



Office of the Governor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Lujan Grisham dedicates new veterans cemetery

ANGEL FIRE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday made her first official visit to the Angel Fire Veterans Cemetery, touring the new state facility for veterans and their families. After a soft “opening” last summer during the pandemic, the cemetery is now open to the public.

The governor, alongside state Veterans Services Secretary Sonya Smith, on Monday evening toured the 10-acre site, including the historic Vietnam Veterans Memorial, honoring the headstones of several servicemen and servicewomen with roses.

The governor met with facility management and staff and met with and thanked local veterans and VFW members.

“This facility provides such appropriate recognition and tribute for so many New Mexico veterans and their families,” said **Gov. Lujan Grisham**. “Creating more veteran cemeteries, in a state with a great number of veterans, is a real service – it cuts down on travel time, it ensures there is appropriate and adequate space for all those who served our country. I know, from visiting my Dad where is buried in the Santa Fe National Cemetery, that these cemeteries can bring great peace to family members – and I always feel grateful and humble reflecting on the patriotism of those who served when I visit one, and I know so many other New Mexicans do, too.”

“When I first came here, as a veteran, I could connect with the experience,” said **Veterans Services Secretary Sonya Smith**. “And each time I leave, on the drive back, I am silent and still, appreciating it, in awe of the service and sacrifice of those who are memorialized here and in veterans cemeteries all across our state.”

The cemetery is adjacent to the historic family veterans’ memorial created by Victor “Doc” Westphall and his wife, Jeanne, in the late 1960s, in honor of their son, Lt. Victor David Westphall III, who was killed in Con Thien, Vietnam.

In 2017, the Department of Veterans Services took over management of the memorial, which now includes a visitor center and museum, with a library of more than 1,000 books and 2,000

photographs, memorabilia exhibits, touchable displays, artwork and sculptures. The area also includes an amphitheater, a memorial walkway and memorial gardens.

In 2020, the state provided \$2 million in capital outlay for a new Vietnam Memorial Wall, a scaled-down replica of the memorial in Washington, D.C.

The state cemetery includes 100 crypts, 100 in-ground sites, 200 columbarium sites and 108 Memorial Wall sites.

As of June 2021, there have been 40 veterans and dependents interred at the cemetery.

Angel Fire is the [third state veterans cemetery](#), operated by the Department of Veterans Services. The others are in Gallup and Fort Stanton. National veterans cemeteries are located in Santa Fe and Fort Bayard.

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