

WASHINGTON - Congressman Spencer Bachus (R-Vestavia Hills) today announced that \$18.5 million has been set aside for construction of the National Veterans Cemetery in Montevallo in President Bush's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2008.

Bachus said he will work to keep the money in the budget during the upcoming congressional appropriations process. The funding would allow construction to begin on the cemetery, which is scheduled to open in 2009 with enough acreage to accommodate burials for 40 to 50 years.

"The construction of this cemetery is significant for Alabama's aging veteran population. I am pleased to see President Bush and the Department of Veterans Affairs working together to help us move forward on this project. It is only fitting those in Alabama who have served our country with honor are afforded a final resting place near their loved ones," Bachus said.

In 2003, Congress directed the Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a new cemetery in the Birmingham area, which has a population of more than 210,000 veterans who do not have access to a burial option in a national cemetery.

"The Shelby County Site is particularly attractive because of the tie in with the American Village, historic Montevallo, and the beautiful rolling landscape of the Shoal Creek Valley," said Congressman Bachus.

The Montevallo site was selected for an environmental assessment in November 2004. Local property owners surrounding American Village cooperated with the Department of Veterans Affairs to facilitate access to their properties during the review. The environmental assessment was completed during the summer of 2006 and land acquisition for the approved site began. The land acquisition is scheduled to be completed this year.

"Our Veterans groups and the entire Alabama Delegation have worked hard to make this a reality," said Congressman Bachus. "Frank Wilkes with the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs and Tom Walker with the American Village are due special thanks for their vision to bring this cemetery to the American Village."

The \$18.5 million budget request would constitute a significant portion of the total cost of the cemetery. It is subject to approval by Congress, which is scheduled to have a budget for the coming fiscal year in place by October 1.

###