This ceremony was symbolic—these 54 Selective Service volunteers were representing all the Selective Service volunteers from their home district. Each had been chosen by lottery from all Selective Service volunteers in their district who had at least five years of continuous service. (See Appendix A for a list of these recipients.)

The Illinois lottery was typical. Their representative was chosen in a drawing before members of the press at the Governor’s office in Springfield. The names of all eligible local board members were placed in a bowl and Governor Dwight H. Green drew the winning name and three alternates (Figure 5). George Funk, Chairman of Chicago Board No. 143, was chosen to represent Illinois at the ceremony.

After lunch, the group proceeded to the White House. There, at a three o’clock, at an informal ceremony in the East Room, President Truman pinned a Selective Service Medal on each recipient’s breast. Truman told the recipients, “You have done a job that was not a happy one, but which was absolutely essential for the winning of the war.” Matthew M. Marshall of Alabama was the first recipient.

At the end of the ceremony, President Truman awarded General Hershey a Distinguished Service Medal for his services as Director of the Selective Service System during the war. In a move that surprised almost everyone, General Hershey then presented a 14 karat gold Selective Service Medal to President Truman. Hershey said the award was for Truman’s contributions to the Selective Service System as a Senator, Vice President, and President (Figure 6). Before leaving the White House, Hershey insisted upon awarding another Selective Service Medal, this one to Colonel Harry Vaughn, Truman’s military aide, “because of his great support for the system.”

Some of the highest ranking American military and political figures were present at the ceremony. In attendance, among others, were Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, General of the Army Air Forces Henry H. Arnold, and Fleet Admiral William D. Leahy. Also present were Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn and President Pro Temp of the Senate Kenneth McKellar. No one questioned the awards to Truman or Vaughn.

The awards to Truman and Vaughn set precedents for later awards of the medal. Truman and Hershey had worked closely since 1940, when Truman was a Senator working on draft issues. At that time, Vaughn was Truman’s aide. Vaughn was constantly helping Truman and the two became close friends. Truman wanted Hershey to present a Selective Service Medal to Vaughn and Hershey did. Truman and Hershey later discussed the award of other Selective Service Medals to compensated people before the medals were presented.

Several Army generals tried to prevent these awards to military personnel, but since President Truman was the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces one could almost hear him saying to General Hershey, “Oh, yes I can.” There was also some animosity between General Hershey and the Army higher brass. Hershey had been
promoted, ahead of many more senior officers, from the rank of Lieutenant Colonel to Brigadier General by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1940. In addition, Hershey was in constant contact with politicians and Presidents from 1940 through 1973 and often got his agenda approved without going through military channels. General Hershey played this game well, wearing civilian clothes when dealing with the military and military clothes when dealing with politicians.

During the next two weeks, Selective Service Medals were presented to other uncompensated personnel in a series of ceremonies in the 54 Selective Service districts. The first ceremony was held in the capital city, followed by ceremonies scheduled in cities, towns, and boroughs throughout the district. These ceremonies were held in county court houses, high school gymnasiums, theaters, and American Legion Halls (Figure 7). The governor, or in the case of New York City, the mayor, usually made the presentations. These awards were made to members of local boards, boards of appeal, and government appeal agents who had completed at least two years of service as of August 31, 1945.

At later award ceremonies, awards were made to examining physicians and dentists, members of medical advisory boards, reemployment committeemen, and anyone else who reached the required two years of service after August 31, 1945. Local award ceremonies ended in the late spring of 1946. Later distribution of medals was made by registered mail. The Selective Service Medal

Figure 7: Selective Service Medal awards ceremony in an Iowa high school gymnasium.

Figure 8: Posthumous letter of award to a Minnesota physician.
was even awarded posthumously. Posthumous awards were sent to the recipient’s family with a note of condolence (Figure 8).

Starting in mid-February 1946, Hershey began personally awarding medals in earnest. Over the next 18 months, he would present medals to senators, congressmen, governors, military personnel, and just about anyone who had supported Selective Service in any way. These awards were often made in public presentations (Figure 9). But Hershey could not be everywhere. Many public awards were made by District Directors starting in the late summer. On October 12, 1946, John F. Robinson, Director for Connecticut, awarded 27 medals to those who had served at least two years on industry advisement boards.

The last public award ceremony occurred on March 18, 1947 in the United States Capitol Building. Here Hershey presented medals to senators, representatives, and a few select others. These awards were to former state governors, then serving in Congress, who had been active in the Selective Service System. At least 18 medals were awarded at this ceremony.

Awards of the Selective Service Medal ended on March 31, 1947 when the Selective Service System became the Office of Selective Service Records. Through this date, 99,313 medals had been awarded. It is very likely that the total number awarded is slightly higher, as those personnel who reached two years of service late in March 1947 would not have been counted.

By the summer of 1947, the Selective Service Medal had pretty much been forgotten. Most recipients had already put their medals away in dresser drawers and attics. Most were reluctant to wear their medals, as civilian medals were uncommon and veterans could not wear their military medals on civilian clothing. Many Selective Service Medals seen today have never been removed from the case. The only pictures known to the authors of recipients wearing the Selective Service Medal are at the award ceremonies where the medals were personally presented to recipients. The only item worn by some recipients was the lapel pin.

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF THE MEDAL**

The Selective Service Medal is a fairly common medal, with an average of one or two listings appearing each week on eBay. It is also fairly inexpensive. A complete set, with the medal, ribbon bar, lapel pin, and case can generally be purchased for less than $25. The biggest challenge facing a collector is finding a case with an undamaged hinge!

![Image of Selective Service Medal](image)

**Figure 10: Ribbon bar (top) and lapel pin with 14k hallmark.**

If you are a more serious collector, there are three different types of this medal. All share the same pendant design. The first type is struck in 14-karat gold and is prohibitively rare. Two of these medals are known and it is believed these were the only ones made. One was presented to President Harry S Truman and the other to Brigadier General Carlton Dargusch, Deputy Director of the Selective Service System. These medals, ribbon...