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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- BURIAL OF VETERANS

Introduced By: Representatives Azzinaro, Corvese, Casey, and Kennedy

Date Introduced: February 11, 2026

Referred To: House 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 in
5 Hmong Laotian special guerrilla units or irregular forces operating in support of the United States
6 Armed Forces during the conflict in the Kingdom of Laos and surrounding regions between 1961
7 and 1975, commonly known as the "Secret War." These individuals fought alongside United States
8 military personnel, sustained heavy casualties, and have been recognized by acts of the United
9 States Congress and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for their service.

10 (b) Eligibility. Any person who:

11 (1) Served honorably in a Hmong Laotian special guerrilla unit or irregular forces
12 operations, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 2402(a)(10), in support of the United States Armed Forces;
13 and

14 (2) Has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs to be
15 eligible for burial in a national cemetery pursuant to 38 U.S.C. § 2402(a)(10), shall be deemed
16 eligible for burial in the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery (RIVMC), subject to all other
17 conditions and rules applicable to interment therein. The RIVMC may request a determination from
18 the Department of Veterans' Affairs as to whether a person is eligible for burial in a national
19 cemetery under 38 U.S.C. § 2402(a)(10) and may rely on that determination in ascertaining

1 eligibility for burial at the RIVMC.

2 (c) Documentation. The RIVMC may establish eligibility by accepting the same evidence
3 of service that the Department of Veterans' Affairs requires to determine eligibility for interment
4 in national veterans' cemeteries.

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

9 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 Laotian individuals who served honorably
2 in military operations in support of the United States as special guerrilla units be granted burial
3 rights at the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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