

**Ronald E. Walters, the head of the Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, issued a statement March 22, 2017:**

*As the head of the Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, it's important for you to hear from me directly about our efforts to establish a final resting place for Veterans in the Indianapolis area. As I write this, we are working with community leaders and others to explore alternatives to Crown Hill cemetery and to understand and be responsive to the concerns of local citizens—as we have at every step along the way.*

*Before purchasing the Crown Hill property in 2015, we notified the public and received no adverse comments. The project was deemed to be environmentally sound, so we moved forward. When concerns surfaced recently, we modified the project's design to preserve as many "old growth" trees as possible, including all those 40 inches in diameter or greater, and nearly 75 percent of other large trees. These are expensive changes but clearly important to many in the community.*

*We continue to operate in good faith, as we seek to balance our mission to serve the nation's Veterans, our responsibility to the American taxpayer, and our sincere desire to engage cooperatively and collaboratively with the Indianapolis community. If proposed alternative locations prove suitable for cemetery development, are comparable in size to the current one, and provide appropriate access for large funeral processions, I promise you we will give them a good hard look. We will also request reimbursement for funds spent on the existing Crown Hill site as part of any solution going forward. I'm sure you'd expect no less of us as stewards of tax dollars.*

*We are committed to being good neighbors and to caring for our Veterans and their families. We have been able to strike this balance in communities nationwide and I believe it can be done here. Thank you for your support of our mission and our Veterans.*

*Ronald E. Walters*

*Interim Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs*