



CITY of LAGUNA NIGUEL

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CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Elaine Gennawey
Mayor Pro Tem Sandy Rains
Council Member Kelly Jennings
Council Member Fred Minagar
Council Member Rischi Paul Sharma

January 19, 2022

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblymember, 65th District
1440 North Harbor Boulevard, Suite 270
Fullerton, CA 92835

The Honorable Steven Choi, Ph.D.
Assemblymember, 68th District
3240 El Camino Real, Suite 110
Irvine, CA 92602

SUBJECT: AB 1595 –Veterans Cemetery, County of Orange–SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Quirk-Silva and Assemblymember Choi:

On behalf of the City of Laguna Niguel, thank you for authoring Assembly Bill (AB) 1595 to allow the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) to design, develop, and construct a state-operated veterans cemetery in Orange County. Home to former Army, Navy, and Marine bases and an estimated 104,949 veterans, Orange County is California's largest county without a veterans cemetery.

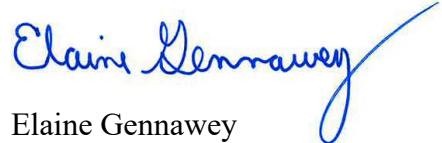
On July 27, 2021, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved allocating \$20 million exclusively for site development of a veterans cemetery at Gypsum Canyon and adopted a resolution to move forward with planning and developing a site to honor and respect the men and women who served our great country. The Board previously allocated over 200 acres of county-owned land at Gypsum Canyon in Anaheim Hills near the intersection of the 91 freeway and 241 toll road, which has been deeded to the Orange County Cemetery District (OCCD) for the purpose of building a veterans cemetery.

The County and OCCD have met with CalVet regarding the Gypsum Canyon site. CalVet is aware that the property will have a separate public civilian cemetery adjacent to it, and that it will be constructed and financed by OCCD separately from a veterans cemetery. OCCD will pay all costs to bring utilities and shared infrastructure to the property.

After years of delay due to lack of consensus on a location, the County's \$20 million commitment, along with OCCD's financing plan, offers an unprecedented opportunity to immediately begin funding the site. All 34 Orange County cities have adopted resolutions supporting the Gypsum Canyon site. In addition, a bipartisan majority of Orange County state and federal delegation members, numerous veterans organization leaders, and more than 140 local elected officials all enthusiastically support a veterans cemetery at Gypsum Canyon. However, legislation is needed to amend the Military & Veterans Code in order to proceed.

AB 1595 would allow CalVet to acquire, study, design, develop, construct, and equip a state-owned and state-operated Southern California Veterans Cemetery in Orange County so that we may honor the men and women who served our country and who deserve the right to be buried in Orange County. For these reasons, the City of Laguna Niguel supports AB 1595.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elaine Gennawey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Elaine" on top and "Gennawey" below it, with a flourish at the end.

Elaine Gennawey
Mayor

Cc: Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin: Chair, Assembly Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Senator Bob Archuleta, Chair – Senate Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Christian Burkin – Chief Consultant, Assembly Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Veronica Badillo – Staff Director, Senate Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Members, Orange County Legislative Delegation
Members, Orange County Board of Supervisors