



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON DC 20420**

OCT 04 2006

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Member, United States House
of Representatives
10 East Doty Street, Suite 405
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Congresswoman Baldwin:

I am replying to your letter on behalf of Reverend Selena Fox, who wrote to you regarding her quest to have the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) add the Pentacle, the Wiccan emblem of belief, to the National Cemetery Administration's list of emblems of belief for Government-furnished headstones and markers. I am responding because I oversee the operations of VA's Headstone and Marker program.

I understand your desire to obtain my expeditious consideration of this matter. However, I have been advised by the VA General Counsel that we must initiate a rulemaking to establish procedures for including new emblems of belief on the listing of emblems that will be inscribed on Government-furnished headstones and markers. I am presently unable to give you a definite time frame within which that rulemaking will be accomplished. I can tell you, however, that we have made significant progress in preparing a proposed rule draft that will soon be distributed for comment within the Department, and then by the Office of Management and Budget, before it is published in the Federal Register for public comment.

The outcome of the rulemaking proceedings will be published in the Federal Register and, thereafter, it will govern the VA emblem of belief decision-making process. I cannot say with certainty how long it might take to consider the Wiccan request after those rules are put into place.

I hope that this information is helpful to you in responding to Reverend Fox. We appreciate your interest in our Nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William F. Tuerk". The signature is stylized and cursive.

William F. Tuerk