

Washington, DC -- The U.S. House today approved one of Rep. Vern Buchanan's top legislative priorities -- \$27.8 million in federal funding to construct a national veterans cemetery in Sarasota County.

The funding is included in the Fiscal Year 2008 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 2642), which provides a necessary increase in federal funding to meet the needs of our nation's military and honor our commitment to our veterans.

"The cemetery funding in this bill will help us ensure that the nearly 400,000 area veterans who proudly served this nation can be placed to rest close to home and with the honor and dignity they deserve," said Buchanan. "As our veterans population ages, the timely completion of this project is an increasingly important priority."

The Sarasota National Veterans Cemetery is currently in the design phase. It will be located on 295 acres of land purchased in April by the Veterans Administration. Construction is planned for May 2008 with the first burials anticipated in October 2008, with the entire first phase of the project expected to be complete in 2011. The 60 acre site will provide 25,700 casket and cremation burials. The entire property is expected to provide burial capacity beyond the year 2050.

Congressional Sarasota National Cemetery Advisory Committee and Sarasota County Veterans Commission Chairman Rich Swier said, "The Sarasota County Veterans Commission is very excited that the \$27.8 million dollars is in the bill. This is a huge step forward in making our new Sarasota National Cemetery a reality. We are most thankful for the hard work of Congressman Buchanan as a member of the House Committee on Veteran Affairs for making this happen."