



# HOUSE BILL 340: Weekend Burials/State Veterans Cemeteries

2015-2016 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>	Senate State and Local Government	<b>Date:</b>	June 1, 2015
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Shepard, Cleveland, Boles, Whitmire	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Tawanda Foster
<b>Analysis of:</b>	First Edition		Committee Counsel

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**SUMMARY:** *House Bill 340 would provide that burial services shall be conducted at all State veterans cemeteries every day of the week that is not a State or federal holiday.*

**CURRENT LAW:** G.S. 65-44 provides that burial services shall be conducted at the Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery and the Sandhills State Veterans Cemeteries every day of the week that is not a State holiday.

**BILL ANALYSIS:** House Bill 340 would amend G.S. 65-44 to provide that burial services shall be conducted every day of the week at all State veterans cemeteries. In addition, the bill would not require burial services to be conducted on federal holidays.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This act is effective when it becomes law.

**BACKGROUND:** State veterans cemeteries were established in North Carolina in response to the shortage of spaces available in the four national veterans cemeteries located in North Carolina,<sup>1</sup> so that veterans could be buried in closer proximity to where their families and friends live.<sup>2</sup>

Under Article 8A of Chapter 65 of the General States, eligible North Carolina veterans and their legal spouses and dependents are provided free burial plots at State veterans cemeteries.

There are presently three State veterans cemeteries<sup>3</sup>:

- Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery (Jacksonville)
- Sandhills State Veterans Cemetery (Spring Lake)
- Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery (Black Mountain)

Each cemetery is staffed with an administrator, an administrative assistant, two maintenance mechanics, and a groundsman.

To cover the costs incurred as a result of weekend burial services required under G.S. 65-44, the Department of Administration was authorized in 2004 to use funds credited to the Veterans Burial Fund for the 2004-2005 fiscal year,<sup>4</sup> and in 2005 the Department was authorized to cover these costs using funds credited to the Veterans Burial Fund for the 2005-2007 biennium.<sup>5</sup> According to the Division of Veterans Affairs, however, weekend burial services have not been conducted pursuant to G.S. 65-44 because sufficient funds have not been available to pay the additional staff wages and expenses required to conduct such services on Saturdays and Sundays.

<sup>1</sup> There are four national cemeteries in North Carolina: New Bern, Raleigh, Salisbury and Wilmington National Cemeteries. Only the Salisbury National Cemetery is still accepting interments.

<sup>2</sup> S.L. 1987-183.

<sup>3</sup> A fourth cemetery is under construction in Goldsboro and is expected to be open in late 2015.

<sup>4</sup> S.L. 2004-124, s. 19.2(b).

<sup>5</sup> S.L. 2005-276, s. 19.3.

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