

difference in the maintenance cost for lined and unlined graves. Although the study recognized that over a long period of time - 20 years and longer - graves with liners could be expected to sink less than unlined graves, the marginal cost difference to maintain graves without liners would be relatively small and would not justify the additional cost to purchase and install grave liners.

Based in part on its staff study, the Maryland Veterans Commission, on December 13, 1984, voted unanimously to oppose any proposal for the State to supply grave liners for each burial plot and reaffirmed the current practice of allowing individuals to be buried with grave liners if the cost is paid by the family or estate of the deceased or some other source on behalf of the deceased. I have also received requests to veto this legislation from the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Budget and Fiscal Planning.

The Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning conducted a cost-benefit analysis of this proposal and concluded in a report dated November 21, 1984 that it would not be cost effective for the State to supply grave liners. The Department's report indicated that all graves require a certain amount of maintenance to replace sinking soil, whether or not they contain grave liners, and concluded that the cost to the State to provide grave liners would be 4 to 6 times greater than the cost to maintain these graves without liners.

Although most commercial cemeteries require grave liners, the cost of which is not paid by the cemetery, only 3 of 108 National Veterans Cemeteries require grave liners and those 3 cemeteries are in areas of unusual soil conditions not found at Maryland veterans cemeteries. The long experience of the Veterans Administration in this area and the fact that grave liners are required only in the three locations with unusual soil conditions strongly suggests that requiring grave liners in Maryland's veterans cemeteries is not necessary.

There is also a serious interpretative problem with this legislation that derives from technical errors associated with adoption of the Conference Committee Report amendments. These issues are addressed in the Attorney General's bill review letter to be dated May 25, 1985 (copy attached).

For the above policy and technical reasons, I have decided to veto House Bill 949.

Sincerely,
Harry Hughes
Governor

The Honorable Harry Hughes

May 25, 1985