



Keeping control of the process

Keeping control of Article 15 is important to how the overall grievance-arbitration process functions best for our members. For that to happen, the grievance time frames need to be adhered to. The union must appeal the issues for the cases to be heard in a timely manner. What seems to be a growing issue is that we are sometimes falling behind when it comes to moving grievances through the system. Below are the time frames established in the National Agreement:

- An **Informal Step A** discussion should be held within **14 calendar days** of when the grievant or the union first learned, or may reasonably have been expected to learn, of its cause.
- If there is **no resolution**, NALC may initiate a Formal A meeting by sending Joint Step A Form 8190 to the postmaster or designee **within seven days** of the date of the discussion.
- **Formal Step A** will meet with the steward or a union representative as expeditiously as possible, but no later than **seven days** following receipt of the Joint Step A grievance form.
- NALC may **appeal to Step B** if there is no resolution within **seven calendar days** of the Formal Step A decision.
- There will be a DRT **Step B review** of the appeal and a joint report of the decision will be issued **within 14 days** (unless the parties mutually agree to extend).
- If **impassed at Step B**, NALC may appeal to arbitration **within 14 days** of the decision.

Coupled with the timeliness issue is the granting of extensions by either party, sometimes repeatedly for the wrong reasons. These two issues cause problems in a number of ways. The cases are not being moved through the process as stipulated by the parties and the National Agreement. The end result is that the membership is suffering and we need to focus on this to prevent it from happening.

Let's talk a little about extensions. It is one thing to

agree to an extension due to someone not being available for the meeting or hearing on a given day. However, it is not a good practice to agree to postpone a meeting or hearing for reasons just to delay the process. For example: Mail is heavy; too much overtime is being used. Too often, this is the case. Management is required by the contract to provide the time necessary to you to process a case. The signing of an extension should include the case issue along with the reason why the parties are agreeing to extend the time limits for a specific period of time. In some instances, we have seen extensions for an unlimited time frame. This should not be done. This defeats the time frames for each step of the process.

I know that part of the problem sometimes involves managers saying they can't permit the meeting or hearing, but that is unacceptable when it happens more than once. Your specific request needs to be documented in writing. Be specific as to why you need the time (e.g., "Time needed to meet with the grievant John Jones concerning a letter of warning issued on 5/1/2012 allegedly for a safety violation"). Put your request in writing and in duplicate. This is important because it is your documented proof that a request was made. Get the supervisor to initial and date it as received. The supervisor will have to then make a decision of either approval or disapproval for the requested time. Be sure to maintain your copy for the grievance file, as this could be an important factor down the road if the case goes to arbitration.

If you have another case, let's say the next day, the request would include both the information for the first and second case. This way, management knows that you have requested the time needed for both. This same process would continue each day until you receive the time. If denials continue, seek advice from your branch officers, and they should advise the national business agent if this is an ongoing problem.

What we need to do is to apply the contract. If this is done, then the grievance process will work as it was intended to, and the members will be served. ☒