Veterans Cemetery

- On June 29, 2022, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved the Orange County Cemetery District Business Plan for Phases 1A and 1B of a public cemetery at Gypsum Canyon. In addition, the Board approved Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with Orange County Cemetery District for a section of the cemetery dedicated for Allied Veterans and First Responders.
- The Veteran's Cemetery will also include a new flagpole entry area which will be funded by the County and the Orange County Cemetery District. That flagpole was installed on August 25, 2022.
- On July 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors budgeted \$20 million exclusively for site development of the Veterans portion of Mountain Park Cemetery, Anaheim, CA. The funding for the Veteran's Cemetery is from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The funding for the Veteran's Cemetery Expenditure and ARPA Revenue for the flagpole project contract is included in CEO Real Estate Budget Control 035, FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget and will be included in the budgeting process for future years.
- On December 4, 2018, the Board of Supervisors approved transferring approximately 283 acres of unencumbered property in Gypsum Canyon, in the City of Anaheim, to the Orange County Cemetery District (OCCD) to be utilized as a public cemetery with half of the useable acreage required to be set aside for a State Veterans' Cemetery. As part of that approval, OCCD was also asked to provide burial space for an Allied Veterans Cemetery within the public cemetery portion, and subsequently, the Board requested OCCD to provide additional burial space for First Responder police and firefighters. The OCCD has agreed to both requests and the attached Memorandum of Understanding memorialize these concepts. The Quitclaim Deed from the County to the OCCD also required that the Board approve OCCD's operational and business plan (Business Plan) prior to any use of the property for cemetery purposes. The OCCD has submitted their Business Plan for Phases 1A and 1B of the public cemetery portion, which also includes common infrastructure that will benefit the State Veteran's Cemetery.