

Membership Eligibility

To be eligible for membership in The American Legion, you must have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military and served at least one day on active duty in the following periods:

4/6/17 - 11/11/18
World War I

12/7/41 - 12/31/46
World War II

6/25/50 - 1/31/55
Korean War

2/28/61 - 5/7/75
Vietnam War

8/24/82 - 7/31/84
Lebanon and Grenada

12/20/89 - 1/31/90
Panama

8/2/90-present Cessation of hostilities as determined by the U.S. Government.
Persian Gulf

You are also eligible for membership if:

- Your basic training time was on federal activation orders and during the above periods.
- You were federally activated subsequent to and during any of the periods given above.
- Your activations were for training or for missions; check the title and subsection of your activation orders.

Under eligibility guidelines for Legion membership, the term "active duty" as used in our national constitution includes "active duty for training."

However, our guideline further defines National Guardsmen and reservists as eligible under services to federal activation orders Title 10, Subsection 672 or Subsection 12301, created following Desert Storm to replace Subsection 672. In other words, to determine eligibility for service members in the National Guard or reserves, the activation order is the authority line. Non-eligible activation orders are Title 32 for the National Guard and Title 10 Subsection 270 for the reserves.

Merchant Marine

Pursuant to PL 95-202, on January 7, 1988, the Secretary of Defense declared certain Merchant Marine services as qualifying for Department of Veterans Affairs benefits. To receive recognition, each member of the "American Merchant Marine in Oceangoing Service during the Period of Armed Conflict December 7, 1941, to August 15, 1945," must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Was employed by the War Shipping Administration or Office of Defense Transportation or their agents as a merchant seaman documented by the U.S. Coast Guard or Department of Commerce (Merchant Mariner's Document/Certificate of Service), or as a civil servant employed by U.S. Army Transport Service (later redesignated U.S. Army Transportation Corps, Water Division) or the Naval Transportation Service; and
2. Served satisfactorily as a crew member during the period of armed conflict, December 7, 1941, to August 15, 1945, aboard:
 - a. Merchant vessels in "oceangoing," i.e., foreign, inter-coastal, or coastal or coastwise service (46 USC 10301 & 10501) and further, to include "near foreign" voyages between the United States and Canada, Mexico, or the West Indies via ocean routes; or
 - b. Public vessels in oceangoing service or foreign waters.

A "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty," **DD Form 214**, plus a discharge certificate, or, an Honorable Service Certificate/Report of Casualty shall be provided each qualifying member of the Merchant Marine, the U.S. Army Transport Service and the U.S. Naval Transportation Service upon receipt of application from the member and upon verification of credible service in accordance with service directives. Total active duty service shall be the summation of each foreign, near foreign, coastal and intercoastal voyage within the period of armed conflict of World War II. Inclusive dates of each creditable voyage shall be reflected on the DD Form 214. For qualifying members taken prisoner of war while on active duty, credible service shall extend to date of repatriation or date of death while a prisoner of war.

The form "Application for Discharge of Member or Survivor of Member of Group Certified to Have Performed Active Duty With the Armed Forces of the United States," **DD Form 2168**, available through any VA regional office or by visiting www.va.gov, is to be used by applicants seeking a discharge certificate.

Note

Merchant Mariners are now eligible for American Legion membership. If any questions as to individual qualifications for membership exist, the application and substantiating documentation (DD-214), or copies thereof, should be forwarded to the National Judge Advocate in Indianapolis.