

Bilirakis Announces \$20.2 Million Contract Award for National Cemetery Expansion

WASHINGTON (Nov. 8) -- U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, today announced a \$20.2 million contract award from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to QGS Development Inc., of Lithia, Fla., to expand the Florida National Cemetery.

"This project will enhance and expand Florida's National Cemetery, allowing Florida's veterans and their eligible family members to be buried there for years to come," said Bilirakis. "What makes this even better is that a local company will have the opportunity to serve our veterans, while making these improvements."

The project will add the new burial sections on cemetery property that had been reserved for this expansion. The project will encompass nearly 70 acres and will provide approximately 41,000 additional gravesites. These will include 20,000 pre-placed crypts for caskets, 4,000 other casket gravesites, 9,000 in-ground cremation sites and 8,000 columbaria niches for cremation remains.

The project will also include two new committal service shelters, a public restroom, a storage facility, and other improvements. Construction is expected to be finished by late 2009. As a result of this expansion, burials for veterans and eligible family members are projected to be available at Florida National Cemetery until about 2020.

Information on VA's burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov>, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. For information on the Florida National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (352) 793-7740.