



## Dispute Resolution Process

**M**ost NALC activists know that our grievance procedure has another name, the Dispute Resolution Process. This is because our current Article 15 grew out of a joint experiment we began with the Postal Service in 1998. Under DRP, the parties overhauled the grievance process—changing the initial steps from 1 and 2 to Informal and Formal Step A. The parties set up joint teams at Step B to work together to try to resolve grievances that the local parties could not resolve at either Informal or Formal A. A grievance could not get to arbitration unless the Step B team reached an impasse despite its best efforts to resolve the dispute.

The Dispute Resolution Process has been very successful, largely because both parties monitor it closely and work proactively to improve it. The parties want to ensure that, as issues arise within the Dispute Resolution Process, we address them so that this process remains and continues to be an improvement over the previous one.

**Leaders from the NALC and the Postal Service met several times in 2010 to candidly discuss and address issues that have been identified within the process. The most recent meeting was held in early December in the Washington area.**

Here are the latest nationwide results from the Dispute Resolution Process:

- Our 15 national business agents, along with the United States Postal Service's area managers of labor relations within their regions, are responsible for monitoring the Dispute Resolution Process. There are currently 74 USPS districts located in eight USPS areas. Of those 74 districts, 48 of them have Step B teams—therefore, certain DRP teams are responsible for resolving grievances in more than one district. In 38 districts, there is one “primary” team that works full-time on Step B duties. Ten districts have two “primary” teams. There are 58 total primary teams. Each district with a primary team or teams also has a “backup” team that is activated when needed to ensure timely grievance processing.
- As of early December, the Step B teams nationwide

had adjudicated about 28,834 cases in 2010. In 2009, the Step B teams nationwide handled 32,620 total cases and in 2008 they handled 30,957 total cases.

- The teams were able to resolve about 77 percent of the cases they received in 2010 (as of early December), while about 14 percent resulted in impasses. The remaining cases were either remanded back to the parties (9 percent) or held (1 percent).
- As of early December, there were just slightly more than 2,400 cases pending arbitration nationwide.
- Of the 28,834 cases handled at Step B through early December of 2010, slightly under 25 percent were disputes over disciplinary actions. Of those disciplinary actions, 44 percent were letters of warning, 19 percent were seven-day suspensions, 12 percent were 14-day suspensions, 7 percent were emergency suspensions, and the final 18 percent were removals.
- Overtime issues accounted for slightly more than 28 percent of the contractual grievances, making that the top contractual subject in 2010.
- On the average, Step B teams decided cases within about 18 days after receiving them. However, they decided 78 percent of the grievances in less than 14 days. The numbers in your district may vary from these nationwide averages. In 2009, the Step B teams on average decided cases within about 17 days after receiving them and had decided 74 percent of the grievances in less than 14 days.
- Since DRP's inception, the parties had certified 382 letter carriers to be either primary or backup NALC B Team members as of December of 2010. DRP training and certification is jointly conducted periodically, how often is based on the needs of the teams.

The intensive week-long training sessions touch on relevant topics, including contract application, decision writing, computer-based research and dispute resolution skills. To be certified as Step B representatives, students must be able to demonstrate that they can work diligently and cooperatively with their counterparts, use a computer to research subjects, write clear, concise and contractually correct decisions and pass a final examination on their contract knowledge. ☒