

# Florida State Veteran's Benefits

As of November 2018



Watching over and advocating for our state's veterans and their families are the more than 1,100 men and women of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. Florida has earned a reputation as the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. Our state's veterans bring more than \$18.4 billion federal dollars annually into Florida's economy. Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas with more than 1.5 million veterans – 12 percent of the Sunshine State's population 18 and over. If you are a veteran, thank you for your service. If you are the spouse or family member of a veteran, a special thank you for your dedicated support. For more information, call (850) 487-1533.

Fiscal 2017 demographic information from the VA's Veteran Population Projection Model 2016. The VA reports there are 20.0 million veterans living in the United States.

- There are 1,525,400 veterans in the State of Florida. There are 1,381,170 male veterans and 144,229 female veterans. Note: Florida has the third largest veteran population in the nation, behind California with 1,681,730 veterans and Texas with 1,584,844 veterans.
- There are 1,172,800 wartime veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 352,600 peacetime veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 61,646 World War II veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 139,129 Korean War veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 519,843 Vietnam-era veterans in the State of Florida.
- There are 188,024 Gulf War veterans in the State of Florida. (1990 to 9/11/01)
- There are 177,494 Post-9/11 veterans in the State of Florida (9/12/01 to present)
- There are 789,717 veterans in Florida 65 years of age and over. (There are 761,682 male veterans 65 years of age and older and 28,033 female veterans 65 years of age and older.)

The state of Florida provides several veteran benefits/Programs. This section offers a brief description of each of the following:

- Housing
- Financial Assistance
- Employment
- Education

- Other

## **Veteran Housing Programs**

### **Florida State Veterans' Homes Program**

Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans Domiciliary Home of Florida is a 149-bed assisted living community, located at 751 Se Sycamore Terrace, Lake City, FL 32025 Tel: (386) 758-0600. Assisted living facilities provide care to elderly people who need help with daily tasks such as meal preparation, mobility, bathing or dressing. Assisted living centers do not provide housing for elders with severe medical conditions that require medical care and monitoring from a doctor or registered nurse. Assisted living offers intermediate care for individuals who cannot reside on their own in an independent living, but do not need the full-time health care services of a nursing home. Veterans must be able to feed and dress themselves. Domiciliary care is provided to veterans discharged under honorable conditions. Veterans admitted must be residents of Florida for one year prior to admission and be in need of ALF care. Current admissions information is available through the office of the Home Administrator, County Veteran Service Office, or any of the FDVA offices listed on <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services>.

### **Veterans' Nursing Homes of Florida**

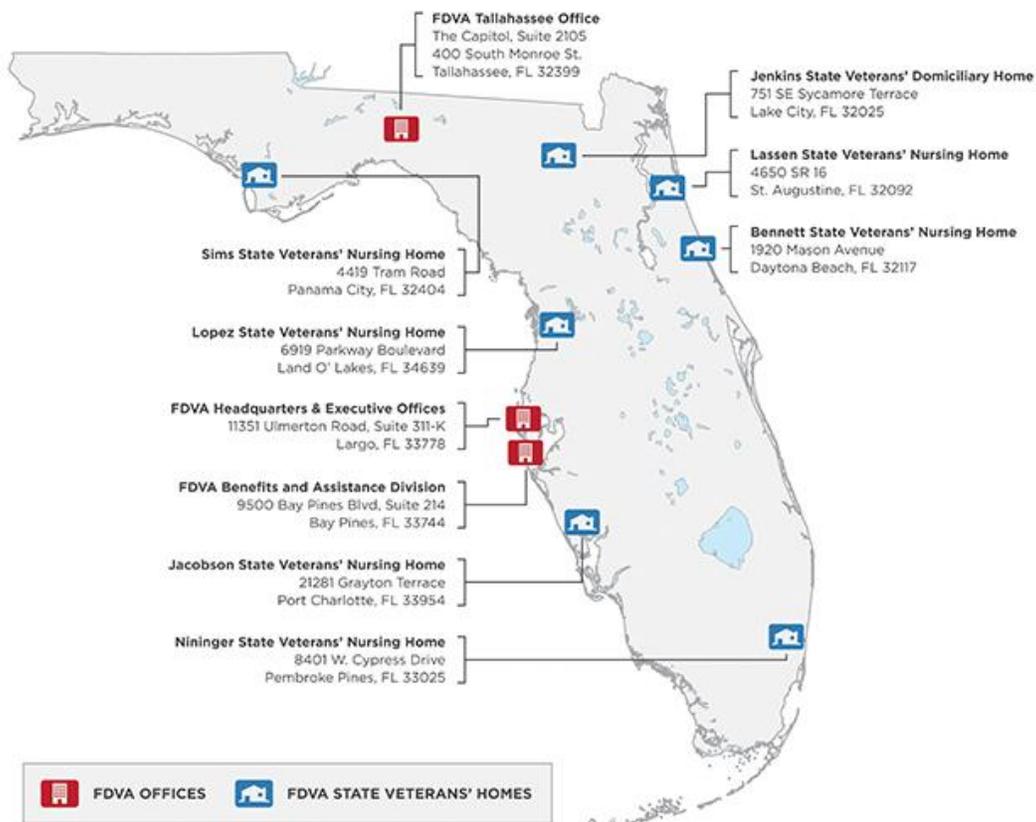
The state of Florida operates 7 Veterans' nursing homes throughout the state. The home locations are:

- **Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home in Daytona Beach** (Volusia County) opened to residents in 1993. The recently renovated 120-bed facility provides skilled nursing care and the highest quality of life and medical care to its veteran residents. Call (386) 274-3460 for more information. Address: 1920 Mason Avenue, Daytona Beach, FL 32117.
- **Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes** (Pasco County) opened to residents in 1999. The 120-bed facility provides skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. A beautiful park setting within the facility grounds is available for residents to enjoy the outdoors. Local veterans and civic groups donate many hours of their time volunteering and interacting with the residents at the Home. Call (813) 558-5000 for more information. Address: 6919 Parkway Boulevard, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639.
- **Alexander "Sandy" Nininger Veterans' Nursing Home in Pembroke Pines** (Broward) opened to residents in 2001. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Each dementia/Alzheimer's module has a dining area, a small nutrition area, a centrally located living area, and a screened porch with a gated garden. Call (954) 985-4824 for more information. Address: 8401 West Cypress Drive, Pembroke Pines, FL 33025.
- **Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City** (Bay County) opened to residents in 2003. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (850) 747-5401 for more information. Address: 4419 Tram Road, Panama City, FL 32404.
- **Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port Charlotte** (Charlotte County) opened to residents in 2004. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (941) 613-0919 for more information. Address: 21281 Grayton Terrace, Port Charlotte, FL 33954.

- **Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home in St. Augustine** (St. Johns County) opened to residents in 2010. The 120-bed facility offers skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. Call (904) 940-2193 for more information. Address: 4650 State Road 16, St. Augustine, FL 32092.
- **Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home in Port St. Lucie.** This facility had its groundbreaking ceremony on March 20, 2018. The veterans' home is now in a 20-24 month construction window. When completed, the 120-bed facility will offer skilled nursing care and can accommodate 60 residents with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. For more information, call (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5562.



**Ardie R Copas State Veterans Nursing Home Concept**



**Resident Admission:** Basic admission requirements for all state veterans' homes include an honorable discharge, state residency prior to admission, and certification of need of assisted living or skilled nursing care as determined by a VA physician. A resident application package for each facility is available for view and downloading below. For specific questions regarding admissions, please contact the Admissions Coordinator at the numbers listed at <http://floridavets.org/locations/state-veterans-nursing-homes>.

For employment opportunities at the homes, call the FDVA Human Resources Office at (727) 518-3202, Ext. 5615 or visit the People First Website at <https://peoplefirst.myflorida.com>

### **Veterans Assisted Living Facility.**

Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City – The Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City (Columbia County) opened to residents in 1990. The recently renovated 149-bed Assisted Living Facility Provides a special combination of housing, personalized supportive services and incidental medical care to eligible veterans. Veterans must be able to feed and dress themselves and in need of assisted living care. Call (386) 758-0600 for more information. Address: 751 SE Sycamore Terrace, Lake City, FL 32025. This facility is seeking additional veterans. A brochure is available at [http://www.fdva.org/Homes\\_Brochures/FDVA\\_Brochure\\_Jenkins.pdf](http://www.fdva.org/Homes_Brochures/FDVA_Brochure_Jenkins.pdf).

### **Homestead Exemption (Permanent & Totally Disabled)**

Any real estate used and owned as a homestead by a veteran who was honorably discharged with a service-connected permanent and total disability and for whom a letter from the United States Government or VA or its predecessor has been issued certifying that the veteran is totally and permanently disabled is exempt from taxation, provided the veteran is a permanent resident of the state on January 1 of the tax year for which exemption is being claimed or on January 1 of the year the veteran died.

The production by a veteran or the spouse or surviving spouse of a letter of total and permanent disability from the United States Government or VA or its predecessor before the property appraiser of the county in which property of the veteran lies shall be prima facie evidence of the fact that the veteran or the surviving spouse is entitled to such exemption.

In the event the totally and permanently disabled veteran pre-deceases his or her spouse and upon the death of the veteran, the spouse holds the legal or beneficial title to the homestead and permanently resides thereon as specified in FS 196.031, the exemption from taxation shall carry over to the benefit of the veteran's spouse until such time as he or she remarries or sells or otherwise disposes of the property. If the spouse sells the property, an exemption not to exceed the amount granted from the most recent ad valorem tax roll may be transferred to his or her new residence as long as it is used as his or her primary residence and he or she does not remarry.

Veterans who are paraplegic, hemiplegic, are permanently and totally disabled, must use a wheelchair for mobility, or are legally blind are exempt from real estate taxation if gross annual household income does not exceed the adjusted maximum allowed. The veteran must be a resident of the State of Florida to qualify. Certificate of such disability from two licensed doctors of this state or from the VA or an award letter from the Social Security Administration to the property appraiser is prima facie evidence of entitlement to such exemption.

### **Homestead Exemption (10% to 100% BUT not Permanent in nature)**

Eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities of 10% or more shall be entitled to a \$5000 property tax exemption. To qualify for homestead exemption a veteran must be a bonafide resident of the state. Every person who is entitled to homestead exemption in this state and who is serving in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States may file a claim for homestead exemption. Servicemen unable to file in person may file through next of kin or duly authorized representatives. For further info on Florida property tax exemption for veterans refer to <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services/housing>

### **Home Loans**

G.I. Home Loan Guarantee – The VA may guarantee part of your loan for the purchase of a home, manufactured home, or condominium. In addition, veterans with conventional home loans now have options for refinancing to a VA guaranteed home loan as a result of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008. For information, call the VA Home Loans Guaranty Services at (888) 244-6711 or visit <http://www.homeloans.va.gov>.

Visit the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs website <http://floridavets.org> for contact information and benefits assistance.

## **Financial Assistance**

### **Basic Property Tax Exemption**

Resident veterans with VA disability of at least 10 percent can get a \$5,000 deduction on their home's assessed value. The unremarried surviving spouse who had been married to the veteran for at least 5 years may also be entitled to this exemption.

### **Homestead Exemption**

Florida resident veterans with an honorable discharge and are 100 percent permanently and totally disabled as well as quadriplegic veterans are exempt from paying property tax on their residence. Unremarried surviving spouses may also be eligible. Florida resident veterans who are paraplegic, hemiplegic, or permanently and totally disabled who must use a wheelchair for mobility, or are legally blind, may be exempt from real estate taxation depending on income.

## **Employment Benefits**

### **Veterans' Preference in Employment and Retention**

The state and its political subdivisions shall give preference in employment and retention in government positions to veterans who served during a wartime period and separated under honorable conditions, or who are disabled veterans who have compensable service-connected disabilities as well as to a spouse or unremarried veteran's widow or widower under certain circumstances.

For additional information concerning veterans' preference, visit the [Florida VA's online Vet Preference Overview](#) or contact the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs: By phone at: (727) 319-7462, Facsimile (727) 319-7780 By email: [postd@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:postd@fdva.state.fl.us).

### **Florida Military Family Employment Advocacy Program**

The Military Family Employment Advocacy Program provides advocates located in Florida's One-Stop Career Centers for regions where military bases and communities are located. Persons eligible for assistance through this program include spouses and dependents of active-duty military personnel, activated Florida National Guard members, and activated military reservists. Approximately 37,000 military spouses, not including military spouses of mobilized National Guard Members/Reservists, currently live in Florida. An increase is projected in the military spouse population due to returning and reassigned military members and their families.

Visit <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services/employment> for contact information and benefits assistance.

## **Education Benefits**

### **High School Diploma - Korean War Veterans**

Effective July 1, 2002, Florida veterans who served during the Korean War may be eligible to receive a high school diploma. Senate Bill 292 provides for the award of a high school diploma to certain Korean War veterans who started high school between 1946 and 1950. Veterans who were inducted into the armed forces between June 1950 and January 1954 and scheduled to graduate between 1950 and 1954 are eligible recipients. The revised law amends s. 232.246, F. S., which originally awarded high school diplomas to World War II veterans. Veterans who meet the following criteria will be eligible:

- Must be a Florida resident;
- Inducted into military service between June 1950 and January 1954;
- Received an honorable discharge;
- Started high school between 1946 and 1950; and
- Scheduled to graduate from high school between 1950 and 1954.

### **Tuition Deferment**

Available to any veteran or other eligible student covered under Title 38, U.S.C. Allows one tuition deferment each academic year and an additional deferment when a delay in benefits occurs.

### **Reduced Tuition for National Guard**

Active Florida Guard members in good standing as of June 30, 1997 are exempt from payment of one-half of tuition and fees. Individuals who enlist in the Guard after June 30, 1997 are eligible for full exemption of tuition and fees. Contact your National Guard Unit for details.

### **Education for Children of Deceased or Disabled Florida Veterans**

Florida provides four-year college educational opportunities for dependent children and spouses of veterans who died from a service connected disability or who are 100% percent service-connected totally and permanently disabled veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. For more information, call toll free (888) 827-2004. Dependent children of service members Missing In Action or Prisoners Of War may also be eligible for tuition benefits.

Visit <http://floridavets.org/benefits-services/education> for contact information and benefits assistance.

## **Veteran Recreation Benefits**

### **State Park Admission**

- 25% discount for annual pass to all state parks for all honorably discharged veterans.
- Veterans with service-connected disabilities and their spouses or surviving spouses get a free lifetime pass.

### **County and Municipal Parks**

- County and municipal parks offer free or reduced entrance fees to current military members, honorably discharged or disabled veterans and their spouses. Contact your local county or municipality for details.

### **Hunting and Fishing License**

- Active-duty and retired military Florida residents can get a Military Gold Sportsman's License for \$20. The license covers hunting, freshwater and saltwater fishing and a variety of associated permits at a greatly reduced cost.
- 100% permanently and totally disabled service-connected veterans are entitled to a free five year hunting and fishing license.

Visit the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs website for more information on any of these programs.

## **Other**

### **Certification of Discharge or Separation**

The Clerk of the Circuit Court shall record, without cost to the veteran, certificates of discharge or separation from the Armed Forces of the United States.

### **Disabled Veteran Identification Card**

The Department of Veterans' Affairs may issue an identification card to any veteran who is a permanent resident of the state and who has been adjudged by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or its predecessor to have a 100-percent, service-connected permanent and total disability rating for compensation, this could also be a rating of Individual Unemployability from the VA, or who has been determined to have a service-connected total and permanent disability rating of 100 percent and is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the United States Armed Services, upon the written request of such veteran. Such card may be used by the veteran as proof of eligibility for any benefit provided by state law for 100-percent, service-connected permanently and totally disabled veterans except this card may not be used as proof of eligibility for Exemption of Homesteads. The identification card shall bear a statement that it is unlawful for any person other than the veteran to whom it was issued to use the card.

### **Motor Vehicle Military License Plates**

The Florida DMC has available the following plates for veterans and their supporters. '

\$25.00 annual fee (plus registration fees)



\$15.00 annual fee (plus registration fees) for below plates



The Florida DMC also offers the below military specialty plates. These car plates plus some motorcycle plates can be viewed at <https://www.flhsmv.gov/specialtytags/miltags.html>.

- ✓ Air Force Cross
- ✓ America Pearl Harbor Survivor
- ✓ Combat Action Badge
- ✓ Combat Infantry Badge
- ✓ Disabled Veteran
- ✓ Distinguished Service Cross
- ✓ Ex-Prisoner of War
- ✓ Gold Star Family

- ✓ Korean Conflict Veterans
- ✓ Medal of Honor (Air Force)
- ✓ Medal of Honor (Army)
- ✓ Medal of Honor (Navy)
- ✓ National Guard
- ✓ Navy Cross
- ✓ Operation Desert Shield Veterans
- ✓ Operation Desert Storm Veterans
- ✓ Operation Enduring Freedom
- ✓ Operation Iraqi Freedom
- ✓ Paralyzed Veterans of America
- ✓ Purple Heart
- ✓ Silver Star
- ✓ U.S. Reserve
- ✓ Vietnam War Veterans

Check with your county tax collector to purchase your specialty plate. These tags are among the most affordable and patriotic specialty tags available. \$15 of the purchase price goes to the Veterans' Homes Trust Fund for maintenance and operation of Florida's six state veterans' nursing homes and one state veterans' domiciliary home.

#### **Disabled Veteran Motor Vehicle License Plate**

One free motor vehicle license number plate shall be issued by the department for use on any motor vehicle owned or leased by any disabled veteran who has been a continuous resident of Florida for the last five years or has established a domicile upon application accompanied by proof that:

1. The vehicle was acquired through financial assistance from the VA, or
2. The veteran has been determined by the VA to have a service-connected disability of 100% rating for compensation, or
3. The veteran has been determined to have a service-connected disability of 100% and is in receipt of disability retirement pay from any branch of the uniformed Armed Forces. A plate fee is charged.

#### **Permits/Fees (parking, tolls, building improvements)**

No totally and permanently disabled veteran who is a resident of Florida shall be required to pay license or permit fees to any county or municipality in order to make certain improvements to assist with his or her disability on any mobile home owned by the veteran and used as his/her residence. Improvements are limited to ramps, widening of doors, and similar improvements for the purpose of making the mobile home habitable for veterans confined to wheelchairs.

**Handicapped Toll Permit** - Any handicapped person who has a valid driver's license, who operates a vehicle specially equipped for use by the handicapped, and who is certified by a licensed physician or by the VA Adjudication Officer as being physically disabled and having permanent impairments which impair the person's ability to deposit coins in toll baskets shall be allowed to pass free through all tollgates. A vehicle window sticker will be issued.

**Exemption Parking Permit: Persons With Permanent Mobility Problems** - A disabled veteran who is a resident of this state and honorably discharged, and has been determined by the VA or the Federal Government to have a service-connected disability rating for compensation of 50% or greater and has a signed physician's statement of qualification is eligible for the permit. The fees are \$1.50 for the initial parking permit, and \$1.50 for renewal parking permit and for each additional renewal parking permit. The

fee must be paid to the tax collector of the county in which the fee was generated. The department shall not issue to any one eligible applicant more than two exemption parking permits upon request of the applicant.

### **Homeless Veterans Program**

About one-third of the adult homeless population have served their country in the Armed Services. On any given day, as many as 250,000 veterans (male and female) are living on the streets or in shelters, and perhaps twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year. Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Right now, the number of homeless male and female Vietnam era veterans is greater than the number of service persons who died during that war -- and a small number of Desert Storm veterans are also appearing in the homeless population. At this time, scientific studies indicate that there is no known, direct connection between military service, service in Vietnam, or exposure to combat and any increased risk of becoming homeless. Family background, access to support from family and friends, and various personal characteristics (rather than military service) seem to be the stronger indicators of risk of homelessness.

Almost all homeless veterans are male (about three percent are women), the vast majority are single, and most come from poor, disadvantaged backgrounds. Homeless veterans tend to be older and more educated than homeless non-veterans. But similar to the general population of homeless adult males, about 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and (with considerable overlap) slightly more than 70% suffer from alcohol or other drug abuse problems. Roughly 56% are African American or Hispanic.

### **Benefits Counseling**

- The FDVA has state Veterans' Claims Counselors co-located with the VA in the Bay Pines Regional Office, and in each VA Medical Center and VA Outpatient Clinic in Florida. Assistance with claims is free (membership is not required) and covers all state and federal veterans' programs.
- Information on current federal, state and local veterans' programs, entitlements and referral services is also available in Florida through a network of County Veteran Service Offices. The counselors are trained and accredited annually by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. All services are provided free of charge. For a full list of offices plus email addrees refer to [http://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CVSO\\_Directory\\_Oct-31-2018.pdf](http://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CVSO_Directory_Oct-31-2018.pdf)

### **Commission as a Notary Public**

The usual fee shall not be required for the issuance of a Commission as a Notary Public to a veteran who served during a period of wartime service, and who has been rated 50% or more for service-connected disability. Other fees may apply.

### **Burial**

The VA provides honorably discharged veterans, spouses and dependents with burial in a National Cemetery at no cost. Cremated remains are also accepted. Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried if they predecease the veteran. The VA provides a headstone, marker or medallion for placement on a private headstone at a private cemetery. The VA does not make funeral arrangements. Call toll free (800) 697-6947 or visit <http://www.cem.va.gov> for more information.

Florida currently has seven National Cemeteries which are listed below:

<b>Cemetery</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Burial Space</b>
-----------------	----------------	----------------	---------------------

Barrancas National Cemetery	1 Cemetery Road Pensacola, FL 32508	Phone: 850-453-4108 FAX: 850-453-4635	Open
Bay Pines National Cemetery	10000 Bay Pines Boulevard North St. Petersburg, FL 33708	Phone: 727-319-6479 FAX: 727-319-6490	Cremation Only **
Florida National Cemetery	6502 S.W. 102nd Avenue Bushnell, FL 33513	Phone: 352-793-7740 FAX: 352-793-9560	Open
Jacksonville National Cemetery	4083 Lannie Road Jacksonville, FL 32218	Phone: 904-766-5222 FAX: 904-766-5980	Open
Sarasota National Cemetery	9810 State Road 72 Sarasota, FL 34241	Phone: 877-861-9840 FAX: 941-922-3457	Open
South Florida National Cemetery	6501 S. State Road 7 Lake Worth, FL 33449	Phone: 561-649-6489 FAX: 561-649-3948	Open
St. Augustine National Cemetery	104 Marine Street St. Augustine, FL 32084	Phone: 904-766-5222 FAX: 904-766-5980	Closed *

\* This cemetery is closed to new interments. The only interments that are being accepted are subsequent interments for veterans or eligible family members in an existing gravesite. Periodically however, burial space may become available due to a canceled reservation or when a disinterment has been completed. When either of these two scenarios occurs the cemetery will assign such gravesites or columbarium niches to other eligible Veterans or family members at the time of the request. Since there is no way to know in advance when a gravesite may become available, please contact the cemetery at the time of need to inquire whether space is available.

\*\* This cemetery has space available for cremated remains. They may be able to accommodate casketed remains in the same gravesite of previously interred family members.

In February 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced the names of two new VA national cemeteries planned in Florida – the Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Scottsmeer and the Tallahassee National Cemetery in Tallahassee. The Cape Canaveral National Cemetery is planned for a 318-acre parcel

located in close proximity to U.S. Route 1 in northern Brevard County in Scottsmeer, approximately two miles from Interstate 95 and 12 miles north of Titusville. The cemetery will serve more than 163,000 Veterans, spouses and their eligible dependents living in the central eastern Florida area. The Tallahassee National Cemetery is planned for a 250-acre parcel in Leon County, with frontage along U.S. Highway 27 (Apalachee Parkway) and Old St. Augustine Road near March Road east of Tallahassee. The cemetery will serve 83,000 Veterans and their eligible dependents in the Tallahassee area, as well as southwestern Georgia and southeastern Alabama. For more information on each of the two upcoming cemeteries, refer to:

- Tallahassee: <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Tallahassee.pdf>
- Cape Canaveral: [http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Cape\\_Canaveral.pdf](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/docs/factsheets/Cape_Canaveral.pdf)

### **Florida Veterans Benefits Guide**

At <http://floridavets.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/FDVA-Benefits-Guide.pdf?v=20182> can be seen the 2018 Edition of the Florida Veterans Benefits Guide provided courtesy of the Florida Veterans Association.

Visit the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs website <http://floridavets.org> for contact information and benefits assistance.

[Source: <https://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/florida-state-veterans-benefits.html> | Nov 2018 ++]