

"When the Department of Veterans Affairs pointed to the State Veterans Cemetery program as the way forward for a Ft. Ord cemetery earlier this year, I set about finding a way to make it happen. I've been working with the VA for almost a decade to create a Ft. Ord cemetery and finally I can see light at the end of the tunnel," said Farr.

In order to clear the path for a State Veterans Cemetery, Farr wrote directing language into the FY07 Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Bill which passed the House Appropriations Committee this week. Farr's language:

- creates a pilot program so the VA and Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) can develop a unique public-private partnership to fund a state veterans cemetery at Fort Ord; and
- puts California at the top of the list for State Veterans Cemetery Grant approval once an application is made.

"I'm well aware of the state's financial constraints - that's why I've cleared the path for the state to get federal money to cover 100% of construction costs and for the creation of a public-private partnership that will relieve the state of all budgetary obligations. Together, the Feds, the state and the local community can make this happen," said Farr.

This afternoon, Farr will be discussing this public-private partnership at the Annual FORA Legislative meeting - 3 p.m. at the FORA Conference Facility/Bridge Center.

Legislative language authored by Rep. Farr and approved by the House Appropriations Committee on May 10, 2006:

Under "Fort Ord Cemetery":

*"The Committee notes the success of the military housing RCI as a public/private partnership. The Committee encourages the Department of Veterans Affairs to work with the Fort Ord Reuse Authority in Monterey, California to develop a pilot program to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of using public/private partnerships in establishing a state veterans cemetery at Fort Ord."*

Under "Grants for Construction of State Veterans Cemeteries":

*"The Committee encourages the Department to work with States for maximum usage of this grant program. Given that over ten percent of the nation's veterans reside in California, the Committee encourages the Department to work with the state of California as it applies for a grant."*