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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- BURIAL OF VETERANS

Introduced By: Senator Walter S. Felag

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 30-25 of the General Laws entitled "Burial of Veterans" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **30-25-14.1. Eligibility for burial -- Members of special guerrilla units.**

4 (a) Purpose. The general assembly finds that certain individuals served honorably with
5 special guerrilla units or irregular forces operating in support of the United States Armed Forces
6 during the conflict in the Kingdom of Loas and surrounding regions between 1961 and 1975,
7 commonly known as the "Secret War." These individuals fought alongside United States military
8 personnel, sustained heavy casualties, and have been recognized by acts of the United States
9 Congress and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for their service.

10 (b) Eligibility. Any person who:

11 (1) Served honorably with a special guerrilla unit or irregular forces operations in support
12 of the United States Armed Forces; and

13 (2) Has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to be eligible
14 for burial in a national cemetery pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 2402 and 38 CFR § 38.620, shall be
15 deemed eligible for burial in the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery, subject to all other
16 conditions and rules applicable to interment therein.

17 (c) Spouse and dependents. The spouse, widow or widower, and certain dependents to an
18 eligible person described in subsection (b) of this section shall also be eligible for burial under the
19 same conditions that apply to veterans under § 30-25-14.

1 (d) Documentation. Eligibility shall be established by presentation of official
2 documentation issued or recognized by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs verifying
3 that the individual has been deemed eligible for burial in a national cemetery under federal law.
4 The office of veterans services shall promulgate rules and regulations for verification and record-
5 keeping consistent with federal grant and eligibility requirements.

6 (e) Federal compliance. Nothing in this section shall be construed to expand eligibility for
7 burial beyond those categories recognized under federal law or to jeopardize the state's receipt of
8 federal funds or grants for the operation or maintenance of the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial
9 Cemetery.

10 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- BURIAL OF VETERANS

1 This act would provide that certain Hmong or Lao veterans who served honorably in
2 military operations in support of the United States as special guerrilla units be granted burial rights
3 at the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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