



# **FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS**



*The information provided in this document is meant for the sole use of Active Duty service members, retirees, their families, and those individuals eligible for legal assistance. The information is general in nature and meant only to provide a brief overview of various legal matters. Rights and responsibilities vary widely according to the particular set of circumstances in each case. Laws can vary across states, services, and civilian jurisdictions and laws are changed from time to time. Do not rely upon the general restatements of background information presented here without discussing your specific situation with a legal professional.*

## **Planning Your Funeral**

While thinking about your funeral may be discomfoting, planning for it in advance may prevent emotional stress and financial problems for your survivors. For these reasons, you may want to consider doing the following:

- Talk to your family about your funeral wishes.
- Make your own funeral arrangements prior to your death.
- Pay your funeral expenses or allocate funds for that purpose.
- Give directions for the use of your body or organs for medical research or donation.

When talking to your family or leaving instructions, think about issues such as burial versus cremation, where you wish to be buried or how your remains will be kept, and any other details you wish to address regarding your funeral ceremony.

Although discussing the cost of a funeral seems callous, it is an important consideration when you are pre-funeral planning. Many funeral providers offer various "packages" of commonly selected goods and services that make up a funeral. But when you arrange for a funeral, you have the right to buy individual goods and services, rejecting any items you do not want.

According to the Federal Trade Commission's "Funeral Rule":

- You have the right to choose the funeral goods and services you want; you usually do not have to accept a package that may include items you do not want.
- If state or local law requires you to buy any item, the funeral provider must disclose it on the price list, with a reference to the specific law.
- Funeral providers offering cremations must make "alternative containers" (i.e. not a casket) available.
- Funeral directors must give you price information over the telephone if asked. Funeral homes must give you a written, itemized price list when you visit.
- To read more of the Funeral Rule's guideline, see the FTC [website](#).

Additionally, you should be aware that pre-planning a funeral does not necessarily mean you must prepay for the funeral. You should fully investigate the terms of any prepayment plan before purchasing one and determine whether a refund is possible if you change your burial wishes.

## **Military Funerals**

If you have served in the military, you may be eligible for special funeral and burial benefits. Military funeral honors are available upon request to all veterans, including military retirees, except for those who have been dishonorably discharged. These honors—which are performed by at least two uniformed service members and (if available) a bugler—include the folding and presentation of an American flag and the playing of "Taps." In addition, veterans are entitled to a government-furnished headstone or marker, as well as a Presidential Memorial Certificate. To arrange military honors, your funeral director will typically make the arrangements by calling the applicable service coordinator.

For more detailed information on the benefits available to service members, please visit the Department of Veteran Affairs [website](#).