

**Statement of
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**Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
S. 3492, Elko National Cemetery Act
November 18, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 3492, the Elko National Cemetery Act. The bill transfers administrative jurisdiction of approximately 15 acres of public land currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) for use as a national cemetery in Elko, Nevada. The Department of the Interior supports S. 3492. This proposal aligns with the Administration's priority to restore trust with local communities and be a good neighbor by providing veterans in rural Nevada with a national cemetery near their homes.

Background

The city of Elko, Nevada, is the county seat with a population of approximately 21,000 people and an additional 15,000 living in the immediate area. Located in northeastern Nevada, Elko is the largest city within a 130-mile radius. Like many communities in Nevada, Elko is situated amidst BLM-managed public lands.

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S. 3492 directs the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of approximately 15 acres of public land to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for use as a national cemetery, subject to valid existing rights. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs would be required to reimburse the Secretary of the Interior for all costs associated with processing the transfer. The Federal land to be transferred would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining, mineral leasing, and geothermal leasing laws.

The Department of the Interior supports S. 3492 and the transfer of administrative jurisdiction. Serving our nation's veterans by ensuring burial access and the opportunity to choose a cemetery near home is important. This remains a priority for the Administration per the President's Fiscal Year 2021 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs budget request to create a cemetery in Elko, Nevada. The proposed National Veterans Cemetery in Elko would serve to honor our veterans and their families in Nevada on behalf of a grateful nation. The BLM would also like the opportunity to work with the sponsors to address technical issues including clarifying the legal description to minimize potential resource conflicts, providing technical modifications to streamline transfer of jurisdiction, and updating the legislative map referenced in the S. 3492.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. The BLM looks forward to working further with the sponsors of S. 3492 as the legislation moves forward. I would welcome any questions you may have.