

During your career, you might take a military leave of absence from your public position covered by PERA. Unpaid leaves may affect your future monthly benefit amount. You may purchase the missing member contributions to restore service or salary lost during your leave, which could result in a larger benefit.

DO I QUALIFY TO MAKE THE PURCHASE?

- » The military leave period must occur during your PERA public employment.
- » You must be honorably discharged.
- » You must return to the same public employer upon discharge within the time frames required under United States Code, title 38, section 4312(e). Generally, this means if a military leave was:
 - Less than 31 days, you must return next scheduled work period following discharge, transportation home, and additional eight hours rest, or
 - 31-180 days, you must return within 14 days, or
 - More than 180 days, you must return within 90 days, or
 - If hospitalized due illness/injury during military leave, you must return once recovered.

WHEN DO I NEED TO MAKE THE PURCHASE?

For leaves ending after May 2021, the payment must be received by PERA by:



- » Three times the length of the military leave, up to a maximum of five years, from when you returned to public employment.
 - **Example:** You were on leave from January 1, 2023 through February 28, 2024 (14 months). You will have 3.5 years to make the purchase (42 months).
- » If the leave was less than three years, you have three years from the date you were discharged from service in the uniformed services.
 - **Example:** You were on leave from March 15, 2024 through March 29, 2024 (two weeks). You will have three years to make the purchase.
- » If you terminate public service, you will have six months from your termination date to make the purchase.

WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

Step 1. Your employer notifies us of your return from military leave.

Your employer provides us with your military leave dates.

Step 2. We send you an informational letter.

PERA will send you a letter notifying you about the leave purchase option. In order to send your military leave purchase information, you (or your employer) must send us the following items:

- Legible copy of your *DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD214)*
- Completed *Leave Verification Form – Military Only*

Step 3. You (or your employer) send us the completed leave form and DD214.

Once we receive these two required documents, we will process your request for leave purchase information.

Step 4: We send you estimates and military leave purchase information.

The information sent to you will include the cost of the purchase and the current impact to your monthly pension, which may help with your purchase decision.

Step 5. You decide if you want to make the purchase.

The leave purchase is optional but may result in a larger monthly benefit. If you decide to make the purchase, send the completed *Leave Purchase Payment Form* to PERA, along with the payment. You can send PERA a personal check, roll over funds from a tax-qualified plan, or a combination of both.

WHAT WILL I PURCHASE?

Missing member contributions from your military leave period. The cost is based on the salary you would have earned during the leave period.

Note – you can purchase up to five cumulative years of service and salary credit for all military leave periods purchased under this statute. Some exceptions exist to this rule.

WILL THE PURCHASE INCREASE MY PERA BENEFIT?

It depends. We use three factors to determine your monthly benefit: service, age, and salary. Service and salary may be affected by your leave and could increase your benefit amount.

If I Purchase Service?

Yes. The more service credit you earn, the higher the percentage of your highest average salary you will receive as your monthly benefit. The benefit estimate with leave purchase information mailed to you will indicate if your leave includes any service credits in the purchase. When you purchase service, you are automatically purchasing salary associated with that month.

If I Purchase Partial Salary?

If you're only missing partial salary during the leave (not service), then it depends on if the purchase falls in the range of your highest average salary. The benefit estimate with leave purchase information mailed to you will indicate if your CURRENT highest average salary increases. However, keep in mind that your highest average salary may continue to change:

- If you plan to continue working after you return from your leave and earn a higher salary, then the purchase may not increase your PERA benefit as the leave purchase may not stay in your highest average salary.
- If you terminate, retire, or go on disability shortly after your leave, and the leave stays within your highest average salary, then the purchase likely will increase your PERA benefit.

Q&A

Can I purchase a portion of my leave?

Yes – you may purchase a portion of the leave. To best help you in this situation, please contact a PERA representative to request an estimate based on the amount of leave you wish to purchase. We will then send you an estimate and purchase information.

If I apply for PERA disability, can I still make the leave purchase?

Yes. You will have the same payment timeline as an active member to purchase the leave. Your leave purchase may impact the start date of your disability benefit.

What if I terminate before PERA receives my leave information?

Your employer is required to notify PERA of your prior year leave(s) at the time you terminate. We will send you an informational letter notifying you about the leave purchase option. You will then have six months from your termination date to send us the required documents and the payment cost amount.

What if my purchase period expired?

If you have not terminated PERA service, you may still qualify for the purchase, but the cost will be the actuarial present value of the increase in your future monthly benefit due to the service purchase. The purchase amount depends on your specific situation. Please see the *Actuarial Military Purchase* brochure online for more information.



We are here to help. If you have any additional questions about leave purchases, please contact a PERA Service Representative or email us at benefits@mnpera.org. You can also find more information on our Member Purchases page on mnpera.org.

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