

SPANISH FORT – On December 7, 2012, Congressman Jo Bonner, R-Alabama, joined VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Steve Muro; Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs, Retired Rear Admiral Clyde Marsh; and other officials in dedicating the long-awaited Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

"On this day steeped in history – a day on which 2,400 gave their lives and other 1,280 were wounded defending our country – it is fitting that we dedicate this magnificent and peaceful final resting place for South Alabama veterans," observed Congressman Bonner.

"Today really is the fulfillment of a 50-year dream. For a half century, South Alabama veterans have been without access to a local cemetery dedicated to honoring their service."

Congressman Bonner joined Baldwin County Commission Chairman Tucker Dorsey, Retired Rear Admiral Marsh, and Undersecretary Muro in cutting the ribbon to dedicate the new facility.

"The Alabama State Veterans Cemetery is the first South Alabama cemetery dedicated to our veterans since the Mobile National Cemetery, which was established at end of the Civil War in 1865, closed to interments in 1962. For a half century South Alabama veterans have had to seek burial arrangements in northern Alabama or out of state," Congressman Bonner added.

In May 2009, Governor Bob Riley signed legislation into law creating Alabama's first state veterans cemetery on 120 acres of land secured near Spanish Fort in Baldwin County.

Congressman Bonner worked with Senators Sessions and Shelby to reach an agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to fund construction of the new cemetery. In August 2011, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced the approval of a \$7,015,564 grant to the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

The new state cemetery will officially open to veteran burials in the spring of 2013.

For release: December 7, 2012