



September 25, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Southern California Veterans Cemetery at Gypsum Canyon — \$10 Million Federal Commitment

Dear Governor Newsom:

We write to respectfully urge your administration to take all necessary steps to preserve the \$10 million in federal funding offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the Southern California Veterans Cemetery at Gypsum Canyon in Orange County.

After more than a decade of work by veterans, local communities, and elected officials at every level of government, we have made extraordinary progress toward finally delivering a veterans cemetery for Orange County. The project enjoys broad and bipartisan support, including the County of Orange, all 34 cities in Orange County, our state and federal legislative delegations, and veterans organizations throughout the region. The County has also dedicated 200 acres of public land to the cemetery project.

At the federal level, the Orange County congressional delegation has worked diligently and on a bipartisan basis to secure federal funding for this project. Importantly, our efforts to secure this funding were undertaken at the express recommendation of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). In October 2025, the VA moved the Gypsum Canyon project to its conforming list, confirming that CalVet's revised pre-application satisfied federal eligibility requirements. In February 2026, the VA accepted CalVet's pre-application and offered \$10 million in federal funding for the project. The VA further indicated that the funds could be provided by the end of the federal fiscal year upon receipt of CalVet's completed grant application.

Based on that history, we are deeply concerned that CalVet is now indicating that acceptance of the federal funding is premature. The congressional delegation pursued this funding at CalVet's request and successfully secured a \$10 million federal commitment for the project. We should not place those funds at risk because CalVet has determined that the project does not align with its preferred development timeline.

We cannot allow this opportunity to be lost.

Federal funding through the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program is limited and appropriated annually, with projects across the country competing for available resources according to federal priorities. There is no assurance that \$10 million will remain available for Gypsum Canyon in a future federal fiscal year. Declining or failing to act upon the current federal commitment therefore risks forfeiting these funds altogether, not simply postponing their receipt.

California has already made a substantial investment in this project. Your administration recently dedicated \$19 million in the 2026–27 State Budget to advance the cemetery, including \$9 million for an access road and \$10 million in expenditure authority for preliminary plans, working drawings, and Phase I construction. Your administration appropriately described these investments as another major milestone toward delivering the cemetery.

The federal government's \$10 million commitment should build upon that investment, not be forfeited because the State is unwilling to complete the steps necessary to receive it within the federal funding window.

The Veterans Cemetery Grants Program exists specifically to assist states in establishing and improving veterans cemeteries. Federal funding offsets eligible costs associated with establishing a state veterans cemetery, while the State assumes responsibility for its continued operation. California and Orange County have spent years positioning Gypsum Canyon to take advantage of precisely this federal partnership.

Governor, we appreciate your administration's continued commitment to the Southern California Veterans Cemetery and the significant resources the State has dedicated to bringing it to fruition.

We respectfully ask that you direct CalVet and the appropriate agencies within your administration to take the steps necessary to preserve the \$10 million federal commitment and ensure that these funds are not forfeited.

After more than a decade of work, we are closer than ever to fulfilling our promise to Orange County's veterans and their families. We should not allow \$10 million in federal funding secured for this purpose to be left on the table.

We stand ready to work with you, CalVet, the VA, and our state and local partners to resolve any remaining issues necessary to protect this funding and keep the project moving forward.

Sincerely,



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Derek Tran
Member of Congress



Thomas J. Umberg
California State Senate
34th District



Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblywoman
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