

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND FOURTEEN

—
S.P. 656 - L.D. 1662

An Act To Clarify the Law Governing the Maintenance of Veterans' Grave Sites

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 13 MRSA §1101, as repealed and replaced by PL 2013, c. 421, §1, is amended to read:

§1101. Maintenance and repairs; municipality

1. Grave sites of veterans in ancient burying grounds. In any ancient burying ground, as referenced in Title 30-A, section 5723, the municipality in which that burying ground is located, in collaboration with veterans' organizations, cemetery associations, civic and fraternal organizations and other interested persons, shall keep in good condition all graves, headstones, monuments and markers ~~and, to~~ designating the burial place of Revolutionary soldiers and sailors and veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States. To the best of its ability given the location and accessibility of the ancient burying ground, the municipality, in collaboration with veterans' organizations, cemetery associations, civic and fraternal organizations and other interested persons, shall keep the grass, weeds and brush suitably cut and trimmed on those graves from May 1st to September 30th of each year. A municipality may designate a caretaker to whom it delegates for a specified period of time the municipality's responsibilities regarding an ancient burying ground.

1-A. Grave sites of persons who are not designated as veterans in ancient burying grounds. To the best of its ability given the location and accessibility of the ancient burying ground, the municipality in which an ancient burying ground is located may keep the grass, weeds and brush suitably cut and trimmed from May 1st to September 30th of each year on all graves, headstones, monuments and markers in the ancient burying ground not designating the burial place of Revolutionary soldiers and sailors and veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States. A municipality may designate a caretaker to whom it delegates for a specified period of time the municipality's functions regarding an ancient burying ground.

2. Grave sites of veterans in public burying grounds. ~~In any public burying ground in which a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States is buried, the municipality in which that burying ground is located shall~~ A municipality, cemetery corporation or cemetery association owning and operating a public burying ground shall, in collaboration with veterans' organizations, cemetery associations, civic and fraternal organizations and other interested persons, keep the grave, headstone, monument or marker designating the burial place of any veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States in that public burying ground in good condition and repair from May 1st to September 30th of each year, ~~including:~~

A municipality in which a public burying ground is located may, in collaboration with veterans' organizations, cemetery associations, civic and fraternal organizations and other interested persons, adopt standards of good condition and repair to which grave sites of veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States must be kept. The standards at a minimum must detail how to maintain the grave, grass and headstones.

If a municipality does not adopt standards, the municipality, cemetery corporation or cemetery association shall apply the following standards of good condition and repair:

- ~~A. Regrading the grave site to make it level when the grave site has sunk 3 or more inches compared to the surrounding ground;~~
- ~~B. Maintaining the proper height and orientation, both vertical and horizontal, of the headstone, monument or marker;~~
- ~~C. Ensuring that inscriptions on the headstone, monument or marker are visible and legible;~~
- ~~D. Ensuring~~ Ensure ~~that the average height of grass at the grave site is between 1.5 to 2.5 inches but no more than 3 inches is suitably cut and trimmed;~~
- ~~E. Keeping~~ Keep a flat grave marker free of grass and debris; and
- ~~F. Keeping~~ Keep the burial place free of fallen trees, branches, vines and weeds.

Sec. 2. 13 MRSA §1101-A, sub-§4 is enacted to read:

4. Public burying ground. "Public burying ground" means a burying ground or cemetery in which any person may be buried without regard to religious or other affiliation and includes a cemetery owned and operated by a municipality, a cemetery corporation or a cemetery association.

Sec. 3. 13 MRSA §1101-B, sub-§2, as amended by PL 2013, c. 421, §2, is further amended to read:

2. Maintenance by landowner. A person who owns a parcel of land that contains an ancient burying ground and chooses to deny access to the municipality or its caretaker designated pursuant to section 1101 shall assume the duties as described in section 1101 and Title 30-A, section 2901, subsection 1. Maintenance of an ancient burying ground by the owner exempts the municipality from performing the duties as described in section 1101.

A municipality or its caretaker designated pursuant to section 1101 to carry out the municipality's functions regarding an ancient burying ground must have access to any ancient burying ground within the municipality in order to determine if the ancient burying ground is being maintained in good condition and repair. If an ancient burying ground or a veteran's grave within an ancient burying ground is not maintained in good condition and repair, the municipality may take over the care or appoint a caretaker to whom it delegates the municipality's functions regarding an ancient burying ground.