

**Dedication: Kentucky Veteran's Cemetery North East
10 a.m.**

**Friday, Sept. 10, 2010
Argillite (Greenup County)**

**Gov. Steve Beshear
(Hassert)**

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When we look around us, it's difficult to believe that -- less than a year ago -- this land was just a field of dirt and weeds.

Come next month, however, it will become hallowed ground.

It's not the landscaping or the new construction that will anoint this ground.

It's the purpose we're assigning to it.

Next month, this ground will become the final resting place for Kentucky veterans and their family members.

These are men and women who so loved this country and all that it represents ... that they were willing to risk their lives to defend it.

That sacrifice, that courage and commitment, requires more acknowledgement than mere words, however deeply felt.

We owe these servicemen and women -- and the families who sacrificed for them -- a site of peace and dignity befitting our debt.

This is a beautiful facility, solemn and respectful.

From the day I took office I made it clear we would move forward toward a goal of establishing a veterans cemetery within 75 miles of every family in Kentucky.

This is our fourth state-operated facility.

Along with our three national facilities, and considering we're actively seeking land in Leslie County for a fifth state site, we are well on our way of accomplishing that goal.

Since 2004, nearly 3,000 Kentucky veterans and their dependents have been interred at our state facilities.

Phase One here at Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North East will accommodate nearly 6,000 more.

These numbers are tangible proof of something this nation has long known – when the time comes to fight for freedom, Kentuckians are always on the front lines.

We saw that as far back as 1812, and we see that today in the Global War on Terror, where Kentucky natives and Kentucky-based soldiers continue to pay the ultimate price for freedom.

We thank them now, once again, for their sacrifice.

Today we honor that commitment, and we do so here in Greenup County, home to two of Kentucky's 42 Medal of Honor recipients. It's fitting that a new memorial was recently dedicated here to honor those two men – John Collier and Ernie West, who I believe is in the audience today.

The state provided the land for this facility and will pay to run it.

But the construction and equipment costs were covered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

We appreciate Frank Salvas Sr., and his efforts to secure that funding.

We also appreciate the support of our congressional delegation, including Congressman Geoff Davis, and of our state legislators, especially Rep. Tanya Pullin, Sen. Robin Webb and former Sen. Charlie Borders.

And we especially salute the energetic and visionary leadership at the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, including Commissioner Ken Lucas and former Commissioner Brigadier General Les Beavers.

And I especially want to identify and thank Jeff Acob, who as cemeteries branch manager is really the man who made sure this project happened.

It is an honor to be here today, and to dedicate this sacred ground.

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