



Dispute Resolution Process

Most 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. 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.

I want to first of all thank all of our stewards and branch officers for defending the contract day in and day out on the workroom floor. You all are the true eyes and ears of this great union.

I also would like to thank all of our Dispute Resolution Team members for the work that you do. Being a member of a Dispute Resolution Team is not an easy job. Just know that the work that you do does not go unappreciated.

You all have consistently stepped up this year—not only in defending the contract and representing our membership, but also in doing everything President Rolando has asked of you in our efforts to save the Postal Service, despite the many hats that you wear. Keep up the great work.

Just as I have provided at the beginning of the last two years, here are the latest nationwide results from the Dispute Resolution Process:

- Our 15 national business agents, along with the U.S. Postal Service's area managers of labor relations within their regions, are responsible for monitoring the Dispute Resolution Process. There are currently 67 USPS districts located in seven USPS areas. Of those 67 districts, 44 of them have at least one Step B team. There are currently 58 total "primary" teams nationwide.
- As of Dec. 5, 2011, the Step B teams nationwide had rendered decisions on 31,351 cases in 2011. In 2010, the Step B teams nationwide handled 34,114 total cases, and in 2009, they handled 32,583 total cases.
- The teams were able to resolve about 72 percent of the cases they received in 2011 (as of early December),

while about 16 percent resulted in impasses. The remaining cases were either remanded back to the parties (10 percent) or held (2 percent).

- As of early December, there were just a few more than 3,000 cases pending arbitration nationwide.
- Of the 31,351 cases handled at Step B through early December 2011, slightly below 22 percent were disputes over disciplinary actions. Of those disciplinary actions, 42 percent were letters of warning, 18 percent were seven-day suspensions, 14 percent were 14-day suspensions, 8 percent were emergency suspensions, and the final 18 percent were removals.
- Overtime issues accounted for slightly below 32 percent of the contractual grievances, making it again the top contractual subject in 2011. In 2010, overtime issues accounted for around 28 percent of the contractual grievances.
- On the average, Step B teams decided cases within about 16 days after receiving them. However, they decided 67 percent of the grievances in fewer than 14 days. The numbers in your district may vary from these nationwide averages. In 2010, the Step B teams on average decided cases within about 18 days after receiving them and had decided 76 percent of the grievances in fewer than 14 days.
- Since the Dispute Resolution Process's inception, the parties have certified 391 letter carriers to be either a primary or a back-up NALC B Team member as of December 2011. DRP training and certification is jointly conducted periodically at the national level. How often is based on the needs of the teams. Overall, there have been a total of 894 participants—from both the NALC and USPS—who have gone through the training since DRP began.

The intensive week-long training sessions mentioned above touch on relevant topics, including contract application, decision writing, computer-based research and dispute resolution skills. In order 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. ✉