



For Immediate Release

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Volunteer Army Gains Foothold for Vets

OC Registrar Validates Ballot Initiative for Southern California Veterans Cemetery

Irvine, CA (April 29, 2020) — The Orange County Registrar of Voters today notified the City of Irvine that a petition to rezone the original 125-acre ARDA site on the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station at the Great Park exclusively for a Veterans Cemetery has qualified for the November 3, 2020 ballot.

An all-volunteer citizens group collected 19,790 signatures from Irvine residents during a petition drive that ended March 17, 2020. In an example of direct democracy, residents are sending a message to the Irvine City Council that they want the Southern California Veterans Cemetery project back on track at the original site.

This marks the second time that Irvine residents have organized and rejected the City Council's attempt to move the Southern California Veterans Cemetery to alternate locations. Measure B, a ballot referendum proposing a land swap with developer FivePoint, was soundly defeated by the voters in 2018 — 63% to 37%.

In an open letter to Irvine residents, Ed Pope, chair of Build the Great Park Veterans Cemetery committee put it this way, *“After enduring five years of Christina Shea’s (Irvine’s current unelected mayor) deliberate delays and her self-described ‘diversion schemes’ to defeat the long-planned Veterans Cemetery, Irvine citizens are finally gaining the upper hand.”*

A diverse group of volunteers fanned out across the city — school sites, parks, UCI and IVC campuses, libraries, shopping centers, special events, neighborhoods and sporting events — to collect the signatures for the initiative. Ed McNew, an Army veteran, and Joyce Kassouf, a retired nurse, were among this army of hundreds of volunteers. Ed explained, *“I feel strongly that we must have a veterans cemetery,”* while Joyce added, *“Men and women gave their lives and their youth, and it’s an honor to help this cause.”*

The Irvine City Council is required to act upon this initiative at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting, likely to be held on May 12, 2020. They can decide to adopt the measure or put it on the November 3rd ballot.

Ray Roschmann is a volunteer writing on behalf of BuildTheVeteransCemetery.org.

For additional information, videos or photos on this topic, contact Ray Roschmann by calling or texting (949) 854-4793, or emailing Ray at rayroschmann@cox.net.

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